

Opinion of the Committee of the Regions on the Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: Winning the Battle Against Global Climate Change

(2006/C 81/07)

THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS,

Having regard to the Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: *Winning the Battle Against Global Climate Change* (COM(2005) 35 final);

Having regard to the decision of the European Commission of 9 February 2005 to consult it on this subject, under the first paragraph of Article 265 of the Treaty establishing the European Community;

Having regard to the decision of its Bureau, of 22 February 2005, to ask the Commission for Sustainable Development to draw up an opinion on this subject;

Having regard to the conclusions of the Council of 22 and 23 March 2005, and of the Environment Council of 7 March 2005;

Having regard to the European Parliament resolution of 12 May 2005 on the Seminar of Governmental Experts on Climate Change;

Having regard to its opinion of 18 November 1999 on the Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament, *Preparing for Implementation of the Kyoto Protocol*, COM(1999) 230 final — CdR 295/1999 fin ⁽¹⁾;

Having regard to its opinion of 21 September 2000 on the Green Paper on *Greenhouse-gas emissions trading within the European Union* and the Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament on *EU policies and measures to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions: Towards a European Climate Change Programme (ECCP)*, COM(2000) 87 final and COM(2000) 88 final — (CdR 189/2000 fin ⁽²⁾);

Having regard to its draft opinion (CdR 65/2005 rev. 1) adopted on 28 June 2005 by the Commission for Sustainable Development (rapporteur: José Macário Correia, Leader of Tavira Municipal Council (PT/EPP));

Whereas:

1. there is a need to set out medium- and long-term strategies in order to win the battle against climate change in the EU and in cooperation with the international community;
2. the EU Council of Ministers stated in 1996 that it 'believes that global average temperatures should not exceed two degrees above pre-industrial levels';
3. the benefits of limiting the increase in the global average temperature to 2°C outweigh the costs of emission-reducing policies;
4. it is imperative to use the most efficient and least-cost mix of adjustment and mitigation actions over time to meet our environmental objectives while maintaining our economic competitiveness;
5. climate change is a global problem that also overlaps with the remit of regional and local authorities; the Kyoto Protocol, which was signed by the EU and its Member States, is an international agreement that obliges Member States, and hence also regional and local authorities, to take action;

adopted the following opinion unanimously, at its 61st plenary session, held on 12 and 13 October 2005 (meeting of 12 October):

⁽¹⁾ OJ C 107, 3.5.2002, p. 76.

⁽²⁾ OJ C 192, 12.8.2002, p. 59.

1. Views of the Committee of the Regions

The Committee of the Regions

1.1 **welcomes** the Communication, which presents an accurate assessment of the current situation and analyses both the dangers posed by climate change and the instruments designed to combat this phenomenon effectively;

1.2 **welcomes** the entry into force of the Kyoto Protocol, the first phase in a global strategy to combat climate change;

1.3 **reiterates** its support for an ambitious EU policy in this field;

1.4 **highlights** the need for a considerable increase in the number of countries taking part in the battle against climate change — all the main sectors responsible for greenhouse-gas emissions should be involved, particularly the energy production, air and maritime transport sectors;

1.5 **wishes to express** its concern at the consequences of the lack of action at world level;

1.6 **deplores** the fact that some Member States are a long way from achieving the targets set for them under the '-8 %' Community objective as defined in the Kyoto Protocol, but **considers it important** to assist such countries in progressing towards this objective;

1.7 **reinforces** the Commission's recommendation that awareness-raising campaigns should be promoted, to help to increase public interest and concern about this issue, encouraging more sustainable lifestyles. It also highlights the importance of implementing and developing school projects in this field, because schools are considered to reflect society at large;

1.8 **considers** that spatial planning policy must take account of energy-efficiency objectives — by promoting a mix of compatible and complementary activities — in order to cut distances travelled and consequently fuel consumption;

1.9 **highlights** the importance of preserving and creating green spaces, which must be incorporated into the strategic planning of urban areas; increasing the size of wooded areas is extremely important to making the process of carbon sequestration from the atmosphere more efficient;

1.10 **supports** the creation of more sustainable mobility patterns, in which establishing pedestrianised zones and banning or reducing motor-vehicle traffic in city centres play a crucial role; it also considers that an attractive public transport system should be set up, to a large extent complementing individual transport and, in many cases, replacing it;

1.11 **highlights** the importance of all vehicles using cleaner fuels, including companies' and public administrations' fleets; **invites** public administrations to take the lead in achieving cleaner fleets;

1.12 **considers** that providing facilities for selective waste collection, and public support for this practice, will both help to achieve these objectives;

1.13 **considers** that sound energy performance must be a factor in the construction of new buildings and the renovation of existing ones;

1.14 **highlights** the responsibilities of all local and regional authorities, together with national governments, to combat climate change through the measures described above.

