



**European Committee
of the Regions**

SPEECH BY PRESIDENT TZITZIKOSTAS
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Ladies and gentlemen,

Let me start by thanking COSLA and its Vice-President Graham Houston who is with us today, for all the support during the COP26.

Let me thank ICLEI for working tirelessly on our behalf, bringing us together, and representing our views.

Together, with the Local Government Municipalities Authorities Constituency, you are giving a voice to the world's local leaders and their communities.

Dear friends,

We are here to listen to the views of our regional and local delegates who have contributed to the COP 26. I want to thank you all.

As Governor of the largest region in Greece, Central Macedonia, my view is realistic: the local and regional dimension was missing in the EU's official COP26 position.

Despite the fact the local and regional governments are responsible for 70% of climate mitigation measures, and 90% of climate adaptation measures, our repeated efforts to make our views heard were properly not taken into consideration by those who represented the EU in Glasgow.

This is unfortunate.

Even more so, it is both legally and democratically fundamentally wrong. Without ownership, how can we feel empowered to deliver the commitments made by national and EU officials?

The citizens that we democratically represent cannot and will not support a fake and over bureaucratic top-down process.

The world's sub-national leaders continues to demand the reference to multi-level governance in the COP26 conclusions is reinserted.

We are still waiting for an answer.

So currently, the COP26 lacks not only ambition in climate targets, but lacks effective governance.



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This is a recipe doomed to fail.

However, given our legal responsibilities and accountability in the eyes and minds of our citizens, it will fall to the world's sub-national governments to make up for the failing of national government's lack of ambition.

My message is simple: we will succeed in tackling the climate emergency only if we work and invest in every region, city and village.

National governments need to set out plans that match their promises. This is why we are here.

To act, not just speak. To deliver, not just share words of hope.

For instance, Glasgow city has a plan: it launched its £30bn 'Greenprint for Investment' to help it reach net-zero by 2030.

The Mayor of Turku has a plan: her city will be carbon neutral by 2029.

We need to protect our forests to cut climate change, preserve biodiversity, and protect people from natural disasters. This is why the Mayor of Prague will plant 1 million trees in his city.

We need to make our food production more local and sustainable.

We need to support our local businesses to be even more innovative.

We need to make our buildings energy efficient, saving money, reducing emissions, and tackling energy poverty, which affects 34 million people in Europe alone. In my own region in Greece we are renovating 2000 homes.

We need to reduce, reuse and recycle our waste.

Stefano Bonaccini's region Emilia-Romagna in Italy is using EU funds to ensure their public transport is low-carbon.

These are some of the pillars of the EU's Green Deal, which if designed, delivered with its one million local leaders, will ensure the EU upholds its legal commitment to be carbon-neutral by 2050.

Together, we need work, think and act local, to tackle climate change.

We need to see the transition to carbon neutrality as an opportunity to create jobs, protect biodiversity and save lives.



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And, we need to ensure that no place or person is left behind.

This is a blueprint that can be replicated around the world.

This is also why our Committee launched its Green Deal: Going Local campaign, which set 10 actions to mobilise local and regional government, from planting trees, to holding local debates – this campaign is open to every local or regional leader in Europe.

Ladies and gentlemen,

In Paris, local and regional governments were finally recognised as formal actors in climate action. Yet, today in Glasgow still today they do NOT have a formal seat in the negotiations.

This is unacceptable.

Dear friends,

Today is about looking forward. This is the purpose of the political declaration we will adopt today I thank everyone for their support.

And let me say this: Local and regional governments, represented by the Local Government Municipalities Authorities, supported by the European Committee of the Regions - the EU's treaty based institutional body representing 90,000 municipalities and 240 regions - must be given a formal seat in the UNFCCC negotiations.

This is a matter of subsidiarity, and it must lead to the formal involvement of the subnational level in planning, developing, implementing, and financing climate actions.

The EU's COP26 position understood the need to align it with the UN's Post-2020 Global Framework for Biodiversity, the Edinburgh Declaration, highlighting the key role played by subnational governments.

We simply demand that the UNFCCC and its Parties include similar language in the Glasgow conclusions.

This is to ensure are plans are deliverable, locally with, in and for our communities.

This week we heard that 1,000 cities committed to being carbon neutral.

The European Covenant of Mayors, with over 10,000 signatories from 53 countries, representing 325 million people, shows local and regional authorities continue to raise ambition setting concrete plans.



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This is why subnational government's climate commitments must be formally measured and taken on board in the Nationally Determined Contributions.

We can no longer afford to ignore the fundamental role of every region, city and village in delivering climate action, or we will continue to fail our children, our young people, and our planet.

Time is running out.

We can and we must change course together, plan together, and act together.

Thank you for listening

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY