



**European Committee  
of the Regions**

**SPEECH BY PRESIDENT TZITZIKOSTAS**

**THE GREEN CITY ACCORD: SPEEDING-UP EUROPE'S GREEN TRANSITION  
HIGH-LEVEL CEREMONY CELEBRATING CITY LEADER'S COMMITMENT**

**WEDNESDAY 22 SEPTEMBER 2PM– 4PM**

Dear Commissioner, dear mayors, ladies and gentlemen.

The climate emergency and biodiversity loss are the greatest threats facing us today.

Next month in China, world leaders will gather for the Convention on Biological Diversity COP15 to hopefully agree ambitious 2030 biodiversity targets.

A month later in Glasgow, they will meet for the COP26 with the hope to accelerate climate action.

But our people and our planet need more than just hope.

They want commitments. They want results today, not tomorrow.

President von der Leyen, in her State of the Union speech earlier this month, rightly called the COP26 "the moment of truth".

The EU should stand proud of the Green Deal, which sets out a roadmap to carbon neutrality by 2050.

Yet her speech failed to explain how this ambition should be delivered on the ground, to positively impact people's lives.

Targets and funding are nothing without strong climate governance, locally, in the EU and globally.

Let me be crystal clear: unless we understand who should deliver results efficiently closest level to people, unless we provide the means locally, unless we work in synergy to rapidly deliver results to save our planet, we will all fail.

Our citizens need to see responsibility and commitment from their elected leaders, not additional levels of bureaucracy that increase the complexity of European decision-making.

This is why we need every level of government, EU, national, regional and local, to work in synergy and responsibly.



**European Committee  
of the Regions**

The green transition and protecting our environment will happen in our cities, regions and village, or it will not happen at all.

That is why I commend every supporter of the Green City Accord: your ambition will create a greener less polluted, more resource-efficient Europe.

If we take Finland's Lahti the 2021 European Green Capital, who aims to be carbon-neutral by 2025, and have a full circular economy in place by 2050.

Or Gdynia in Poland, which should be proud of its green public transport, cutting emissions and noise.

In my home country in Greece, Nikaia-Rentis is promoting sustainable gardening and expanding playgrounds and parks.

These are just some examples of why local and regional governments must be given a stronger role in EU decision-making and the UN's talks.

It is also why their climate and environmental contributions need to be formally monitored and measured globally, contributing to nationally determined contributions

Dear friends, today is a celebration of local ambition, local delivery and local leadership.

We celebrate Murcia in Spain, whose green climate policies aim to alleviate drought and mitigate the risk of desertification.

We celebrate Lille Metropole in France, which is expanding its green spaces and planning to set up a low-emission zone.

Nevertheless, local ambition to deliver results to people is nothing without investment.

As President of the European Committee of the Regions and the directly elected Governor of the Central Macedonia Region in Greece, let me say clearly: our local and regional governments need direct green financing in areas that fall under our competencies.

The EU's budget and recovery and resilience plans were unprecedented in ambition and proportion.

But if the national plans are designed without cities and regions as partners, our recovery will be more painful and the green transition slower.

Dear friends, today's initiative is an open recognition by Virginijus Sinkevičius, of the work and commitment of city leaders to deliver the Green Deal locally.



**European Committee  
of the Regions**

I am proud that the Accord was launched with our Committee last year and pleased to see it grow.

Over the past two years, it has fallen to you - local leaders - together with our public services, working on the frontline to save lives and protect our economy.

It now falls to you to drive Europe's green recovery, and build resilience so we are better prepared for the future.

I call on every one of Europe's cities to participate, share knowledge and lead by example.

Time is running out.

We can and we must change course, together.

Thank you for listening.

(Word count: 663)

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY