



CRPM CPMR

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MINUTES OF THE 35TH CPMR GENERAL ASSEMBLY 17/19 OCTOBER 2007 - FLORENCE (TUSCANY, ITALY)

THURSDAY 18 OCTOBER 2007

OPENING SESSION

Mr Claudio Martini (CPMR) welcomed the participants. He said that the current period is an important time for negotiations, notably on the European Treaty and the future budget. It is therefore important to place the CPMR within the whole European context in order to develop an analysis on the CPMR's growth. The European Commission considers the CPMR's analysis to be reliable and constant. It does not just provide a political service, but also a technical and scientific one. Mr Martini added that new prospects for growth are being opened up by collaboration between the CPMR and other regions around the world, as a result of the initiative to create a global network. On this matter, the UN sees the CPMR as a partner. He concluded by reasserting that, while Europe is our *raison d'être*, the regions must also become actors on the global stage. It is therefore necessary to ensure that our work is of greater quality.

The members approved the minutes of the Murcia General Assembly.

The members approved the agenda of the General Assembly.

Opening of the 35th CPMR General Assembly

SESSION 1: ACTIVITY REPORT AND OUTLOOK FOR THE CPMR

Mr Xavier Gizard (CPMR) presented the report on the CPMR's activities since the last General Assembly. He then set these activities within the context of the Medium-Term Strategic Plan (MTSP) approved by the Stavanger General Assembly in 2004. He said that, beyond the context set out in the MTSP, new factors make it necessary to adjust the CPMR's activity: new policies (such as energy, climate change and immigration), as well as globalisation of trade leading to a revision of the Lisbon strategy. He believed that the 2008-2009 period will be noted for the existing consensus on the need to avoid opening the debate at European level (notably on the 2014-2020 budget figures) other than on the ratification of the Treaty. It will be more of a period of general discussion on the fundamental themes of the European budget. The CPMR must therefore ensure it is ready for the "real discussion" that will no doubt start in 2010.

Mr Claudio Martini concluded by stressing that there is a current growth process of which we must be aware and that has to be managed carefully.

Debate

Mr Alberto Jardim (Madeira) thanked and congratulated President Martini for his leadership of the CPMR's work over the years, as well as for his commitment and enthusiasm, which have helped give the CPMR the prestige it has today. He said he fully agreed with the need for quality in the CPMR, which has stopped issuing mere political declarations and managed to make a truly technical leap forward. He nonetheless said that this qualitative leap cannot be brought about unless it includes real political determination. He said that, with certain respect for the concept of globalisation, he did not however want it to become a global government, but, to the contrary a consolidator of regional identities. He concluded by calling for the CPMR to ensure it does not lose sight of its objective, which is namely to defend the regions' role within European

institutions, in order to consolidate freedoms and guarantee a genuinely democratic structure. He wanted the CPMR's action to ensure that globalisation and efforts to defend the regions' interests are coherent with one another.

Ms Christel Liljeström (Itä-Uusimaa), on behalf of the Baltic Sea Commission, raised a query about the Forum of Global Associations of Regions (FOGAR). She did not remember when a decision had been made to have an administrative link between the CPMR and the FOGAR. She asked for the CPMR's decision-making procedures to be clarified on this issue. In her opinion, such matters should not just be dealt with as a sub-point on the agenda.

The representative from Cantabria made three points:

- He mentioned the work carried out by Cantabria Region within the Atlantic Arc Commission, notably on air transport;
- He believed that the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and rural development are important issues for his region, notably in relation to regional policy and climate change;
- He thought that the principle of sustainable development should be respected, including in cooperation with other areas, hence the need to forge alliances between CPMR regions and other regions in the world. On this matter, he said that in Spain, 20% of development aid activities – which represents nearly 0.7% of Spanish GDP – is carried out by local and regional authorities.

Ms Annika Annerby Jansson (Skåne) said that local authorities must be prudent in their investment of resources in the international field. The CPMR might have benefited from a wider debate in which all of the regions could have set out their position.

Mr Richard Westlake (Devon) said that globalisation is present in our countries and regions: the European regions interact with one another, generating advantages and economic disadvantages as well as a certain number of challenges. The CPMR must show very clearly how it sees its role in globalisation. If it adopts a global approach, it must prove that there is such a need, it must examine the financial resources that could be allocated, and identify the benefits that could be reaped by the regions, including from a budgetary point of view.

Mr Roy Perry (Hampshire) spoke on the 'migration' issue mentioned in the activity report. He felt it is necessary to make a distinction between two strands: migration within the EU and migration from outside the EU. There is little mobility within the European labour market. This prevents it from having a positive impact on the European economy, which is growing less well than in the US. Europe's enlargement has led to major movements of people from Eastern European countries. The United Kingdom benefits from such migration, but parallel problems have arisen as a result (regarding housing, public health). The EU's internal migration mechanism therefore needs to be oiled, for example by encouraging regions that host migrants by giving them financial support.

Mr François Maitia (Aquitaine) spoke on three matters:

- He affirmed Aquitaine Region's support for FOGAR. He thought that the regions must be involved in organising globalisation. They must pull their weight in the debate by saying that the European regional policy model is positive for regions throughout the whole world. If the regions are not involved, they will be overwhelmed by the tide of globalisation. He pointed out that the regions are already participating in several global networks: what is strange about Europe's most powerful regional organisation getting involved in the debate? He was pleased about this and encouraged it to continue in this direction. He also mentioned the Association of European Border Regions (AEBR), which is a signatory of the Marseille Declaration, supports FOGAR, and that it does not oppose the CPMR's leadership on this initiative. In his view, territorial cohesion is a vital complement to social cohesion. How can migration issues be tackled if there is no territorial cohesion at global level? He believed that funds should be levied from the global economy for regional policies at global level. The UN realises that aid policy through states alone does not work and that it is vital to go through the regions in order to deliver it.
- He said he also agreed that Aquitaine should coordinate the CPMR working group on the Common Agricultural Policy, because this is a key issue for the regions' general stability.
- He concluded by inviting all of the participants to the CPMR's 2008 General Assembly in Bayonne.

Mr Jérôme Polvéřini (Corsica) supported President Alberto Jardim's analysis of globalisation. He said he believes that the CPMR has an original purpose, which is to defend the interests of Europe's peripheral regions in relation to the Blue Banana. Globalisation must be considered as a factor that should be taken into account, and as an argument the CPMR can use in order to combat the periphery's disadvantages, but not as an enlargement of its field of action.

