PRESS RELEASE

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THE FIRST WORLDWIDE MEETING OF REGIONS

Brazil, Argentina, Tunisia, Chile, Russia, South Africa and of course the European Union. For the first time, leaders from Regions the world over have been discussing their views on globalisation, a phenomenon that imposes limits on the Regions, but also offers opportunities.

At the invitation of Carlos Manuel Cesar, President of the Autonomous Government of the Azores in Portugal, the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions of Europe (CPMR) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), held a discussion seminar on “the place of the Regions in globalisation”. On the occasion of this seminar – organised under the high patronage of the President of the European Commission, Mr José Manuel Durao Barroso, who opened the proceedings by videoconference; the Director General of the WTO, Mr Pascal Lamy; and with the cooperation of the OECD – a framework cooperation agreement was signed between the CPMR and the UNDP. The aim is to step up cooperation actions between European Regions and Regions from other continents with a view to fostering the gradual emergence of a worldwide expression of regions. “The Commission is very much attached to the principle of solidarity,” said Mr Barroso, “to a regional dimension that is increasingly present in all our policies. A partnership between the EU, international organisations and regions is essential if we are to rise to all the challenges that face us, including globalisation.”

“We are convinced,” stated Claudio Martini, President of the CPMR and of Tuscany Region in his opening speech, “firstly of the need to develop regional structures at international level so as to protect the interests of regional populations and involve the regions as the most important partners in coordinating development strategies, and secondly to ensure that controlled globalisation brings advantages to our populations.”

For Christophe Nuttall, the UNDP’s Director of Resources and Strategic Partnerships “the Regions can play a major role in terms of identity and global governance. But it is on the ground, especially in developing countries, that the UNDP hopes to benefit not only from the practical but also the human experience of CPMR member Regions in managing a territory.”

Carlos Manuel Cesar, President of the host Region expressed his satisfaction. “This is an extremely important event on account of the relevance of its main issue, the quality and diversity of the institutions involved and the contribution that it will most certainly make to the process by which regional powers worldwide are coming together and cooperating.”

Some of the leaders of the Argentine provinces, Arturo Colombi (Corrientes), Roy Nikish (Chaco) and Juan Carlos Romero (Salta), reminded delegates that globalisation now presents us with a multipolar planet without frontiers, marked by trade and supported by scientific and technological
progress. Regional authorities are concerned by all these changes that they share with their populations, both in terms of the benefits as well as the devastating impacts. From Brazil, **Alexandrina Sobreira De Moura** Chair of the Association of Brazilian States for the Environment, gave her account on the contribution Brazilian States were making to the world sustainable development strategy, while Africa was represented by the Tunisian **Ridha Bouargoub** from Sousse Region and **Laurine Platsky**, Deputy Director General for Special Projects of the Government of Western Cape.

Following the discussions on globalisation, the second part of the debate, introduced by **Michel Vauzelle**, President of the Regional Council of Provence-Alpes-Côte d’Azur (France), addressed the issue of the Regions and sustainable development. “We have an obligation to preserve the “Earth’s capital,” he stated with conviction in his speech before his peers, including the Estonian, **Toomas Kivimagi** (Governor of Pärnumaa County), the Lithuanian, **Zigmantas Beniaminas Kazakevicius** (Governor of Kaunas County), **Gunn Marit Helgesen** (Chair of Telemark Fylkeskommune, Norway, and Vice-President of the CPMR) and the Pole **Janusz Krzyzewsky** (Marshal of Podlaskie Voivodeship). Worth mentioning also is the fascinating speech given by **Gennadi Oleynik**, Councillor in the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, on climate change and his polar experience.

Aside from the political speeches, the seminar also looked at some practical examples. The Director General of the Delegation of Comunidad Valenciana in Brussels, **Juan Manuel Revuelta**, affirmed that “the role of the regions is fundamental for sustainable development at world level and a balance needs to be found between economic growth and respect for the environment. In Valencia for example, to solve environmental and recycling problems, we are converting waste into energy, thus generating jobs and growth.”

At the start of the proceedings an important contribution was made by **Michel Barnier**, former French Foreign Affairs Minister and European Commissioner. “Successful globalisation: we are still a long way off! Positive globalisation: there again, we are still a long way off! However, we are not afraid of the differences and diversities, because we are together and are learning to respect one another. This is why it is important to establish dialogue between European regions and regions from the rest of the world.”

Finally, the European Commission expressed its views with **Eneko Landaburu**, Director General for External Relations, who chaired one full session of the proceedings, and **Joe Borg**, Commissioner for Maritime Affairs, who spoke on behalf of President **José Manuel Durao Barroso**. “The EU has much to share thanks to its long experience in implementing innovative regional policies. These range from the core commitment, in the preamble of the EU’s founding treaty, to ‘reducing the differences between the various regions’, to the Maastricht Treaty’s creation of the Committee of the Regions. For more than 30 years, the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions of Europe has worked at our side, helping to make a success of these policies, and I would like to thank them for that support,” affirmed the Maltese Commission before the signing of the cooperation agreement took place.

Thirty years ago, the CPMR acknowledged the urgent need to structure a mouthpiece for the regional level within a European Union in the process of being set up. Today, in seeking alliances with Regions from other continents, the voice of Europe’s Regions shares the same concerns within the emerging circles of future world governance, such as the World Trade Organisation, International Maritime Organisation, Kyoto Protocol and United Nations General Assembly.

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