

RESOLUTION

**ON THE COP26 AND GLOBAL AND LOCAL ALLIANCES FOR
CLIMATE ACTION**

THE EUROPEAN COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

- Wants the UNFCCC to note the need to implement a climate governance that includes all levels of government, sets clear objectives, milestones and monitoring mechanisms, to deliver sustainable economy while raising social and environmental standards worldwide. Sub-national levels of governance should be formally involved through a system of Regionally and Locally Determined Contributions (RLDCs) to acknowledge, monitor and encourage the reduction of carbon emissions by cities, local governments and regions globally. This system should be complementary to the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) under the Paris Climate Agreement by 2025.

**Resolution of the European Committee of the Regions
on the COP26 and global and local alliances for climate action**

THE EUROPEAN COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS (CoR),

1. is deeply concerned about the findings presented in the latest IPCC report on *Climate Change 2021 - The Physical Science Basis*¹, which confirms the urgency of putting in place effective and comprehensive strategies to reach the objective of the Paris Agreement to limit global warming to well below 2, preferably to 1.5 degrees Celsius, compared to pre-industrial levels, to fight climate change and to mitigate and adapt to the evolving climate;
2. underlines the fact that local and regional authorities (LRAs) implement 70% of climate mitigation measures, 90% of climate adaptation policies, and 65% of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), representing one third of public spending and two thirds of public investment in the EU. As such, they are in the frontline for addressing climate change impacts at local and regional level and enhancing the resilience of their territories to climate challenges;
3. recalls that the Paris Agreement recognises the important role played by multilevel governance in climate policies and the need to engage with regions, cities and non-state actors; urges that this principle be put fully into practice across all levels of government to develop synergies and close existing gaps between national, regional and local climate change policies; stresses that the voice of LRAs has become stronger in international negotiations and initiatives on climate change and welcomes existing initiatives of LRAs networks and their input to the UNFCCC Non-State Actor Zone for Climate Action (NAZCA); highlights the crucial role of Local Governments and Municipal Authorities (LGMA) in bringing together these voices globally and continuously reinforcing a worldwide network of subnational governments willing to fight climate change;
4. considers that the stepping-up of politically-relevant, democratically elected non-state actors such as LRAs, which are the authorities closest to the public, in the global climate governance regime is a key condition to meet global climate targets and that it is therefore essential that the UNFCCC regulatory framework acknowledge this form of bottom-up governance by formally recognising its role in the decision-making process;
5. highlights the key role of the CoR as the institutional representative of more than one million local and regional leaders and network of networks; considers that this unique position should be leveraged in order for the CoR to strengthen its role in global climate governance; calls therefore on the UNFCCC to establish a Memorandum of Understanding with the European Committee of the Regions, as the institutional representative of European cities and regions, focusing in particular on climate change mitigation and adaptation in sectors where governance already strongly includes LRAs, such as energy supply and demand, mobility and transport, agriculture, waste management, urban planning and buildings, and flood management;

¹ Full report available at https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg1/downloads/report/IPCC_AR6_WGI_Full_Report.pdf

6. stresses that ongoing activities and commitments by regions and cities should have a strong role in the preparations for, and gain official visibility at the UNFCCC's COP26 in Glasgow; thus calls on the UNFCCC to cooperate with the CoR and other relevant counterparts from the LGMA towards the formal recognition of the contribution from subnational governments (i.e. Regionally and Locally Determined Contributions (RLDCs)) to formally acknowledge, monitor and encourage the reduction of carbon greenhouse gas emissions by cities, local governments and regions globally – taking as an example the Edinburgh Declaration on biodiversity;
7. calls on the UK COP26 Presidency to ensure that the planned COVID-19 sanitary measures allow non-state actors to play an active part in the COP26 works in Glasgow; calls in this light on the European Commission to ensure the sufficient participation and involvement of the CoR delegation, as part of the EU delegation to the COP26; renews its commitment to cooperate with the EP delegation;
8. stresses that the ambition of the European Green Deal to make Europe the first climate-neutral continent by 2050 applies internally by integrating sustainability criteria into all EU policies while setting the pace at global level; underlines that the European Green Deal and Local and Regional Green Deal initiatives should be instruments for achieving the goals of the Paris Agreement, fully implementing the UN 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, and making an ambitious EU contribution to the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, which will be decided on by the UN CBD COP15². At the same time as achieving climate neutrality, the European Green Deal should be economically viable and not put heavy burdens and costs on consumers and businesses
9. strongly believes that the UNFCCC COP26 is an opportunity to look ahead and prepare the ground for an ambitious global 2050 agenda, complementing the approach of the SDGs with the Paris Agreement. Since the European Green Deal already considers the systemic links with many relevant policy areas, if properly implemented, it might inspire and motivate a Global Green Deal;
10. calls on the UNFCCC Parties to insert in the rules on the global stock take, an obligation for the Parties to consult and involve local and regional authorities during the drafting phase of their submission; in particular calls on the Parties to involve the sub-national level in the revision of their NDCs ahead of the COP meetings by setting up a system of national dialogue;
11. stresses the importance of the EU leading the global talks with its ambitious and inclusive climate policy, therefore recognises the European Climate Law as an undeniable signal and commitment that places the European Union at the forefront of climate action; In this regard, also urges for climate ambitions to not further alienate citizens by hitting hard on their household budgets – many of which are highly impacted by the COVID pandemic. Citizens and small businesses should not have to foot the bill of ambitious policy packages;