Mr Abdelkader Fradi (Sousse) stressed that in coming years the regions will prosper thanks to the rapid growth of transport activities on all seas, including the Mediterranean. He therefore called for support to be given to a strictly Mediterranean policy. He furthermore felt that it is necessary to develop positive immigration based on complementarity, cooperation and neighbourhood relations, because it is impossible to develop trade without exchanging people and their efforts.

Mr Claudio Martini provided some responses to the points raised by the speakers:

- He felt that Mr Alberto Jardim's ideas are interesting and should be examined further.
- He was pleased about the debate on FOGAR, because this encourages transparency, which is absolutely necessary. He pointed out that it was the Political Bureau meetings in Florence (February 2007) and Augustów (June 2007) that stated the need to embark on this process, which was not discussed at the 2006 General Assembly in Murcia because the matter had not yet been fully reflected upon.
- The creation of FOGAR has not solely come about at the CPMR's initiative. The idea was launched in Marseille at the initiative of Michel Vauzelle, President of the Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur Region. It is the result of a convergence of several people's views, including those of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).
- The CPMR has responsibility for FOGAR's General Secretariat because all of the global networks asked it to take this on due to its prestige on the European stage. FOGAR representatives will meet with UN officials to see what is expected of this network and the debate will then continue. A discussion on this subject will be held next year at the general assemblies of the geographical commissions.
- It should be noted that involvement in FOGAR has not decreased the number of topics the CPMR works on. FOGAR is financed through voluntary additional dues and this has no effect on the dues of CPMR regions. These aspects only account for a limited area of the CPMR's activity.

The activity report was adopted.

SESSION 2: NEW FACTORS OF REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN EUROPE

THEME 1: AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Mr Patrick Anvroin (CPMR) introduced the session. He said that while a transfer is currently taking place between the first and second pillars of the CAP (also called modulation), there is not any real rural development strategy at EU level. He then presented the study conducted by the CPMR General Secretariat on regional economies' dependency on the CAP's First Pillar:

- Regions from the North of Europe are more dependent than those from the South. This observation applies both between member states and between regions from one member state to another;
- The typology of the study distinguishes between seven groups of regional interests in relation to the reduction of the CAP's First Pillar, thus demonstrating the wide variety of situations;
- The CAP does not contribute to territorial cohesion: what sort of redistribution systems can thus be envisaged? This question will be at the heart of the debate in the CPMR's working group on the CAP;
- It will be necessary to undertake an additional study focusing on the Second Pillar of the CAP.

Ms Aurélie Trouvé (ENESAD - The French national agronomics higher education establishment in Dijon) presented the results of her research on the scope for manoeuvre and the differentiation of agricultural policies in Europe. After having outlined the context of the discussion, she said that:

- The regions have greater scope for manoeuvre on the Second Pillar than on the First Pillar, even though this scope has generally become greater since the 1990s;
- The levers for support continue to be heavily directed by the member states (she identified four types of regions);
- Although the regions are a relevant tier of coordination, there are still a certain number of institutional obstacles;
- Liberalisation of the agricultural sector is accompanied by problems relating to interregional cohesion and distorted competition.

She concluded by saying that Agricultural Policy needs to be rethought within national and European agricultural policies. This is a change that must be brought about not by dismantling this policy, but through eco- and socio-conditionality.

Mr Andrew Moxey (Consultant) presented the Sub Rosa approach, which was developed in March 2007 by officials and university academics from Highland and Islands, the Scottish Executive and the Scottish Government.

Debate

Ms Christel Liljeström commented on two aspects:

- She said the debate on the CAP is very important for the CPMR, and she believed it is being tackled in the right way. Everyone understands that it must be reformed because there are huge issues at stake: the CAP subsidises agriculture but also ensures access to food products at acceptable prices. It is also foreseeable that changes in food consumption will take place in coming years as a result of climate change.
- She pointed out that the Baltic states have not been taken into account in the study conducted by the CPMR General Secretariat and also felt that some conclusions had been drawn without the situation in the North having been fully understood: the situation is indeed much more diverse than it would seem. It would be necessary to focus on the consequences of the discharge of nutrients into the Baltic Sea. Competitiveness is not the only solution: CAP reform should be exploited in order to integrate the problem of climate change.

Ms Annelie Stark (Västra Götaland) thought that agriculture is one of the major issues that must be discussed by the regions. It is not just necessary to discuss the CAP, but also cohesion policy and the budget, and to link this to Lisbon and Gothenburg. She was pleased to see that discussion has started on this subject. She stressed that the North Sea Commission supports the remarks made by Christel Liljeström on behalf of the Baltic Sea Commission.

Mr Jerzy Kwieciński (Polish Government) pointed out that the study does not cover the new member states, which makes it impossible to have a complete overview of the situation. He also said he felt that the link between the CAP and cohesion policy is fundamental, especially as far as the environmental dimension is concerned.

Mr Humphrey Temperley (Devon) said that with the French Presidency and the European elections, CAP reform will be a major step. He thought that the Second Pillar is a good thing for agricultural development, but that the advantages for the environment are an illusion. He was worried about the 'fossilisation' of agricultural enterprises: the receipt of subsidies does not encourage reform, and European taxpayers will not be able to accept this situation for long.

Mr Patrick Anvroin concluded the discussion by noting that:

- Most contributions came from the Northern regions concerning the First Pillar, which shows that they are sensitive about this subject.
- He regretted that the lack of data on Poland and, more broadly, the new member states, had made it impossible to have a complete overview of the situation. This work should therefore be made complete.
- The introduction of ceilings for support will be taken into account by the working group.

THEME 2 : THE IMPACT OF CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr Pierre Schellekens (European Commission DG Environment) presented the main ideas in the Green Paper on climate change in a video message.

Mr François Desrentes (CPMR) presented the CPMR's draft resolution on climate change. The CPMR welcomed the European Commission's initiative and stressed that the regions can contribute directly to meeting the objectives of adaptation and mitigation. He stressed that it is not enough to change current policies in order to cope with the coming challenges: to date, the CPMR believes that the solutions proposed by the Green Paper are not equal to the challenges, and calls for the organisation of a major European congress on sustainable development in Europe as soon as possible.

Ms Ségolène Royal (Poitou-Charentes) focused her contribution on two priority areas for action in the field of climate change: renewable energies and the protection of marine environments and resources that have been damaged by climate change.

On renewable energies, she stressed the need for a new political momentum in the wind sector in order to develop off-shore wind power. She regretted that the potential of solar power is insufficiently exploited, and called for the transition from a decentralised system to a dispersed system of consumers and producers. She stressed the need for cooperation on research and industry in the field of sea-related power, notably tidal power.

On the protection of marine environments and resources, she strongly regretted that France's "*Grenelle de l'environnement*" (a large-scale, four-month forum organised by the French government to address a wide range of environmental issues) makes no proposals on the maritime issue. The time for procrastination is now over and it is time to act. The regions can sound the alarm and demand the European Commission's support in this area.

Debate

Mr Christian Guyonvarc'h (Brittany) said that Brittany Region supports the CPMR in its action on climate change. He stressed that it is not climate change that will adapt to policies but the opposite. He then presented two amendments submitted by his region: the first focused on the need to transfer transport flows from land to rail and sea, and the second on the organisation of the second summit of the Network of Regional Governments for Sustainable Development (nrg4SD), a major event to be organised in Saint-Malo at the end of October in 2008, which aims to show how the regions are concerned by climate change and what they are doing to adapt.

THEME 3 : THE REGIONS AND THE GOVERNANCE OF GLOBALISATION

Ms Marie-Ange Orihuela (CPMR) described the steps leading to the creation of FOGAR and outlined the CPMR's activities in this area:

- 2004: the CPMR's Second Medium-Term Development Plan;
- 2006: the Azores seminar on the regions' needs with regard to globalisation;
- 2007: organisation of the First Convention for a Regional and Local Approach to Development in Marseille.

The aim of this work is to ensure that the regions' opinion is heard, to promote strategic governance that includes the regions, and to organise joint work involving the different levels of governance.

Forthcoming work will focus on:

- development of the new network;
- publication of a guide on international funding;
- work of an 'institutional' nature aimed at obtaining recognition from the UN and the EU.

She said that the Second Convention for a Regional Approach to Development, which will be jointly organised by the UNDP, Tangiers-Tetouan Region and the Kingdom of Morocco, will take place from 12 to 14 May 2008 in Tangiers.

Mr Xavier Gizard said that this initiative is the culmination of nearly ten years of work, marked by decentralised cooperation, maritime disasters that have highlighted the global dimension of these policies, and the creation of the nrg4SD network following the Earth Summit in Johannesburg in 2002.

He referred to the Final Declaration of the 2006 General Assembly in Murcia and the conclusions of the June 2007 Political Bureau meeting in Podlaskie, which gave the CPMR a mandate in this field.

Mr Michel Vauzelle (Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur) spoke on behalf of the InterMediterranean Commission; he called for a new governance in the Mediterranean and mentioned the work currently being done by a working group coordinated by Campania and the pilot initiative led by Morocco in the framework of the UNDP's Art Gold Programme.

He described the new strategy for the Mediterranean: to create a new alliance to promote peace, sustainable development and culture. This process is spurred by political urgency, economic urgency, ecological urgency and cultural urgency, notably concerning the need to preserve linguistic diversity.

The very mixed results of the EUROMED Partnership make it necessary to seek a new path towards a cohesion policy that could become the pillar of a reformed common foreign policy in this area. The aim is therefore to formalise a structural policy based on four pillars: cohesion, a common Mediterranean agricultural policy involving countries from the north and the south of the sea basin, and the creation of a multilateral investment fund for water, energy and culture.

Mr Vauzelle stipulated that this strategy must include the Balkans/Black Sea area and be linked to the Millennium Goals. The aim therefore is to give a political boost to the Euro-Mediterranean partnership in order to forge a new vision as soon as the 2014- 2020 period begins.

Mr Yavuz Mildon (Council of Europe), on behalf of the Balkans and Black Sea Commission, invited President Martini to come and present the FOGAR initiative at the Council of Europe. He then described the current work on the creation of the Black Sea Euroregion on the model of the Adriatic Euroregion (23 regions). The main challenges to be met are of an economic and ecological nature.

He asked for the CPMR's support for a new legal instrument to promote regional democracy in this area and stressed the importance of the regional level for meeting the challenges of the 21st Century.

Ms Marlène Mélisse (Guadeloupe), on behalf of the outermost regions, spoke about the wider neighbourhood policy proposed by the European Commission in 2004 to support the integration of the outermost regions within their geographical vicinity.

This policy is restricted to neighbouring states and cannot be an integration policy because it does not affect trade or customs issues. However, this wider neighbourhood policy has started a process of integration, notably through three major projects on the harmonisation of business law with Haïti, the provision of cable services in the Caribbean and territories' vulnerability to natural disasters.

While this instrument will pave the way for good governance, there is nevertheless a certain lack of consistency between national and EU public authorities, because the regions are excluded from the negotiations despite having demonstrated their ability to deal with global policies.

Ms Christel Liljeström, on behalf of the Baltic Sea Commission, spoke on neighbourhood policy in the Baltic. She said that all of the regions wish to pursue this policy by adapting the new period to new requirements. She supported the concept of differentiation proposed by the President of the European Commission, Mr Barroso, and stressed the need to implement this policy bearing in mind its direct effects on citizens.

While several countries in the area pose problems owing to their level of democracy (notably Belarus), this policy should nevertheless be pursued.

The programmes for the 2007-2013 period will focus on cohesion, competitiveness and sustainable development, and there will be efforts to involve new partners. Four priorities have been selected: SMEs, transport, better management of Baltic Sea resources and the combined work by cities and regions in the sustainable development field.

The northern dimension focuses on a key issue relating to the stability of the area: cooperation with Russia on energy. But the neighbourhood instruments can only have a limited impact on this point. The regions will maintain their active involvement in this programme in order to promote an instrument that stimulates peace and prosperity in the area.

Debate

Mr Louis Le Pensec (UCLG - Member of the CPMR's Administrative Council) pointed out that the UCLG (United Cities and Local Governments) aims to promote a single voice for local and regional authorities on the international stage. He believed the time is ripe for dialogue between the UCLG and FOGAR - two bodies that pursue the same objectives. It would now be appropriate to combine expert capabilities and launch joint fields of work.

Mr Anthony Papadimitriou (Balkans/Black Sea Commission) described the efforts of the regions in this geographical commission to promote cooperation programmes. He called for greater synergy between the various instruments.

Mr Kevan Lim (East of England Regional Assembly) said that while the global dimension is necessary, it is firstly important to understand which aspects the regions should tackle and how this should be done. He believed the best approach is not to create new institutions/bodies, but rather to develop tools that are useful for the regions.

He called for transparency on financing and insisted on the need for open and detailed debate. He asked the CPMR's Political Bureau to examine this aspect of FOGAR.

Responding to these remarks, **Claudio Martini** felt that all of the speeches show how our activities go beyond Europe's borders. Concerning FOGAR's impact on the CPMR's activities, he pointed out that, from his point of view, this new initiative has not reduced our investment in other fields. He agreed that future developments regarding this matter should be monitored closely, but felt that this discussion should not become a debate for or against such a policy. There is no conflict between our investment in EU affairs and opening up to global issues, but rather they are complementary.

Concerning finance, he said he agreed to monitor the way FOGAR is funded more closely, and proposed to put these issues up for debate after the working meetings with UN officials in early November.

Concerning Louis Le Pensec's contribution, he thanked the speaker for his offer of dialogue, which is fully appreciated.

THEME 4 : THE REQUIREMENT OF TERRITORIAL COHESION

Mr Xavier Gizard introduced the session by explaining the history of this concept since the work of the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP) some ten years ago up to the Leipzig meeting in May 2007.

The new phase of work launched by the Portuguese Presidency includes a "territorial agenda" followed by an action plan. The Council would have to adopt a contractual framework for the implementation of this action plan. This is an innovative approach that should be fully welcomed.

Mr Manuel Chavez Gonzalez (Andalucía) thanked President Martini and stressed that there is a strong requirement for territorial cohesion, although it has still not been achieved once and for all. He said the reason it has been hard to have people accept the concept of territorial cohesion is partly because social cohesion has not been a great success.

The EU is currently at a pivotal time, and its next programming period must be a success. At the same time, the persistence of imbalances poses a real threat to the achievement of the Lisbon objectives and the credibility of the EU itself.

The major challenge today is to succeed in reconciling the Lisbon and Gothenburg objectives with one another. This can only be achieved if everybody pulls in the same direction.

Concerning climate change, this is a global phenomenon and the regions have a big role to play, as demonstrated by the approach adopted by Andalusia through its action plan for the region.

Concerning North/South relations, wealth gaps are still intolerable and have even increased over time (for example, the ratio between Moroccan and Spanish GDP is currently 1 to 17, whereas it was 1 to 6 twenty years ago). It is thus important to adopt an approach that would bring about more balanced relations with our neighbours. The Barcelona process must be given a strong boost, despite its relative failure to date.

On the theme of immigration, President Chavez believed that any policy that fails to cover the whole of the problem is doomed to failure. It is therefore necessary to make the necessary resources available and, to do this, to make significant changes to the financing system. The Mediterranean cannot deal with the immigration issue alone, and the EU must grasp it by giving priority to the following points:

- development of a common integration policy;
- development of a common development aid policy;
- development of European management of external borders and migration flows.

Such action is urgent and the regions can contribute to it.

Debate

Mr Claudio Martini firstly greeted the representatives of the Greek, Polish, Portuguese and Slovenian governments and opened the debate.

Mr Jens Sundström (Norrbotten) stressed the need to keep the cohesion fund and the importance of CAP reform. He argued that cohesion policy should be extended to all territories and asked for thought to be given to the issue in order to complement the GDP criterion, notably by adding unemployment and migration flows.

Mr Jerzy Kwieciński (Polish Government) in turn stressed the importance of cohesion policy for European regions. He drew attention to the importance of the forthcoming budget reform and suggested that the regions should participate. Lastly, he said that the Structural Funds' beneficiaries have a particular responsibility because they have to prove the effectiveness of the funds they receive in terms of wealth and jobs.

Mr Xavier Gizard announced that the CPMR is resuming the debate on cohesion, after a period during which it had been on hold. A framework paper outlining the CPMR's positions will be proposed in January 2008 at a seminar on this issue in Seville.

This topic will also be the central theme of the CPMR's next General Assembly in October 2008 in Aquitaine.

Mr Kevan Lim (East of England Regional Assembly) again raised the matter of FOGAR and the process that had led to the current situation. He asked for the Political Bureau to examine this issue.

Mr Claudio Martini said that the main aim of the debate on territorial cohesion was to achieve equal opportunities between territories and the CPMR has a big interest in reviving the issue. He thanked all of the government representatives and brought the session to a close.

CPMR POLITICAL BUREAU MEETING

Given the plenary session discussions on FOGAR (*cf.* session 1), Claudio Martini proposed to add an item on this subject to the Political Bureau's agenda. This proposal was accepted.

1- FOGAR

Mr Claudio Martini introduced the debate.

- He said that a meeting between FOGAR members and the UN will take place in early November at the invitation of the UNDP, in order to discuss how FOGAR can be used as an instrument for structured discussion between the UN and the regions. This meeting should offer an insight into the UN's intentions on the matter. He proposed:
 - o that a thorough report on the subject be sent to all of the CPMR's member regions in order to start the discussion;
 - o to take stock at the Political Bureau meeting in January 2008 in order to gather the feedback and comments of the member regions.
- He deemed it strange that while all global bodies are asking the CPMR to make FOGAR a global instrument, certain member regions have doubts about the expediency of this initiative. He did however accept that it is totally legitimate to discuss it.

Mr Jean-Yves Le Drian felt that Mr Martini's proposals will be useful to calm down the debate, which he believed to be rooted in a misunderstanding. He understood that the plan is not to dissolve or merge the CPMR within FOGAR. The CPMR will maintain its autonomy and its involvement in FOGAR will be financed by the regions' voluntary contributions.

Ms Christel Liljeström supported the proposals made. She also thought that the plenary session discussions were due to a communication problem. As the participants are often different from one meeting to the next, she said she felt that the decision making procedures must be extremely transparent.

Mr Kevan Lim hoped that the proposal in January 2008 will not have any financial implications. He added that FOGAR's objectives must be both political and concrete.

Ms Annelie Stark stressed the importance of having a clear idea about FOGAR's financial implications.

Mr Philippe Bonneau (Basse-Normandie) asserted the full support of his region for FOGAR. He could not imagine there being no international outlook in the CPMR's work, and did not doubt the transparency of this initiative.

Mr Jorma Pitkälä (Päijjat Häme) supported Mr Martini's proposals.

Mr Claudio Martini proposed to close the debate by approving the minutes of the Augustów Political Bureau meeting. The minutes were adopted.

2- Financial decisions: Adoption of the draft 2008 budget and the financial situation in the current year

Messrs Yves Morvan and Jacques Boulau (Administrative Council) presented the accounts in three parts:

2.1. A brief report on the 2006 accounts, which are practically balanced (- €6,000). The 2006 accounts had already been adopted by the Augustów Political Bureau meeting, and should be ratified by the CPMR General Assembly.

2.2. An update on the current 2007 accounts, for which the budget had been adopted by the Administrative Council and the General Assembly of the regions in Murcia in 2006. It is foreseen that the accounts will be slightly in the positive at the end of the year (forecasted + €50,000 or 60,000) in spite of the increase in the budget for travel costs. This is due to:

- o additional receipts resulting from three new regions having joined;
- o the payment of dues expected from Sicily Region;
- o additional receipts from the ASDP and Gederi projects (deficit off-balanced by the Southern Europe Atlantic Fund for the ASDP and deficit partially off-balanced by one-off contributions from four regions for Gederi).

Debate on the 2007 accounts

Mr Kevan Lim was concerned about the increase in the travel budget. He was not pleased to learn that this budget had been underestimated.

Mr Henning Gjellerod (Midtjylland) spoke on behalf of the Danish regions, which had had a discussion on this subject and shared the concerns of the representative of the East of England Regional Assembly.

Mr Xavier Gizard said that the 2007 travel costs as presented were significantly lower than those really incurred in order to be able to submit a balanced budget. The fact that these costs have been exceeded was therefore not at all surprising.

2.3. A proposal for the 2008 budget. Mr Morvan said that this was both an austerity budget (closure of the Porto Forward Studies Unit, elimination of one assistant position in Brussels, end of the fisheries contract) and one of expansion (recruitment of a secretary to cope with the increased workload, recruitment of an expert and a research officer). The expenditure resulting from external cooperation will be financed by dedicated funds from the 2007 budget and the regions' voluntary contributions.

Messrs Yves Morvan and Jacques Boulau said that dues had been indexed to inflation since 2004 and believed that a step forward needed to be made. They outlined four scenarios:

Proposed increase	Estimated impact on the 2008 budget
+1.91% (Eurostat inflation)	- €67,885
+4%	- €26,845
+5%	- €7,169
+6%	+ €12,526

They recommended an increase of 5%.

Debate on the 2008 accounts

Mr Xavier Gizard said that the CAAC, FOGAR and nrg4SD are separate from the CPMR budget and have no impact on it or on the member regions' dues. These three budget headings partly explain the increase in travel costs (they contribute up to more or less €95,000).

Mr Claudio Martini proposed that a three-year agreement similar to that of Stavanger be adopted: an increase in dues making it possible to achieve a balanced budget in 2008, and then stability for 2009 and 2010 (an inflation rate increase).

Mr Kevan Lim supported this proposal.

Ms Gunn Marit Helgesen (Telemark) said the regions do not have any choice if they want the CPMR's activities to be maintained. If no increase were to be voted in 2007, it would then be necessary to cut activities and choose which ones to focus on.

The 2008 budget, taking into account a 5% increase in dues and the fact that there will be no increase in dues for 2009 and 2010 other than those linked to inflation, was adopted by the Assembly. The total income, including the CPMR, the geographical commissions, the internal and external cooperation programmes and the CAAC are €3,151,770, and the total expenditure is €3,243,740. After carrying forward dedicated funds for a total sum of €84,801, the accounts for the draft 2008 budget present a deficit of €7,169.

The scale of dues adopted by the General Assembly for 2008 is as follows:
€0.009983 per inhabitant

Minimum dues for regions with less than 621,760 inhabitants: €6,207

Adoption of the draft Final Declaration and draft resolutions

Mr Jean-Didier Hache (Islands Commission) presented the results of the resolutions synthesis group:

- No remarks were made on the amendments proposed regarding the Final Declaration, the resolution submitted by the North Sea Commission, the two resolutions submitted by the Intermediterranean Commission or the resolution submitted by the CPMR.
 - The resolution submitted by the Baltic Sea Commission must be debated by the General Assembly, notably the amendment proposed by the Islands and North Sea Commissions.
- Mr Christian Guyonvarc'h** asked for a stylistic correction (removal of "of fossil fuel").
- **Reinhard Boest (Mecklenburg-Vorpommern)** raised a query about the suitability of the resolution presented by the Baltic Sea Commission on the Via Baltica. The problem is currently before the European Court of Justice, and he said he would vote against this proposal.

3- Review of membership applications

The membership applications from the Burgas, Monastir and Syddanmark regions were approved by the Political Bureau.

4- Additional nominations to the Political Bureau

Mr Xavier Gizard presented the list of new Political Bureau members. The list was adopted.

5- Next Political Bureau meeting

The next CPMR Political Bureau meeting will take place in Seville on 19 January 2008.

The South Aegean Region (Greece) offered to host a Political Bureau meeting in Rhodes on 27 June 2008.

FRIDAY 19 OCTOBER 2007

SESSION 3: TOWARDS A EUROPEAN MARITIME POLICY

Mr Claudio Martini welcomed Commissioner Joe Borg and informed the Assembly about the success of the European summit in Lisbon, which reached an agreement on the simplified European Treaty; he invited the CPMR to send a message of congratulations and support to the Council and the Commission.

He then spoke of the CPMR's priority and its commitment to the development of a European maritime policy. A detailed analysis of the proposals will soon be made but the regions' objective is to validate a

coherent action plan at the European summit in December 2007. On this matter he said that the CPMR was totally available to assist the future Slovenian Presidency.

He then gave the Assembly his initial personal thoughts on the matter: the Blue Paper sows the seeds of everything the regions' have been hoping for, but it will now be important to turn this into a winning strategy, even though it had been hoped that there would be a long-term vision, symbolic initiatives and greater visibility in budgetary terms.

Overall, the Blue Paper is satisfactory, notably regarding the consideration given to social aspects, and the regions are willing to participate in the initiatives proposed.

Mr Joe Borg (Fisheries and Maritime Affairs Commissioner) said straight away that, with the Blue Paper, the time for action has come. His idea is to combine the Gothenburg and Lisbon strategies and to strengthen consistency with sectoral policies. He then described the most important points in the Blue Paper, starting with governance. To improve this, governments are invited to create synergies between policies and update legislation in a similar way to what has been achieved in Canada and Australia.

He stressed that there is no single approach, but that the Commission would like to provide a framework to enable the different communities concerned to act, as well as tools to strengthen coordination. He mentioned three such tools: surveillance, spatial planning and information. As examples of measures to be undertaken, he mentioned the development of an integrated network of vessel-tracking systems, and an observation and data network. A roadmap is planned for 2008, but this will mostly remain within the competence of the member states.

