

Resolution of the committee of the Regions on climate change: the road to Copenhagen**Adopted on 18 June 2009**

(2009/C 211/09)

THE CLIMATE CHANGE CHALLENGE FOR LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES

The Committee of the Regions:

1. **recalls** that climate change is one of the most important political challenges facing mankind. In this respect, local and regional authorities have a key role to play in the fight against climate change, not least because they most often bear the social and economic costs involved;

2. **stresses** that the economic crisis must not be an argument for reducing efforts but, on the contrary, for stepping up action to fight climate change. The economic crisis should be an opportunity for strengthening the technical know-how and developing activities aimed at addressing climate change;

3. **emphasises** that many local and regional authorities already make a key contribution to the success of European climate and energy policy initiatives and play a crucial role in implementing the respective policies through measures in the field of public transport, traffic and energy infrastructure, housing, spatial planning, energy efficiency and public communication;

4. **underlines** the vulnerability of European regions to climate change and the fact that their ability to adapt to it varies greatly, mainly because of differences in socioeconomic development, natural conditions and population density; mountain regions; coastal zones, outermost and island regions, and many semi-arid areas in the Mediterranean Basin are among those regions most vulnerable to the adverse impact of climate change;

5. **is convinced** that the cost of policy measures to reduce climate change will be significantly lower than the estimated costs of climate change;

6. **considers** that an effective climate policy could prevent the social inequalities that are a consequence of climate change;

7. **emphasises** that the transition to a carbon-free economy represents a significant step for growth and job creation, in particular for local and regional authorities;

NEXT STEPS IN INTERNATIONAL CLIMATE NEGOTIATIONS

8. **urges** the European Union to step up its efforts at the highest political level to boost the international coalition against climate change and guarantee Post-Kyoto agreements based on ambitious, transparent and legally binding reduction targets;

9. **underlines** the need to ensure that the CoR is represented in the EU delegation at the UNFCCC COP 15 conference in

Copenhagen in December 2009 as the voice of the European local and regional authorities;

10. **expresses** its concern that the latest draft negotiation paper of the ad hoc working group on long-term cooperative action under the Convention (AWG-LCA), while acknowledging the importance of subnational efforts in adapting to climate change, remains silent on their role in mitigation and on any long-term vision of how to tackle climate change;

GENERAL POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

11. **calls** on the European Commission and the Member States to apply the subsidiarity principle when developing and negotiating new policy on climate-change-related issues that may have significant impact on local and regional authorities and their citizens, and to ensure the provision of sufficient financial and human capacity when assigning responsibilities to the various different levels ;

12. **stresses** the need for active awareness-raising campaigns to be launched with the full support of the regional and local authorities which have a direct channel of communication to the citizens.

13. thus **welcomes** the EU's commitment to a synergy of efforts aimed at climate change mitigation and adaptation in accordance with the Lisbon Agenda and the Gothenburg Agreement, but calls for the new post-2010 Lisbon Strategy to move away from the current position, where three parallel processes are in place, and to pursue a single development framework covering the social, economic and environmental action of the European Union;

14. **recommends** that consistent investments be made with regard to green infrastructure: broader use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in administration; energy efficient renovation of old public and private buildings; new forms of transport. The use of energy efficient lighting, heating and cooling must also be encouraged. It is also essential to use green procurement as well as to improve security of energy supplies.

15. **considers** that adaptation and mitigation must be mainstreamed into all existing EU policy frameworks as an explicit objective, including EU agricultural and rural development policies, including avoiding deforestation, transport, biodiversity, water and waste management, and funding programmes in areas such as cohesion policy;

16. ***calls*** for a revision of the post-2013 EU budget, programmes, policies and especially key legislation in the light of the changing parameters that climate change will bring;

17. ***recommends*** that, in order to develop suitable policy responses to climate change, consideration be given to whether new sustainability measuring indicators need to be developed and taken into account as parameters in the new generation of Structural Funds;

18. ***stresses*** that local and regional authorities must be fully involved in the conception, development, adoption and implementation of national climate change strategies and actions plans;

19. ***reiterates*** its full political support for the Covenant of Mayors — launched by the European Commission together with the Committee of the Regions — as a response by cities to global warming, in which they formally pledge to reduce their CO₂ emissions beyond the EU 2020 objectives, and calls for the Covenant to be open to all relevant subnational authorities. Urges that the Covenant of Mayors be further developed and that appropriate resources be made available to develop expertise and strategies that are tailored to the specific needs of local authorities;

ADAPTATION

20. ***recommends*** that the Community budget framework be such that all European local and regional authorities are equally well-equipped to face climate change and have the resources needed to prevent its causes and adapt to its consequences, in particular for the benefit of the hardest hit people and economic players;

MITIGATION

21. ***believes that*** the 'polluter-pays' principle must be applied in all Community policies relating to environmental protection and the climate by internalising the environmental cost of goods and services;

22. ***endorses*** the principle of cooperation and solidarity between Member States as introduced in the new EU Greenhouse Gas Emission Trading Scheme (EU ETS) between countries that are technologically more advanced (whose industrial sectors are more energy-efficient) and less-developed countries (whose economies have a higher energy consumption and need to increase their growth rates);

