

THE CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES

Resolution 257 (2008)¹ Democracy and local governance in South-Eastern Europe: the role of Local Democracy Agencies (LDAs)

1. The Congress has always been convinced of the major role played by civil society, in particular non-governmental organisations and associations, in developing participatory democracy and restoring the democratic fabric at local level.

2. Since 1993 the Congress has accordingly helped to set up the Local Democracy Agencies (LDAs) in order to create a democratic area in the Balkans and to contribute to the achievement of peace and stability. Today, the LDAs are key forums for involving associations in building grass-roots democracy and dialogue between the various players in civil society and politics.

3. The LDAs contribute to the prevention of conflict, the consolidation of peace and reconstruction following the conflicts which have affected this region.

4. The Association of Local Democracy Agencies (ALDA), set up in 1999, has actively co-ordinated the efforts of the LDAs to develop peace and bring about the return of democratic stability throughout South-Eastern Europe.

5. This contribution to strengthening these basic elements of democracy has led the Congress to offer sustained and substantial support to the activities of ALDA, the partnerships it has developed and its efforts to expand outside the Balkan region.

6. The Congress supports the planned opening of a new LDA in Shkodra (Albania) in November 2008 and welcomes the establishment of new LDAs outside the Balkan region, in particular in the South Caucasus, with the opening of an LDA in Kutaisi (Georgia) in 2006.

7. The Congress takes note that ALDA is actively helping to strengthen civil society in Belarus and will continue in this way.

8. The Congress points out that in Resolution 251 (2008) on city diplomacy, adopted in March 2008, it committed itself to continuing to support LDAs in their efforts to use and expand city diplomacy. It therefore hopes that ALDA will step up its co-operation with local and regional authorities represented in the Congress and that it will also benefit from their contribution to the development of participatory democracy in South-Eastern Europe.

9. The Congress therefore:

a. wishes ALDA and individual LDAs in particular to approach Congress members first when seeking to establish partnerships;

b. calls on ALDA to step up interaction with the Congress, in particular during the preparatory phase of its projects;

c. urges ALDA to ensure greater synergy and consistency of its actions with the work of Congress committees;

d. will make sure that, when observing local and regional elections in countries with LDAs, Congress delegations are able to meet LDA representatives in order to draw on their knowledge of the situation of local democracy;

e. urges ALDA and the LDAs to strengthen their co-operation with the networks of “political schools” set up by the Council of Europe with a view to undertaking joint activities to promote local democracy;

f. instructs its Ad hoc Working Group on Local and Regional Elected Representatives of South-East Europe to:

i. develop greater synergy between the Congress and ALDA by expanding the mutual flow of information;

ii. follow up this resolution and, more particularly, involve the LDAs and ALDA in its future work and conferences on a regular basis;

iii. consider the consequences of the co-operation agreement signed by ALDA and the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe in Brussels on 22 February 2008, in particular concerning the Congress’s future work on transfrontier co-operation in South-Eastern Europe.

1. Debated and adopted by the Congress on 29 May 2008, 3rd Sitting (see Document CG(15)7RES, draft resolution presented by D. Ghisletta (Switzerland, L, SOC), rapporteur).