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Oslo declaration

CEMR Policy Committee
Oslo, 4 June 2010

"A common political effort to overcome the financial and economic crisis in Europe"

Conseil des Communes
et Régions d'Europe
Council of European
Municipalities and Regions



We, mayors and elected representatives of Europe's local and regional governments, meeting together within the Policy Committee of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions in Oslo, Norway, on 4 June 2010, wish to express our view on the institutional developments in Europe.

1. Recent developments within Europe have given rise to concern. In the European Union, the economic and financial crisis and the threat to the Euro show that the system still needs further EU mechanisms, in particular in the financial and economic sector, so as to avoid serious distortions.
2. In the current context, characterised by a confidence crisis, we would like to reiterate our unbridled commitment to European unity, and notably to the Monetary Union, which remains one of its most vital tools. We wish to underline that the Euro crisis reveals a lack of political, economic and financial governance, which is required for all projects working towards the European construction.
3. So as to tackle upcoming challenges, Europe needs to develop a shared vision and resolve. European leaders must display their will to fulfil their common ambition for peace and cooperation and do so for the continent as a whole.
4. The weakness of a European Union which has remained to a large extent intergovernmental in nature, has not helped Europeans to effectively combat the financial problems of some Eurozone countries. The emerging Euro crisis has given rise to eurosceptic comments and in-creased the attention paid to messages delivered by populist parties in recent elections.
5. We encourage political leaders at all levels as well as all those who support the European project not to tolerate the unfounded stigmatisation of countries or peoples, which could give rise to new prejudices.
6. Europe must act together as a whole if we want to find the way to exit the crisis and prepare for a better future. We have to define ambitious targets for a sustainable economy, act together to tackle the challenges such as climate change, the demographic crisis, the emergence of a digital society, etc.
7. We believe it is vital to mobilise all means necessary to ensure the conditions needed for new growth, notably through the favouring of future-oriented investments, including those made in the EU budget. We also insist on the need to maintain and reinforce social and territorial cohesion within the Union, and notably Regional Policy.
8. Citizens and civil society expect their leaders to show the way, to set the framework and to provide the means to reach the goals in a comprehensive sense of community.
9. Successful implementation, however, requires the implication of and cooperation between all relevant actors and stakeholders.
10. The role of local and regional government – now explicitly recognised in the Lisbon Treaty – needs to be systematically taken into account in policy or legislative initiatives. As the broadest and most representative organisation of local and regional government in Europe, the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) will prepare concrete proposals on the application and monitoring of the relevant Treaty provisions to continue its commitment to multi-level governance.

11. We wish to recall that local and regional authorities remain essential actors when it comes to public investment and territorial cohesion. We underline in this context that all efforts to combat the effects of the current financial crisis must be taken with a balanced approach regarding all levels of government, so that local and regional authorities are not left to bear a disproportionate burden.

12. We thus wish to reassert our commitment to the respect of local and regional selfgovernment, to the principle of subsidiarity and to the quality and universality of public services, which are or could be seriously affected in the context of the crisis.

13. The gap between the European Union and its citizens cannot simply be closed with publications explaining the merits of the EU. Politicians and other actors must make an effort to understand the people's concerns and wishes for a stronger and more united Europe. CEMR is ready to take on its own responsibilities.

14. Many citizens are worried about the development of the economy and its impact on their individual life. They are afraid that the European Union lacks balance as it favours free trade in the Single Market, defining the achievement of the four freedoms as a goal unto itself.

15. We recall that European integration is first and foremost a political project, economic integration serving as an instrument to support the process.

16. The predominance of the Single Market concept does not sufficiently take into consideration the social, environmental and cultural dimension, which is urgently needed if we really want to lead Europe towards a social, ecological and innovative future.

17. In the whole of Europe, the core of our political and economic decisions should be the citizens, for whom local and regional leaders are their closest level of government: their well-being in a human, economic and social environment, based on the specificities of our cultures, our heritage and diversity, which makes Europe different and special in the world.

18. Sixty years ago, Robert Schuman presented his proposal on the creation of an institutionalised European cooperation as a means of guaranteeing peaceful relations on our continent. One year later, a group of European mayors founded the Council of European Municipalities in Geneva to join such a movement by building a European Community based on the recognition of local autonomy and on the role municipalities can play, as it is recalled in the preamble to CEMR's Statutes*.

19. Today, CEMR can look back with satisfaction as we consider how much has been achieved over the last decades in Europe for local and regional democracy and governance. The Council of Europe and the European Union, both in their respective context, recognise the role of local and regional government in achieving sound political, economic, social and environmental living conditions for our citizens.

20. Europe must have the courage to define its own – sustainable – future and we local and regional leaders wish to play a major role in this, as it is mostly at our level and with our citizens' initiatives that developments get underway.

**"[CEMR] will strive, without delay, to extend the liberties of local and regional authorities and to lead on to a united Europe founded upon these liberties, and to ensure that the local and regional authorities may participate - by appropriate methods - in the unification of Europe."*

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