23. ***considers*** that, despite the progress made, it is necessary to further increase the transparency and long-term reliability of the EU ETS and to remain attentive to the social and environmental repercussions that the proposed measures will have, especially at regional and local level;

24. ***recommends*** that due consideration be given to the demands of regional development policies and notes that, in

order to promote a more transparent and effective carbon market, a number of industrial installations could be thoroughly restructured so as to rid the production system of the least efficient installations or those that are already in crisis; on that note, calls for action to support the process of industrial renewal and retraining for the workers concerned;

25. ***notes that***, alongside the emission allowance scheme, much more needs to be done in particular to effect a switch to environmentally sound modes of transport; calls on national governments to expand rail and waterway infrastructure and promote intermodal transport generally;

26. considering the European transport sector's high dependency on oil, ***regrets*** that the Second Strategic Energy Review does not put forward any transport efficiency proposals in parallel with the Energy Efficiency Package, not least in areas such as rail and other public transport modes, energy-efficient vehicles, car sharing, eco-driving, getting more people to cycle etc;

27. ***believes*** that energy policy and climate protection policy are closely interrelated and must be coordinated, given that 80 % of CO₂ emissions in Europe come from the production of energy;

28. ***regrets*** the failure to introduce a binding energy efficiency target in the 2008 climate change and energy package, which is the missing link in moves to achieve the necessary CO₂ reduction;

29. ***highlights*** the variation in progress across EU cities and regions in reducing CO₂ emissions and energy consumption in recent years. Account should be taken of differing levels of energy intensity in consumption and production and the associated greenhouse gas emissions situations across and within Member States, particularly between urban and rural areas;

30. ***considers*** that regional climate action plans and/or sustainable energy plans could provide the link between the local and national initiatives which must introduce practical instruments to achieve the targets; adequate financing must also be made available;

31. ***recommends*** the provision of further resources and measures, in addition to the use of European Structural Funds, as useful means of fostering adaptation policy and measures directed at mitigation, such as energy saving and renewable energy, to improve the energy performance of buildings and to reduce the emissions of greenhouse gases. This would increase support for European climate policy;

32. ***calls*** for an increase in Research funding for carbon capture technologies which should be used in combination with the other mitigation measures to achieve the necessary deep reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.

33. **wishes** to ensure that support schemes are accessible to renewable energy producers at all levels, including small installations, and believes that, for consistency's sake, support for renewable energy should be targeted towards the reduction in the use of fossil fuels;

PROTECTION OF VULNERABLE CITIZENS

34. **considers** that, by promoting sustainable energy and energy efficiency, the Covenant of Mayors can spur the cities and regions on to implement changes to protect their most vulnerable citizens, particularly those on low and fixed incomes, from the

effect of high energy prices and from suffering fuel poverty. In doing so, care should be taken to avoid subsidising energy use and to allow scope for strong incentives to improve energy efficiency and, as far as possible, reduce energy use;

35. **strongly** supports the need to protect the most vulnerable citizens in society from the possible rise in the price of energy sources — electricity in particular — including moves to help them make their homes more energy-efficient.

The Committee instructs its president to submit this resolution to the Czech and Swedish presidencies, to the European Commission and Member States and to the UN counterparts.

Brussels, 18 June 2009.

*The President
of the Committee of the Regions*

Luc VAN DEN BRANDE

APPENDIX

List of recent CoR opinions with direct or indirect relevance for the issue of climate change

- 'The European economic recovery plan and the role of local and regional authorities' CdR 12/2009 fin
 - 'The energy performance of buildings and the second strategic energy review' CdR 8/2009 fin
 - 'The Green Paper on territorial cohesion' CdR 274/2008 fin
 - 'The fifth progress report on economic and social cohesion' CdR 273/2008 fin
 - 'How regions contribute to achieving climate change and energy goals with a special focus on the covenant of mayors' CdR 241/2008 fin
 - 'Addressing the challenge of energy efficiency through information and communication technologies' CdR 254/2008 fin
 - CoR outlook opinion on 'The Lisbon growth and jobs strategy' CdR 245/2008 fin
 - 'The Commission's legislative proposals for the post-healthcheck Common Agricultural Policy' CdR 162/2008 fin
 - 'Emission allowance trading' CdR 161/2008 fin
 - 'Promotion of renewable energy' CdR 160/2008 fin
 - CoR outlook opinion on 'The contribution of local and regional authorities to the European Union's sustainable development strategy' CdR 85/2008 fin
 - 'An integrated maritime policy for the European Union' CdR 22/2008 fin
 - 'The third legislative package on European electricity and gas markets' CdR 21/2008 fin
 - 'Reforming the budget. Changing Europe' CdR 16/2008 fin
 - 'Addressing the challenge of water scarcity and droughts' CdR 313/2007 fin
 - 'A strategy for the outermost regions: achievements and future prospects' CdR 309/2007 fin
 - 'Green Paper on urban transport' CdR 236/2007 fin
 - 'The Common Agricultural Policy healthcheck' CdR 197/2007 fin
 - 'Adapting to climate change in Europe: options for EU actions' CdR 118/2007 fin
 - 'The energy package' CdR 111/2007 fin
 - 'Limiting global climate change to 2 degrees Celsius and the inclusion of aviation in the emission trading system' CdR 110/2007 fin
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