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EUROPE'S ISLANDS READY TO SEIZE THE OPPORTUNITIES OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT... BUT WANT THE RESOURCES TO DO IT

Meeting in Ponta Delgada for the 30th annual conference of the **CPMR Islands Commission**, the European island regional authorities stated that they were determined to seize all the opportunities offered by a policy for sustainable development given that, quite apart from its intrinsic merits, this could play an instrumental role in strengthening economic, social and territorial cohesion within the EU.

"The development of renewable energies, the promotion of environmentally-friendly tourism or the protection of marine species and the proper management of fish stocks are questions that touch on areas where sustainable development and territorial cohesion cross," remarked **Alex MacDonald**, Convener of the Outer Hebrides and outgoing President of the Islands Commission. *"However, there are two conditions to us being able to seize these opportunities. Firstly, our people and industries need to be fully involved in this strategy, and this will only be possible if they are likely to gain tangible benefits in economic and social terms. Making island territories attractive does not mean turning them into Indian reserves!"*

"Secondly," added President MacDonald, *"the EU needs to introduce an adapted political, economic and financial framework to address the specific constraints of our territories which often require special efforts."*

Developing trans-European transport and energy networks, overcoming administrative barriers, an integrated approach for different EU policies or even use of suitable statistical tools to better pinpoint island realities are just some of the ideas developed during the Azores conference. It might also be pointed out that the Islands Commission expressed its support for the ISLE-PACT initiative, which aims to reduce carbon emissions in the island regions by 20% by massively developing renewable energies.

Finally, the delegates stated that they were especially interested to see what proposals the European Commission would be setting out on the future of cohesion policy after 2013 and are counting on these proposals to take into account the provisions laid down in the new Article 174 of the Lisbon Treaty.

In his welcome address to the delegates, **President Carlos César**, Leader of the Azores Government, underlined that *"Islands and Outermost Regions must now meet the challenges arising from the new institutional structure of the Union while coping with the Crisis and the future implementation of EU policies. It is in this context of new challenges, and with a renewed ambition, that I wish to officially confirm my desire to assume the presidency of the Islands Commission for the next mandate."*

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