THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

On the urgent need for EU to achieve further progress on the global climate change agenda

1. Recalls its commitment stated in its resolution on the Copenhagen Climate Change summit, adopted at the CoR plenary session in June 2009;

2. Reaffirms its full support for an international climate change agreement aimed at limiting global warming to no more than 2 degree Celsius by 2012;

3. Regrets that despite the worldwide attention to climate change and environmental concerns in the run-up to the Copenhagen Summit, the resulting agreement failed to meet the high expectations of a broad range of crucial climate change policy stakeholders across the EU including local and regional authorities;

4. Endorses the efforts of the European Commission to secure an internationally binding agreement on greenhouse gas emission reduction and calls on the EU to speak with one resolute voice in the UNFCCC COP16 in Cancún in accordance with the spirit and context of the Lisbon Treaty, resuming a leading role in international climate change negotiations;

5. Recognises that the EU climate change goals can only be achieved if, on one hand, future emissions reductions are distributed fairly across the whole of the international community, with due consideration to the different capabilities and starting positions of countries and regions, and, on the other hand, a worldwide consensus for decisive action is established backed by basic common standards for regular monitoring, reporting and verification (MRV);

6. Recognises a need to make more of progress within the EU in combating climate change, to continue setting ambitious goals and to underpin and promote successes in implementing them, especially at the local and regional level, and calls on the Council and the Commission to adapt and reinforce their strategy for EU climate policy in case no international climate change treaty might be forthcoming;

7. Hopes especially for an agreement on the necessary architecture for issues like adaptation, mitigation, finance, reducing emissions from deforestation (REDD), reducing international aviation and maritime transport, setting up new carbon market mechanisms as well as support for the most affected developing and the least developed countries;

On the key role of local and regional authorities

8. Reiterates its unflinching commitment to the EU’s 20-20-20 targets and urges all sub-national levels of government in the world to invest in the fight against climate change, raise public awareness, mobilise public political support, business investment and funding sources, and motivate the producers and consumers to change their behaviour to achieve better resource efficiency and more climate friendly economy;
9. Emphasises that a **Territorial Pact** of Regional and Local Authorities on Europe 2020 Strategy as proposed by the CoR could be a very important tool in the fight against climate change because the targets of 'Resource efficient Europe' can be achieved in an effective way only via a close partnership between the European, national, regional and local levels of government based on the principle of subsidiarity;

10. Stands ready to raise the **target to 30%** provided certain conditions are met;

11. Notes that the Commission has analysed the possibilities for cutting greenhouse gas emissions by **more than 20%**. The Committee regrets that, on the basis of that analysis, the Commission feels that current conditions do not allow for a unilateral increase in the EU's reduction target to 30% and that it is not, for the time being, pursuing any further policy initiatives;

12. Highlights the efforts of cities and regions across Europe that have adopted local or regional climate and energy strategies with specific climate mitigation targets and signed up to the **Covenant of Mayors**, aiming to reduce the CO₂ emissions by at least 20% by the year 2020;

13. Urges the Council and the European Commission to **involve the CoR in the process** leading towards the UNFCCC COP 16 in Cancun, to ensure full and proper recognition of the role played by local and regional authorities in implementing climate change mitigation and adaptation;

On cross-sectoral mainstreaming of climate change concerns and low carbon economy

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

15. Calls on the European Commission to deliver on a comprehensive **transport and climate change package** and recalls that including air and sea transport in a global emissions trading system will be an important step towards reducing carbon emissions; feels that this package needs to take account of the specific circumstances of the island and outermost regions, which are highly dependent on air and sea transport, by striking a balance between reducing CO₂ emissions and adopting at huge cost measures to combat climate change in these regions;

16. Believes that the EU must launch specific projects to support the switch to a **low-carbon economy**, based on the EU-2020 strategy for sustainable growth (the 'Green New Deal') with a view to becoming the most climate-friendly region in the world;

17. Considers that the EU's Energy policy must provide a decisive impetus for **low carbon innovation and energy efficiency**, ensuring that innovation, energy efficiency and early deployment of new technologies consolidates the leading role of European business in key sectors of green economy;

18. Recalls that **massive investment** in sectors such as industry, transport and housing as well as public and commercial buildings will be needed, if energy savings are to be achieved in line with the EU's 20-20-20 objectives;

19. Believes that a carbon tax, or a form of directly taxing emissions, may be a useful tool both in creating incentives for reduced and cleaner energy use, and for generating the necessary financial resources to make the changes required to combat climate change;

20. Thus suggests the creation of **new instruments** as priority lines in the Structural Funds or as a separate Energy Investment Fund;

21. Is persuaded that the switch to a low-carbon economy must take place in a **socially responsible and economically viable** way by keeping and if necessary adapting existing jobs, alongside the new 'green' jobs that are expected to be created;