² 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity.

12. highlights in this regard that many European regions had declared a climate emergency before the announcement of the climate emergency by the European Parliament, and have already introduced their own ambitious climate laws; therefore, believes that their expertise should be more prominently present in global climate diplomacy;
13. calls for faster adaptation and implementation of the EU Missions on "Adaptation to Climate Change" and "Climate-Neutral Cities" and other relevant missions like soil, health and oceans, once they are endorsed; calls on the LRAs to prepare their own climate adaptation and mitigation strategies to increase protection and resilience of local communities and natural habitats³;
14. while fully supporting the ambition of the EU climate framework, calls for concrete action to underpin these goals, ensuring that no region or citizen is left behind. Particular attention and increased dedicated support is required in the case of coal regions, carbon intensive regions, less developed regions and islands;
15. welcomes the launch of the Conference on the Future of Europe and calls for the European Green Deal to be a central topic as climate change, just transition and sustainable development have a direct impact on the economy, public health and the wellbeing of EU citizens; considers that, in this framework, the European Climate Pact can play a crucial role and become a best practice to be replicated worldwide;
16. stands ready to co-organise with the European Commission, European Parliament and other relevant organisations a series of Citizens Dialogues and a thematic day on local Climate Action to present the added value of the European Green Deal, as well as to showcase different local initiatives. At the same time, restates its call to CoR members to lead by example and promote local and regional COPs;
17. calls on all Parties to the UNFCCC, in cooperation with subnational governments and non-state actors, to contribute constructively to the process leading up to COP26 by, among other things, promoting local consultative bodies, citizens' conventions, local and regional COPs, as well as semi-formal institutions, such as local and regional youth councils and parliaments;
18. highlights the importance of research and data collection on predicted climatic variations across different regions, and of climate modelling and climate impact assessments to build evidence-based climate policies that also respect the principle of technological neutrality. Considers it necessary to boost interregional cooperation to assist and protect the most vulnerable regions and groups of citizens;
19. supports the development of local scientific platforms on climate change (already existing in various regions and playing the role of "local IPCC") and their integration in information-sharing networks to encourage cooperation with scientists and support local elected officials' decision-making;

³ COR-2021-01903, CoR opinion on *Forging a climate-resilient Europe – the new EU Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change*.