He then emphasised the need for a healthy maritime environment and the duty to protect marine ecosystems and the quality of coastal areas, which also need to be protected from the consequences of climate change.

To achieve this, the regions have an important role to play and the EU financing instruments at their disposal must be used to the full.

He concluded by stipulating that this initiative constitutes a major political development and we are at the beginning of a process aimed at introducing concrete measures, in which the regions will have a key and acknowledged role as regulators of coastal activity.

Lastly, he thanked the CPMR for the commitment it has displayed to developing an integrated maritime policy until now, and said he counted on its active support in the future.

Mr João Mira Gomes (Portuguese State Secretary for Defence and Maritime Affairs), on behalf of the Portuguese Government, welcomed the European Commission's Communication, which in his view reflects the particular nature of maritime issues by replacing a fragmented approach with a unified and integrated approach. He stressed that the Blue Paper is the result of intense cooperation, and that Portugal has adopted this approach since the beginning: as early as 2005, a joint contribution by France, Spain and Portugal was sent to the European Commission and taken up by the Green Paper.

He believed the Lisbon conference will be a high-point of the Portuguese Presidency because it will bring together maritime representatives from the 27 EU states, Norway and Iceland. The Portuguese Presidency will use the occasion to listen to the views of the member states, which it will do until the final conclusion at the end of the European Council in December 2007. Concrete and staggered measures will then be implemented as from January 2008, while respecting the principle of subsidiarity. He said that nobody knows whether there will be a specific maritime budget heading in the EU's future budget. The decision will be taken later on. He concluded by asserting that the regions provide added value to maritime policy.

Mr Jean-Yves le Drian thanked Commissioner Borg and hoped that the Blue Paper would not be 'pale blue'. He outlined the work carried out by the CPMR and the extensive efforts of all maritime stakeholders.

Two major political achievements have been attained as a result of the work carried:

- affirmation of the notion of a European maritime area;
- affirmation of an integrated maritime policy.

Some thematic achievements should also be underlined in the 29-point action plan accompanying the Blue Paper: research, clusters, safety, transport, energy, social issues and employment in particular; there is therefore a real desire to act.

However, there is also some frustration and regret about the role of the regions, the absence of any sea basin concept, the management methods, and the lack of any long-term strategy for identifying maritime finance within European funds.

He concluded by stating that the CPMR will continue its concerted efforts and participate actively in the implementation of the measures through a working/monitoring group that he suggested should be called the Aqua Marina Group.

Debate

The Shetlands representative underlined that the Blue Paper is the most important political initiative developed by the Commission for maritime regions. The regions would like to see the introduction of concrete measures as soon as possible and some must be tailored to meet the needs of coastal communities. However, he stated that such an initiative will be difficult to “sell” to fishing communities whose activities have collapsed in recent years.

Ms Christel Liljeström congratulated Commissioner Borg and said she was keen to continue making efforts. She asked if the Commission is prepared to accept that regional and local authorities be responsible for the delivery of this integrated maritime policy. She emphasised the need to reintegrate the notion of sea basins in order to have a differentiated approach to delivery.

Ms Gunn Marit Helgesen also congratulated Commissioner Borg and stressed the interest of the ecosystemic approach and the direct involvement of the partners. She also emphasised the need for financial resources to ensure successful delivery of the action plan, notably as far as integrated coastal zone management is concerned.

The representative from Cantabria congratulated the Commission and repeated the Atlantic regions’ commitment to involvement in the action plan, notably regarding maritime safety. He also underlined how important it is for the regions to participate directly in the work of the European Maritime Safety Agency.

Mr Philippe Duron (Basse-Normandie) emphasised the following three points: climate change and notably the need to assess its socio-economic consequences; ports and maritime transport in relation to the reduction of formalities in the Schengen Area; and fisheries, in particular the need to support small-scale coastal fishing.

Mr Roald Bergsaker (Rogaland) considered this initiative to be an exemplary process, which he totally supports. He stressed the need for cross-sectoral approaches and mentioned the example of the Barents Sea Corridor and relations with Russia. He said that the Norwegian regions’ strategic priority is to strengthen the concept of the Far North.

In response to the comments and questions, **Commissioner Borg** firstly stressed that the Blue Paper is a reflection of the majority opinions expressed during the consultation period. It is the start of a process that is not yet complete, but that sets out clear guidelines for action.

On fisheries, he acknowledged that certain areas have seen their activity collapse, in spite of the Common Fisheries Policy, which has nevertheless helped to limit the damage. However, the decrease in stocks of certain species is a reality that must at all costs be taken into account through controls on authorisations for catches.

Concerning the role of regional and local authorities, he fully agreed that they have an important role to play in the preparation of guidelines for this maritime policy and that uniform rules are not desirable. It will be necessary to adapt their application to the different contexts, although it will be appropriate to have clear guidelines; the regions will be associated to the definition of these guidelines, which are expected to be available in 2008.

On financial matters, the European Parliament’s Budget Committee has released €10m to support a cross-sectoral fisheries initiative aimed at developing data collection methods and models. Funds exist for other aspects, mainly through the regional fund. The possibility of having a specific fund for maritime regions should be examined as from 2013.

Concerning the hopes expressed by the Norwegian regions, he pointed out that active cooperation with neighbouring countries will continue (the same applies in the Mediterranean) and the Commission wishes to cooperate fully.

Further debate

Mr Abdelkader Fradi highlighted the place of the Mediterranean in European maritime policy and hoped that it will contribute to the replacement of the Meda programmes. He emphasised the importance of climate change for this area and hoped for concrete solutions to help cope with it.

The representative from Blekinge wondered whether everyone is aware about the need to introduce an action plan that would also concern the land environment. He took the example of the situation in the Baltic Sea, which is designated as a zone in need of protection, and for which maritime transport needs to be organised in consequence. He asked how national governments are going to deal with these requirements. Concerning the need for management and protection of coastal areas, he wondered if Europe has a sufficient number of qualified experts to implement these principles and whether the CPMR might introduce an initiative in this area.

Ms Lena Celion (Gotland) said she was satisfied with the Blue Paper but drew attention to the need to identify ships and regulate traffic. She suggested that shipping companies and the insurance sector be involved in the discussions and emphasised the dangers arising as a result of climate change. She also asked for island-specific issues to be fully taken into account.