22. Recommends **strategic public private partnerships** such as alliances between small and medium-sized enterprise and local and regional authorities with a view to further developing and applying low carbon technologies and invites regions and cities to conclude local climate actions pacts between public and private partners setting out concrete climate action measures to reach the 20-20-20 goal;

Building global EU climate leadership: multi-level governance and budgetary empowerment of LRAs

23. Underlines that effective EU action against climate change requires **coordination of efforts** between the local, regional, national, European and global levels of government;

24. Stresses the importance of considering the role of the regional and local governments in the fight against climate change. In this line, and applying the principle of subsidiarity, we underline the need to take into account these levels of government as among their powers we find the drawing up of mitigation plans, adaptation and other activities at the regional and local level of outmost importance in the fight against climate change;

25. Notes that since **urban areas** produce 75% of carbon emissions, cities are at the forefront of our struggle against climate change and points to the fact that the failure to agree on binding targets for greenhouse gas emission reduction in Copenhagen confronts local and regional authorities with a particularly heavy responsibility to pursue decisive and urgent action on the front of climate change adaptation and mitigation. The **Covenant of Mayors** is an important step in the right direction;

26. Stresses that the EU's vision on **synergies of green economy and the climate change policies** could provide inspiration for the rest of the world if the potential of local and regional authorities is fully recognised and enhanced;
27. Highlights that such a vision should comprise an integrated, innovative array of measures in transport, construction and power generation, representing a new industrial revolution involving individual households in energy production;

28. Calls on the European Commission and the Council to resume a lasting and credible EU leadership in the global climate change policy process by developing and strengthening local, sub-national, national or regional skills, capacities and institutions and urges the European Commission to promote this approach in its relations with global partners;

29. Strongly believes in the potential of European local and regional authorities to contribute to the EU’s global leadership providing an example for others to emulate and therefore looks forward to acting upon the new Memorandum of Understanding with the U.S. Conference of Mayors, to ensure that European and U.S. municipalities achieve concrete results in the field of climate change mitigation and adaptation;

30. Strongly recommends the organisation of training for LRAs on how to tackle climate change at a grassroots level and climate change awareness campaigns run for the citizens;

31. Strongly recommends a particular emphasis on the mainstreaming of climate change in budget at all levels of governance, and to this end:

a) reiterates that local and regional authorities need to be provided as soon as possible with appropriate European tools in support of local and regional efforts in tackling climate change. National framework conditions for funding and financing need to be adapted and access to European Investment Bank loans should be facilitated;

b) notes that the recent financial crisis puts additional pressure on municipal budgets. Underlines therefore the usefulness of properly designed subsidies and incentives for local and regional authorities to promote energy efficiency, sustainable energy policies, and renewable energy projects; calls for the reinforcement of the Intelligent Energy Europe Programme while making it better tailored to cater for the evolving requirements of local and regional authorities;

c) recommends for the forthcoming EU Budget review to make climate change challenges a transversal priority within existing funding schemes such as structural funds, CAP, and the Framework Programmes for Research and Technological Development;

d) suggests that a substantial proportion of the revenues from the European emissions trading system should be made available to local and regional authorities for putting climate change mitigation and adaptation measures into effect at local level and suggests that finance from the international carbon market should also be used to support projects in developing countries;

e) recalls the important role of EU Structural Funds in reducing disparities and enabling all regions to benefit from the trinity of research, innovation and smart investment to correct structural inefficiencies;

Local and regional authorities’ call for global outreach and partnership on the climate change agenda

32. Calls for the partnership activities of EU Member States with local and regional authorities in developing and emerging countries to be promoted and developed and urges in this context European local and regional authorities to draw on the available acquis of decentralised cooperation and expand it in order to work with sub-national authorities in the developing world to raise awareness, exchange best practice, transfer technology and ensure that the financial commitments made in Copenhagen are invested effectively;

33. Considers that greater convergence at international and national levels is needed in efforts to address climate change and biodiversity loss in a mutually reinforcing manner, optimising opportunities in ongoing global processes within the International Conventions;

34. Calls upon the EU to support the increased take up of ecosystem-based approaches within UNFCCC financing, including the UN Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation (REDD/REDD+) programme, further aiming at extending this programme to cover not only forests, but also other ecosystems such as wetlands;

35. Reiterates its commitment to achieve an internationally binding agreement and insists that national governments will only be able to meet their targets with the active involvement of the local and regional authorities;

36. Instructs its president to submit this resolution to the President of the European Council, the Belgian Presidency of the EU, the European Commission, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee as well as to the UNFCCC.

Brussels, 6 October 2010.

The President
of the Committee of the Regions
Mercedes BRESSO