

Strasbourg, Council of Europe

12-15 October 2009

17th session of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities.

Local action against climate change and Youth participation in local democracy were among the main issues discussed during the Congress that also dealt with violence against women and children.

The Congress was born from the evolution toward decentralization because it's at local level that the citizens' political expectancies are best taken into account. "Ignoring the People's will can only lead to unstable democracy" (Ulrich Bonher, Secretary general of the Congress).

The Congress attaches priority importance to transborder cooperation in Europe: joining forces to make the most of one another's experience and good policies in specific fields like: health, environmental protection, respect for human rights...

Here are several issues dealt with during the Congress and presenting particular interest for SI/E

On the 13 October 2009, within the context of "Citizen Participation" and the CoE programme : **Building a Europe For and With the Children**, representatives of the children and youth town councils of Strasbourg and Schiltigheim, presented their works and insisted on the importance of granting freedom of speech to Children so that they may take part in the lives of their towns. Indeed, thanks to the dialogue between adult town coucillors and children and youth representatives, they can turn their towns into better places to live, more friendly to both communities. The speech of Ambrine Baader, 11 year old, in front of the assembly, was particularly applauded, setting an example for all the youth ready to take part in the life of their city or their village.. An approach to be followed and encouraged by Soroptimists... Because today's children will be tomorrow's adults and will make tomorrow's world.

2. On the 13 October 2009, the Congress adopted several texts backing the guiding lines of the Council of Europe for the elaboration of integrated national strategies concerning the **Protection of Children against Violence**. The problem of violence against children is a widespread global phenomenon because it affects all the societies at all levels of and most cases are never reported ; the involvement of local authorities is particularly wished for . Here again SI can play an important part of information and investigation.

3. On the 14 October 2009, Sandra Barnes, a member of the Congress, stood up as the spokeswoman for **Fighting Domestic Violence** reminding us that it must be a priority at all levels. During its setting of the 3 October 2009 the INGO Conference carried a declaration which backs a convention proposal aiming at fighting against **Violence to Women**. There is urgent need to put an end to all kinds of violence against women because it is the main cause of mortality among women aged between 19 and 44 - more than war, cancer or accidents. **Sandra Barnes urged all the authorities to commit themselves to this fight, most of all women and INGOs, because being united is our strength and together we can take up this challenge and win.** Inquire about the rate of domestic violence in your town, your country and the means used to fight against it. Then share your experience with us. A great action for SI !

4. On the 14 October, following the widespread mobilization of local and regional authorities, the Congress adopted a resolution and a recommendation asking that local authorities should be represented in the national delegations of parties at the **Framework-Convention of the United Nations on climate change in Copenhagen, in December 2009.**

The climate change has a direct impact on the future of mankind: it affects the very basis of life and therefore the fundamental human rights. Sustainable development has become a democratic issue and the new agreement on climate must comprehend the dimension of human rights in its negotiations so as to give more lasting answers to a major challenge. We are all directly concerned by this vital issue and the SI must voice its position at all levels.

Don't hesitate to email me your questions for complementary information and also to voice your comments on these various issues . Your involvement and your opinions give its full meaning to our representation at the Council of Europe.

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