2. Recommendations of the Committee of the Regions

The Committee of the Regions

2.1 **points to** the need for the Commission to promote the battle against climate change at all levels, including the local and regional levels;

2.2 **calls for** measures to prevent and combat forest fires to be stepped up, as a decisive means of controlling greenhouse-gas emissions;

2.3 **calls for** strengthened measures for the study and constant monitoring of European glaciers insofar as they are fragile ecosystems and highly sensitive to climatic change;

2.4 **urges that** businesses be given substantial financial incentives to encourage them to use 'clean technologies' or to convert existing technologies;

2.5 **advocates** that an efficient monitoring policy be put in place as part of the efforts to control industrial activity, to ensure legitimacy for the battle against climate change;

2.6 **supports** incorporating alternative energies, such as biomass, into buildings' heating systems, and that this should apply to all sectors, including public administrations; **points out**, in this context, that existing sources of energy should be used more efficiently, for instance through the extended use of co-generation. This would lead to lower emission rates per unit of energy produced;

2.7 **calls for** incentives for the preferential consumption of highly energy-efficient products or of those produced using renewable energies;

2.8 **recommends** that subsidies for activities contributing to climate change be abolished;

2.9 **supports and reiterates** the Council proposal to set targets for the post-2012 period; like the Council, it considers that for developed countries, it would be appropriate to set reduction targets of between 15 % and 30 % by 2020 in relation to the reference values established by the Kyoto Protocol; beyond this date, it recommends that values should be set in line with the spirit of the conclusions adopted by the Environment Council (60 % to 80 % by 2050);

2.10 **proposes** that the thematic strategy for the urban environment create incentives for combating climate change;

2.11 **recommends** that the cost/benefit analysis of limiting temperature increases to 2°C should be studied/researched in greater detail; the concentration of greenhouse gases required to achieve the objective of 2°C and the costs associated with such a reduction must be established more precisely;

2.12 **suggests** that towns continue to sign up to the LA21 process, and focus more on implementing this type of strategy.

Brussels, 12 October 2005.

The President
of the Committee of the Regions
Peter STRAUB

Opinion of the Committee of the Regions Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament The 2005 Review of the EU Sustainable Development Strategy: Initial Stocktaking and Future Orientations

(2006/C 81/08)

THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS,

Having regard to the Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament on *The 2005 Review of the EU Sustainable Development Strategy: Initial Stocktaking and Future Orientations*, COM(2005) 37 final;

Having regard to the decision of the European Commission on 9 February 2005 to consult it on this subject, under Article 265(1) of the Treaty establishing the European Community;

Having regard to the decision taken by its Bureau on 12 April 2005 to instruct the Commission for Sustainable Development to draw up the opinion on the subject;

Having regard to the Communication from the Commission on *A Sustainable Europe for a Better World: A European Union Strategy for Sustainable Development (Commission's proposal to the Gothenburg European Council)*, COM(2001)264 final;

Having regard to the **Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on *Towards a global partnership for sustainable development***, COM(2002) 82 final;

Having regard to the Communication from the Commission of 15 January 2002 to the Spring European Council in Barcelona on 15 and 16 March 2002, at which a new impetus was given to the strategy, adopted two years earlier at the Lisbon summit (COM(2002) 14), to make Europe the world's most dynamic, competitive and sustainable knowledge-based economy;

Having regard to the exploratory opinion from the European Economic and Social Committee adopted on 28 April 2004, NAT/229 — CESE 661/2004;

Having regard to the Declaration on Guiding Principles for Sustainable Development from the European Council on 16 and 17 June 2005;