20. stresses that, despite ambitious actions undertaken by numerous cities and regions, many do still not know their current and past level of GHG emissions and do not have climate change vulnerability analysis, which makes it difficult for them to quantify and compare their efforts; calls on the European Commission, in particular by fully using local and regional energy agencies, the Joint Research Centre (JRC) and the European Energy Agency (EEA), in coordination with national services drawing up GHG inventories, to support LRAs in their emissions evaluation and reporting, in analysing the primary effects of climate change in their area, and in drawing up climate action plans, making commitments at local and regional level, such as joining the Covenant of Mayors, and recognising their efforts by providing European Funds;
21. welcomes the work of UNFCCC on renewable energy deployment as a prerequisite for successful climate protection; considers that ambitious expansion targets and measures as well as large-scale and decentralised infrastructure planning are needed for large-scale renewable energy deployment in the near future;
22. asks the European Commission to cooperate with the CoR to explore how regional climate action plans could act as RLDCs providing local contributions to the Paris Climate Agreement and be officially recognised as a complement to Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), taking particular care to avoid double counting; as a starting point, RLDCs should become an integral part of the National Energy and Climate Plans (NECPs) through a revision of the Governance of the Energy Union regulation;
23. supports in this light the Common Reporting Framework by the Global Covenant of Mayors as a step towards the comparability of local and regional efforts and asks the European Commission to further support and expand initiatives such as the Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy, both within and beyond the EU;
24. considers that local implementation of climate actions must be complemented and enriched via information sharing, peer-to-peer learning and the consideration of the diversity of territories; the networks and alliances of local and regional actors are of capital importance to increasing the knowledge at regional, national and global levels;
25. will continue to strengthen its cooperation with global, European and national associations of local and regional authorities, with communities of stakeholders from regions and cities, with national parliaments, and with other actors;
26. values inter-institutional cooperation and increased synergies with its partners, such as: regional parliaments through the Conference of Regional Legislative Assemblies of Europe (CALRE), the RLEG initiative promoted by a group of regions with legislative powers, the RegHub network and the Cohesion Alliance network, the CoR campaign on European Green Deal, young elected politicians (YEPs) through its own dedicated programme, regional and local politicians in charge of the Europe Direct centres and the *Building Europe with Local Entities* (BELE) pilot project;

27. underlines the role of finance in the delivery of climate and climate adaptation objectives and the need for local governments to partner with the private sector and financial institutions to unlock sustainable investments in line with zero emission, zero pollution, minimum waste and climate adaptation ambitions; reiterates its call for EU funds to be accessed directly by local and regional authorities for the Green Deal projects, and proposes that the Commission set up a specific climate innovation programme for local governments;
28. considers global urbanisation as a core climate sector for Climate Action and Finance⁴; notes, in light of growing urbanisation, the fundamental role cities play in the road towards climate neutrality as testbeds for innovation and new approaches to mitigate and adapt to climate change, in particular when it comes to spatial planning, sustainable mobility, affordable housing and energy-efficient buildings; renews its support for initiatives aimed at showcasing best practices and transfer of knowledge, such as Horizon Climate Neutral Cities mission, the Urban Agenda partnerships, etc.;
29. considers that European Groupings of Territorial Cooperation (EGTCs) and other cross-border structures play an important role in facilitating and promoting cross-border, transnational and interregional cooperation on climate adaptation and mitigation;
30. welcomes the work of UNFCCC on the connection between gender and climate policies⁵ and calls on the European Commission to work in the same direction; calls for global and European actors to invest in gender-analysis and sex-disaggregated data to understand fully the impact of climate change on all vulnerable groups, implement gender-budgeting techniques and ensure equal access to representation in policy making for all genders and all levels. In this light, supports the call for enhancing the gender balance in the EU and national delegations to the COP;
31. reiterates its call to better reflect environmental and climate-change considerations in the EU's external relations and notably in its trade policy. Also highlights the importance of sharing peer-to-peer experience within platforms of territorial cooperation such as ARLEM and CORLEAP, as well as through city-to-city partnerships. Climate change should remain a strategic diplomatic priority of the EU in order to support third countries in adopting and implementing ambitious policies to reach climate neutrality and to achieve the target of the Paris Agreement;
32. considers that a WTO-compatible Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism could enhance the transition towards climate neutrality worldwide and sees a clear role for LRAs to contribute to this process through subnational climate diplomacy;

⁴ Both *Urban CDM/Emissions trading schemes* (Article 6.4 on market mechanisms) and *Sustainable, integrated urban and territorial development* (Article 6.8 on non-market mechanism). Article 6 of the [Paris Agreement](#).

⁵ <https://unfccc.int/gender>

33. fully supports the key actions national governments and financial institutions should take, as prerequisites for local climate action, as identified in the Human Settlements Climate Action Pathway⁶;
34. instructs its president to forward this resolution to the European Commission, the European Parliament, the Slovenian presidency of the Council of the European Union and the President of the European Council.

Brussels, 13 October 2021

The President
of the
European Committee of the Regions

Apostolos Tzitzikostas

⁶ [Marrakech Partnership for Global Climate Action, 2021.](#)