Mr Jérôme Polvéřini (Corsica) expressed his satisfaction that the CPMR's longstanding desire to have an integrated maritime policy had been fulfilled. He had several regrets:

- that there is no directorate-general for maritime policy;
- that the islands are not treated as they should be, bearing in mind their specific circumstances and disadvantages; he asked for this to be corrected through the creation of a statistics office for the islands;
- that greater flexibility be allowed in EU state aid policy.

Mr Richard Westlake, speaking on behalf of Mr Humphrey Temperley, drew attention to the situation of small ports, which play a key role for communities even though they have little economic clout. Concerning maritime safety, he wondered if the current measures are sufficiently effective for protected listed coastal sites and whether specific measures should be envisaged.

Mr Uwe Döring (Schleswig-Holstein and the Committee of the Regions) spoke of the Committee of the Regions' contribution to the process of developing an integrated maritime policy and confirmed that this body proposes to boost the potential offered by seas and oceans.

He emphasised the very positive aspects of the Blue Paper, notably the action plan and the consistency that comes across. He also pointed out certain weaknesses relating to the lack of vision for the future and the absence of methods for achieving the stated objectives.

In conclusion, he announced the organisation of the Blue Planet Forum, which will take place at the end of 2007 in Brussels.

In response to these observations and questions, **Mr João Mira Gomes** emphasised that we are currently entering a practical application phase and that the Portuguese Presidency will do its utmost to ensure that the Blue Paper is adopted by the Council in December. Regarding the islands, and more specifically the outermost regions, it would be best to wait until 2008 to see how these issues will be tackled. On shipping vessels, he referred to the need to find innovative solutions. Concerning foreign policy and neighbourhood relations, he stressed the need to strengthen all types of exchanges.

He concluded by underlining that this presents a real opportunity to rekindle citizens' support for the European project, especially because nearly 50% of them live and work in maritime regions.

Mr Claudio Martini spoke, to conclude this session, stressing the great interest aroused by this initiative, which is deemed to be an opportunity to launch concrete measures. He noted the additional demands expressed by the regions and that the need for realism, as requested by Commissioner Borg, will not prevent close scrutiny of the follow-up process started.

He also noted the concerns expressed by the islands and outermost regions.

Lastly, while we are a little uneasy, it is nevertheless necessary to extend the dialogue beyond assistance and the need for exceptions. We also need to aim for excellence as part of competitiveness.

He re-voiced President Le Drian's call for the creation of a working group to monitor the delivery of the maritime policy action plan, and proposed that it should be called the Aqua Marina Group as suggested by President Le Drian.

SESSION 4: PROSPECTS FOR THE EU BUDGET

Ms Eulalia Rubio (Notre Europe) presented the conclusions of the seminar organised in April 2007 by the think tank Notre Europe on the role of the EU budget.

- A first set of conclusions focused on what the EU budget is not for, for example: the redistribution of funds between member states, permanent and unconditional support for certain actors and sectors, redistribution to individuals and macroeconomic stabilisation.
- A second set of conclusions focused on what the EU budget should be for: financing of EU public goods, support for a political project and the accomplishment of the Union's statutory goals, compensation for the negative effects of the integration process, and financing incentives to leverage private spending.
- How, on this basis, can progress be made towards a good European budget? A range of questions are still unanswered on this issue, notably concerning the criteria that should be chosen, the overall size of the budget, the extent of the reform process, whether or not a European tax needs to be introduced, and, if it does, how to divide budget powers between the three EU institutions.

Debate

Mr Desmond Clifford (Wales) urged that the budget debate should not be underestimated. He said that in 2005, the richest member states wanted to reduce the overall volume of expenditure and not just cap it. This discussion paves the way for another on the future financial perspectives that will start in a few years. He asked the regional authorities to do their own lobbying vis-à-vis their national governments.

Mr Javier Velasco Mancebo (Asturias) said that, in the 1980s, budget decisions were based on economic efficiency studies. He expressed nostalgia about this Golden Age, and called on Europe and the CPMR to invest in such work.

Mr Xavier Gizard welcomed this presentation, which helped to raise the regions' awareness about the work to be done in coming years. He outlined the following stages:

- January 2008: a seminar debate on the future of regional policies in Seville (jointly organised by the CPMR and the Committee of the Regions at the invitation of President Chaves);
- May 2008: a seminar to present the work of the Bureau of European Policy Advisers (BEPA) organised by President Barroso. The CPMR will attend;
- October 2008: invitation of the Budget Commissioner, Ms Dalia Grybauskaitė to the CPMR General Assembly to find out how she perceives the future of this process.

Generally speaking, work on the CAP and regional policy contributes directly to the debate on the European budget.

Mr Vannino Chiti (Italian Government) said how much he appreciated the CPMR and that he felt such organisations to be essential in order to work constantly to forge a European spirit based on personal relationships and common projects. He then spoke about the results of the Lisbon summit to revive the European project and hoped that the Treaty will be signed by the Heads of State and Government on 13 December.

He then underlined the need for a social Europe, which alone can create cohesion between peoples. He called for more justice and stability, notably in the Mediterranean where Europe must reclaim the most important position.

On this point, he emphasised President Sarkozy's initiative to create a Mediterranean Union within which the regions would have an important role to play in pioneering projects, programmes, exchanges of experience and good practice and in finding solutions to the immigration problem.

Concerning sustainable development and climate change, he noted Europe's pre-eminent position and the major role of the regions. He stressed the CPMR's ability to anticipate and felt that it is necessary for a tripartite approach (involving the Commission, states and regions) to be implemented in order to meet the challenges.

In conclusion, he presented an institutional reform plan currently being prepared in Italy. It aims to replace the Senate with a Chamber of Regions, Provinces and Cities that would have joint powers with the Chamber of Deputies. This initiative would complement other measures aimed at encouraging more decentralisation, such as the presence of regional representatives in Italy's Council delegations – for example – two regional representatives participate in EU work on state aid.

He concluded by emphasising the importance of the year 2013, which could offer a real opportunity to strengthen the partnership between states and regions. If this does not happen, there will be a high risk of disintegration and loss of cohesion.

SESSION 5: PRESENTATION OF NEW MEMBER REGIONS

Seven new regions are joining the CPMR: Picardie (France), Schleswig-Holstein (Germany), Burgas and Varna (Bulgaria), Chiatura (Georgia), Syddanmark (Denmark) and Monastir (Tunisia) ; Odessa (Ukraine) and Schleswig-Holstein (Germany) presented their respective regions.

