



European Committee
of the Regions

MARSEILLE
PROVENCE-ALPES-CÔTE D'AZUR
FRANCE

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MARCH
2022

EUROPEAN SUMMIT OF REGIONS AND CITIES

Address by

Roberta Metsola

President of the European Parliament

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Monsieur le Président de la Région Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur,

Monsieur le Président du Comité des Régions,

Mesdames et messieurs,

Chers collègues,

"Europe starts in its regions, cities and villages". I could not agree more.

Our European Union, our European project, grows in every city, village and region across Europe, from Marseille to Strasbourg, from Lisbon to Thessaloniki, from Oulu to Calabria.

Regions and cities are the beating heart of our Union. Our citizens' lives, workplaces, schools, universities and hospitals are there. Our democracy is rooted in every city and at each level of local and regional government.

The importance of local and regional authorities was also made evident during the COVID pandemic. They were at the frontline of the health crisis in the last two years.

Not only did local and regional authorities assure the proper functioning of all public services, like hospitals and schools, but they also advised central governments on the most effective way of protecting our citizens.

À l'occasion du neuvième sommet européen des régions et des villes et dans le contexte de la Présidence française du conseil de l'union européenne, je suis fière de vous adresser la parole, ici à Marseille, car Marseille est une ville profondément européenne.

Fondée par des Grecs, avec des influences phocéennes, romaines, gothiques et franques ; un port ancien et dynamique ; une référence du commerce européen ; une ville pleine de symbolisme dans la Révolution française qui a apporté le concept des droits des citoyens à notre époque.

Notre civilisation est fondée sur des valeurs intangibles. Ces valeurs, nous les partageons entre peuples européens, mais il ne s'agit pas seulement de les partager. Nous devons en être les garants.

La paix, la liberté, l'État de droit ne sont pas négociables !

Et je salue la ville de Marseille pour son geste symbolique envers Odessa mardi dernier. En déposant devant la mairie, l'ancre-cœur qui lui été offert il y a quelques années par sa ville jumelle Odessa, Marseille fait un geste fort en soutien au peuple ukrainien. Bravo.

Let me also salute the Committee of the Regions for inviting the Mayor of Kiev,

the Mayor of Mariupol and the Mayor of Kharkiv to attend this European Summit of Regions and Cities here in Marseille, today.

We stand united with Ukraine, today and tomorrow.

On behalf of the European Parliament, I condemn the Russian invasion and aggression against Ukraine in the strongest possible terms and express my solidarity with all those suffering and all those killed.

The outrageous invasion of a sovereign, independent State has been met by a united European response. We saw this unprecedented unity last Tuesday, in the extraordinary plenary session of the European Parliament.

Our European response is forceful and regions have a critical role to play:

- We, Europeans, are sheltering hundreds of thousands fleeing Ukrainians,
- We, have implemented a series of unprecedented, massive sanctions,
- We, will provide much needed weapons to Ukraine.
- We have banned Russian aircraft and oligarchs' private jets from our skies
- We have moved for Russia to be disconnected from the SWIFT system.
- We have banned Kremlin propaganda tools.

European citizens, European cities and regions, European Members States, the European Union, We, stand together and forceful against an aggressor, against autocracy, against the rule of the gun.

Our house of European Democracy will not be tampered with.

We know that we cannot take democracy for granted.

We know that democratic principles are fragile and can be destabilised.

There is a clear role for regional and local governments in assuring that fundamental freedoms and the rule of law are present in the everyday life of EU citizens. We know how important your actions can be, as local mayors and governors of regions, in promoting and caring for our common project, our shared values and principles. We cannot give in to complacency. We must remain vigilant.

Our European House of Democracy is precious. We will protect it.

There are challenges ahead, and local authorities will play a pivotal role in addressing them. You will play a



pivotal role in implementing the EU's energy and climate policy.

Let me say this again: we need to end our dependence of Russian gas.

With pressure on energy sources, resulting from the Russia's war on Ukraine, regions and cities across Europe will need to be ready for change. From increasing the energy efficiency of buildings, decarbonising public transport to creating a circular economy; from clean air initiatives to waste management... all such reforms are already being rolled out by local and regional authorities. And there will be more to do.

You will play an important role in welcoming Ukrainian refugees, who will get access to our schools and our services at an unprecedented time of crisis. I applaud the many European regions and cities neighbouring Ukraine, that have already shown tremendous solidarity. Thank you.

We had hoped to be able to focus on reconstructing our economies after the COVID pandemic. Ahead of this, we now act to protect peace in Europe and to defend our democratic values.

As President of the European Parliament, I am proud of our unity.

Our European House of democracy in peace will prevail, in every European city and region.

Thank you.



European Committee of the Regions

The European Committee of the Regions (CoR) is the EU's political assembly of 329 regional and local representatives from all 27 Member States. Our members are elected presidents of regions, regional councillors, mayors and local councillors - democratically accountable to more than 446 million European citizens. The CoR's main objectives are to involve regional and local authorities and the communities they represent in the EU's decision-making process and to inform them about EU policies. The European Commission, the European Parliament and the Council have to consult the Committee in policy areas affecting regions and cities. It can appeal to the Court of Justice of the European Union as a means of upholding EU law where there are breaches to the subsidiarity principle or failures to respect regional or local authorities.

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