Statement from the Secretaries General and Directors of national Associations of local and regional governments – members of the CEMR | 4 March 2020

The Secretaries General of national associations of Local and Regional Governments, members of CEMR, during their meeting in Brussels on 4 March 2020, were briefed by the Secretary General of KEDE, Dimitris Kafantaris, on the situation at Greece and Bulgaria’s eastern borders with Turkey, creating a new migration crisis and an "asymmetrical threat" to the borders of Europe.

Mr Kafantaris reiterated that Greece will protect its borders, which are also the external borders of the European Union, and added that he hoped that the current crisis would serve as a wake-up call for Europe to assume its responsibilities.

We need fast and effective actions at European level. Manipulating desperate people to push a geopolitical agenda to pressure the European Union is unacceptable and will not help solve the crisis in Syria and the region.

Local Governments, as the level closest to the citizens, have shown great courage and humanity in managing all these difficult situations.

Neither Greece nor Bulgaria can handle alone a situation that concerns the whole of Europe and they call on the solidarity of all member states to find solutions to guarantee the security of the local population as well as the refugees.

European Council President Charles Michel, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and European Parliament President David Sassoli toured the Greek-Turkish and Bulgarian-Turkish borders on Tuesday 3 March together with the Prime Minister of Greece Kyriakos Mitsotakis and the Bulgarian Prime Minister Boyko Borisov.

The Secretaries General of CEMR took note of the situation and firmly expressed their solidarity with all Local Governments of the region and asked for Europe to assume its responsibilities. This is an issue that concerns not only Greece and Bulgaria and therefore it concerns Europe as a whole and all European institutions. We stand for a new agreement between the European States and the Turkish Government with the aim of handling the situation in a most humane manner.