SESSION 6: EXAMINATION AND VOTE ON THE FINAL DECLARATION AND RESOLUTIONS

Mr Claudio Martini introduced the session by proposing to add a declaration welcoming the Lisbon European Council's adoption of the Treaty and the arrangements for constituting the European Parliament. The declaration was adopted (1 abstention: Hampshire)

Mr Jean-Didier Hache presented the results of the Resolutions Group:

1. *The final declaration was adopted unanimously (1 abstention: Hampshire)*

2. *The resolution submitted by the North Sea Commission was adopted unanimously.*

3. The resolution submitted by the Baltic Sea Commission was debated:

The Islands and North Sea commissions requested the removal of part of Paragraph 5 of the resolution. This point was debated:

- **The representative from Västerbotten** again stressed the reality of climate change in the regions. It generates a high risk of desertification, migration and conflict. The serious nature of the situation calls for strong measures such as the increase of fossil fuel prices for dissuasive purposes. He understood the remarks of the islands and coastal regions, but thought that the cost will be even higher if people wait before acting.
- **Mr Kevan Lim** supported the removal of this sentence because he felt it was based on too simplistic arguments on renewable energies. What would in fact happen if they were not developed quickly enough? Renewable energies must firstly become cheap, which will beforehand entail an increase in R&D in the sector.
- **A Scottish representative** also supported the removal of this sentence because it would seem to favour a fiscal policy against their interests, notably with regard to islands' accessibility. It is not possible to adopt measures that would strangle certain economies.
- **The representative from Western Isles** felt that such a measure would be introduced to the detriment of rural areas and thus called for the sentence to be removed.
- **The representative from Catalonia** felt it is possible to tax fossil fuels and transfer the revenue to subsidise the development of renewable energies.
- **The representative from Midtjylland** invited the European Commission to take on a major role in international protocols and supported the removal of the sentence.
- **The representative from Hiiumaa-Saaremaa** supported the removal of the sentence.
- **Mr Claudio Martini** said he agreed with its removal because it would make us look like those who want change through disaster and not through progressive adjustment. Before increasing the price of fossil fuels, it seems necessary to change the way people live. This should be the thrust of our message, otherwise it will be confusing. However, he appreciated the Baltic Sea Commission's initiative aimed at proposing less comfortable options in order to achieve real results.
- **Mr Jean-Didier Hache** said that this proposal raises a fundamental issue which will have to be reflected upon. There is sometimes a conflict of interest between energy and territorial cohesion.

- **The representative from Hordaland** wanted encouragement to be given to policies encouraging the use of renewable energy sources that stimulate innovation, research and discoveries.
- **Mr Claudio Martini** pointed out that the current text already takes this aspect into account.
- **The representative from Västerbotten** agreed to withdraw the sentence without having a vote.

The other amendments to this resolution were adopted unanimously.

4. The resolution submitted by the Baltic Sea Commission on the Via Baltica was debated:

The representative from Galicia pointed out that this resolution refers to a very complex problem. He considered that the adoption of this text would send the wrong message: the idea that economic development take priority over the environment, as if the environment was just a minor issue. He felt that, to the contrary, the environment and regional development need to be reconciled with one another. Even though he understood the need for infrastructure in this region, he thought that one cannot give the impression that this can be developed at any price.

Ms Christel Liljeström pointed out that this route is very important.

Mr Dariusz Piontkowski (Podlaskie) said that the people who came to Augustów for the last CPMR Political Bureau meeting could see the lack of infrastructure in the region. He also said that the area concerned by the project is not a protected one, but there are certainly some areas of habitat that need to be protected. This is why the project seeks to compensate in environmental terms in the framework of construction. He concluded by stressing that this project will above all make it possible to protect the human environment, which the current situation does not allow satisfactorily.

The representative of Ostrobothnia stated that this project already goes back a long way. As early as 1994, commitments were made concerning the Via Baltica and plans were proposed. He hoped that the text could be adopted.

Mr Claudio Martini specified that the objective of this text was not just to unblock the situation but also to ask the European Commission to re-examine it in accordance with the principles of sustainable development and equity between citizens.

The resolution was approved (4 votes against and 10 abstentions)

5. *The resolution submitted by the Intermediterranean Commission on pollution in the Mediterranean was adopted unanimously (1 abstention)*

6. *The resolution submitted by the Intermediterranean Commission on forest fires was adopted unanimously.*

7. *The resolution submitted by the CPMR on climate change was adopted unanimously.*

Mr Xavier Gizard presented the list of new Political Bureau members. The list was adopted unanimously.

SESSION 7: BUDGET DECISIONS

Messrs Yves Morvan and Jacques Boulau presented:

- A brief report on the 2006 accounts, which are balanced. The 2006 accounts had already been adopted by the Augustów Political Bureau meeting, and were ratified by the General Assembly.
- An update on the current 2007 accounts. It is foreseen that the budget will be slightly in the positive at the end of the year (forecasted €50,000 or €60,000)
- A proposal for the 2008 budget. Jacques Boulau reported on the debate held on the subject in the Political Bureau meeting the day before, and Claudio Martini reported on the Political Bureau's debate on FOGAR.

Debate on the draft budget for 2008

Mr Kevan Lim said he agreed with the proposal. He was pleased that FOGAR will be on the agenda at the Political Bureau meeting in January 2008 and that the 5% increase is not due to FOGAR. He asked for a report to be made on this 5% at the Political Bureau meeting in January.

Ms Josefina Moreno (Murcia) agreed that a solution had to be found regarding the 2008 budget deficit, but stressed that budgets should not have deficits.

Mr Claudio Martini said that the General Secretariat will prepare an overview on the use of expenditure in order to ensure that they are not excessive and that the CPMR does not exceed its commitments.

The draft 2008 budget was approved, with 6 votes against and 5 abstentions.

Furthermore, the following Declaration was adopted unanimously (1 abstention):

"The CPMR's plenary Assembly, meeting in Florence in 2007, approves the Administrative Council's proposal to increase by 5% the membership dues for 2008 in order to manage as best as possible the stringent budget to develop CPMR's activities and agrees that in 2009-10 there should be no additional increases in dues other than in line with the EU rate of inflation".

CONCLUSION

President Claudio Martini brought the work of the General Assembly to a close by thanking all of the delegates. He also thanked Aquitaine, Västra Götaland and Aberdeen City regions, which will respectively organise and host the next general assemblies in 2008, 2009 and 2010.