

Copenhagen Declaration

WE, THE MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS, the elected representatives of the European Union's local and regional authorities,

WHEREAS the changes experienced by European cities over the centuries have helped to reorganise population distribution, to encourage trade and to foster creativity in various fields of law, politics and economics;

WHEREAS industrial change, globalisation and the advent of new information and communication technologies have brought about disparities between cities, deriving from natural, structural or historic constraints or from institutional capacities that are sometimes lacking;

WHEREAS cities have to meet the ever more pressing demands of their inhabitants at a time of public finance cuts and provide a satisfying and inspiring social framework that embraces both architectural quality and better access to services;

WHEREAS, 20 years on from the third Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, the goals of sustainable development and reducing poverty have yet to be achieved, and the Rio+20 Summit will be an opportunity to renew political commitment to global, joined-up action to achieve sustainable urban development;

WHEREAS there are many European examples that illustrate how local potential is rising to the internal challenges of cohesion, security, unemployment and poverty and to the external challenges associated with the environment, migration and international competition;

DECLARE that the European Union has a key role to play in reducing regional disparities, not least by means of an appropriate European budget, a stronger cohesion policy and a political and legislative framework that is conducive to the development and autonomy of cities;

STATE that the European Union's work can have a tangible impact only if cities and regions are given a central role in implementing the Europe 2020 Strategy and made full partners through multilevel governance;

STRESS that cities are vital tiers in the democratic process, which, as part of multilevel governance and a better implementation of the subsidiarity principle, can develop new forms of citizen participation in public and political life;

WE DECLARE OUR GOALS FOR EUROPEAN CITIES:

IN ORDER TO SECURE GREENER, MORE BEAUTIFUL AND MORE ATTRACTIVE CITIES, we confirm our commitment to climate-neutral cities that are economical in their consumption and efficient in production. Spatial planning must ensure symbiosis between urban and natural areas while preserving and enhancing natural and cultural heritage, including architectural heritage;

WE POINT OUT that cities are in the front line when it comes to promoting sustainable development by means of housing policy, urban renewal policy, resource management policy (including renewable energies, water and waste) and urban transport policies that give priority to public transport and "soft" transport measures;

IN ORDER TO SECURE MORE INCLUSIVE CITIES, we acknowledge the fact that cities are first and foremost places of "coexistence", where inclusiveness must be an ongoing goal, which means making public services accessible to all, refusing to allow ghettoisation, responding to situations of poverty and promoting a social mix in communities, including through policies encouraging active ageing, social innovation and mutual support between generations and cultures;

IN ORDER TO SECURE MORE COMPETITIVE CITIES, we stress the need for cities to invest as a priority in human capital, education and health, physical infrastructure and new technologies, with a view to developing innovation, research and creativity leading to the creation of high-quality jobs and helping to improve the standard of living;

IN ORDER TO INTEGRATE CITIES MORE CLOSELY WITH THEIR REGIONS, with a view to the harmonious development of urban and rural areas, we would like to see the strengthening of cities' links with European transport networks and of their capacity to develop trade and ties with the surrounding peri-urban and rural areas, so as to help them avoid urban sprawl, to encourage the formation of a balanced network of small and medium-sized towns and to promote local agricultural products;

WE CALL:

- on the EUROPEAN UNION to work towards these goals by providing financial support for a cross-cutting urban policy for the Europe of tomorrow;
- for the EUROPE 2020 STRATEGY to be localised in order to empower regions and cities to spearhead a bottom-up dynamic of innovation;
- for EUROPEAN POLICIES to give greater priority to territorial cooperation between European cities;
- for the ROLE OF CITIES AND REGIONS in framing and piloting European policies to be strengthened, in particular as regards integrated strategies for sustainable regional development and a carbon-free economy;

- for the PARTICIPATION of cities and regions to become mandatory as part of the systematic practical implementation of multi-level governance;
- for THE DECENTRALISATION PROCESS underway in most European Union Member States to be taken further, and cities and regions granted greater financial autonomy;
- for EUROPEAN POLICIES to promote the role of "local task forces" made up of elected representatives, practitioners and civil society players who are capable of successfully bringing about change, by involving other partners in integrated, cross-sectoral approaches;
- for THIS VISION OF TOMORROW'S CITIES, the role of urban policy and the European social model to be upheld and championed at the Rio+20 Earth Summit and within other sustainable development initiatives such as the Covenant of Mayors. The Rio+20 Summit should, in particular, recognise the need to mainstream sustainable urban development policies as a key ingredient in national sustainable development policies.

Copenhagen, 23 March 2012
