



Brussels, 27 May 2009

Recognising the role of local and regional government in the fight against climate change in the discussions ahead of the meeting of EU Heads of State and Government of 18-19 June

Dear President / Prime Minister,

The next European Council will agree the key elements of the European Union's position on a new international agreement on climate to be reached at COP15 in December 2009 in Copenhagen. Our organisations, representing local and regional government throughout Europe, strongly support the leadership role played by the EU in the international negotiations for the achievement of a comprehensive agreement on climate change.

Local and regional authorities are aware of the challenges ahead and already initiate strategies to reduce their footprint on climate and prepare for a low-carbon future, while mobilizing their citizens and the private sector. Through their wide ranging responsibilities in relevant policy areas such as transport, air quality, energy efficiency in buildings, sustainable public procurement, water and waste management, local and regional government can make a real difference in the fight against climate change and actively contribute to CO₂ reduction commitments in line with the European energy and climate targets. One initiative that highlights this commitment to drive forward change is the fact that some 500 municipalities have agreed to voluntarily reduce their CO₂ emissions by more than 20% by 2020 within the framework of the EU initiative Covenant of Mayors.

However, this already significant contribution to climate mitigation and adaptation policies has not been formally recognised in the European Commission communication on COP15 presented in January, or in the conclusions of the Councils which have recently been held.

We are therefore writing to you to ask for your support to ensure that, with backing from the European Council, the European Union proposes and promotes the formal recognition of the role and contribution of local and regional government in these fields, in the texts to be adopted in Copenhagen in December. This role and contribution was previously acknowledged in the Rio Earth Summit in 1992 (Agenda 21 asserts that "the participation and co-operation of local authorities will be a determining factor" in fulfilling its objectives), and in the recent 2008 COP to the Convention on Biological Diversity (COP 9 Decision IX/28 "promoting engagement of cities and local authorities").


We believe that such an acknowledgement of the role and contribution of local and regional authorities worldwide is even more important and relevant to the new climate change agreements which are being negotiated, and consider that - with its track record of support for democratic local and regional government in the international arena - it would be sad indeed if the EU were to forget our contribution at this crucial moment for humanity.

The European Council in June will be an important opportunity for Member States to demonstrate this support and give a clear signal to local and regional decision-makers, in the run-up to Copenhagen, that their role and commitment are taken seriously. This is especially important since the UNFCCC's negotiating text makes no reference to local and regional government in relation to mitigation.

Please find in attachment the draft proposal that local and regional government and their global associations are promoting towards COP15.

We look forward to collaborating with you in this crucial issue.

Yours sincerely,



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Jozias Van Aartsen

David Cadman

Mayor and Governor
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