



Launching Conference

Working Together for Development

Brussels, 28 March 2012

Presidentessa, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to welcome you to this launching conference on behalf of the Association of Local Democracy Agencies. For quite a number of years ALDA has enjoyed excellent cooperation with the Committee of the Regions and I am therefore particularly pleased, first, to thank Ms Bresso, President of the Committee, for the kind hospitality offered for this important conference and, second, to ask her to take the floor.

The project “Working Together for Development”, or WTD, represents an outstanding opportunity for the Association of Local Democracy Agencies and its network to continue working towards the promotion of local democracy, good local governance, respect for human rights and rule of law, as highlighted in the European Commission document “*Increasing the Impact of EU Development Policy: an Agenda for Change*”. These same principles have guided the actions of our Association since the very beginning, when facing the difficulties in the Balkans in the ‘90s, and they have continued to be the core aim when we enlarged our action to the European neighbourhood countries, working closely with Non-State Actors.

The long-standing practices of cooperation between Local Authorities and Civil Society Organisations as experienced in the Local Democracy Agencies network have become a reference point for the promotion of sustainable local development. With WTD we want to

capitalise on those experiences bringing to policy makers, at all levels, the best practices of cooperation between these two crucial actors in development.

ALDA is the driving force behind this important and ambitious initiative, both in terms of the number of partners and of the nature of its objectives, with the aim of generating a more inclusive and efficient policy for development thanks to the cooperation of networks of civil society and networks of local authorities.

These important principles of good cooperation have been highlighted by the European Institutions several times and we hope they will be further strengthened in the forthcoming EC Communication on 'Engaging Civil Society and Local Authorities in Development Cooperation', expected in the autumn of 2012.

We firmly believe that strong cooperation between LAs and CSOs, based on peer relations, can bring new perspectives and unexpected benefits to the development cooperation practices. For this reason, ALDA, together with the 21 partners coming from 16 different countries of the enlarged Europe, want to launch the WTD Alliance aimed at sharing at the European level the experiences of cooperation between LAs and CSOs in development cooperation.

The WTD Alliance would have two main objectives: a) implementing actions at the local level involving LAs and CSOs and b) bringing to policy makers those best development cooperation practices. As for the first objective, WTD has a strong local dimension by re-granting part of the resources of the project to small initiatives carried out by local authorities (of municipalities with up to 30,000 inhabitants) and local NGOs. As for the second point, we have appreciated the progress of the Structured Dialogue on Development through our membership in the CONCORD platform and we welcome the idea of the European Commission of setting up a Policy Forum on Development. We hope to be included in this Forum and we are convinced

that we can contribute to the Forum by bringing our experience in the field of joint cooperation between LAs and CSOs in development.

These cooperation practices exist already but mostly on a case-by-case basis. The present WTD project aims at developing a long lasting alliance in order to bring an added value to implementation and policy making. (for info, most of the programmes are clustered into "local authorities work with local authorities", "civil society work with civil society"). This initiative breaks with these divisions because we know that there is great potential in this shared approach.

To conclude, the WTD Alliance will not only constitute a coordination initiative but will represent ACTION FOR CHANGE.

I look forward to a fruitful presentation and discussion and thank you for your attention.