“EXTERNAL COOPERATION” GROUP
19TH NOVEMBER 2009 – BARCELONA

- MINUTES -

Present
Cf. list in the Annex

Session 1: Development

Palermo II process – CPMR’s political position

After welcoming those present, Mr. Cortadellas handed over to Mrs. Orihuela who described the work carried out by the CPMR on cooperation for development since the working group’s last meeting (cf. the document “Summary of actions taken with regard to external cooperation”). In particular, she highlighted the various meetings and hearings organised with the European Commission and the Committee of the Regions on the role of Regions in development.

Mrs. Orihuela then described the forthcoming discussions on the future of the European development policy. With the launch of new Community programmes for local and regional authorities, the emergence of new platforms of local and regional stakeholders and the adoption of the Accra Agenda for Action and its evaluation scheduled for 2011 in Seoul, the European Commission is setting up a new discussion forum known as “Palermo II” to debate its development policy and its instruments and more closely integrate the commitments made on an international level. Palermo II is a forum for discussion between the European Commission on the one hand and civil society, the European Parliament, Member States and local and regional authorities on the other.

The forum will extend over several months, from the beginning of 2010. It will allow for a review of the directions taken by development policy and of Community instruments and their implementation. The European Commission has clearly expressed its wish for the process to impact on forthcoming financial regulations. Mrs. Orihuela provided additional information on the frequency and discussion topics of the meetings and working groups that will be set up. She also mentioned the fact that, in addition to working groups, the European Commission intends to organise training and information seminars for partner local and regional authorities in the South, in 2010 and 2011.

It is the CPMR’s job to contribute to the discussion forum, highlighting the concerns of European Regions and their partners in the South. The CPMR will also be involved in the initiative through PLATFORMA, the European local and regional authorities’ platform for development, of which the CPMR has been an active member since the end of 2008.

To ensure that the relevant European partners are aware of the CPMR’s position before the start of the Palermo II process, the General Secretariat is submitting a draft policy position (cf. the document entitled “The Regions in Future European Development Policy: Preparing the Palermo II Process”) for the next CPMR Bureau.

Discussion:

Mrs. Guichet-Lebailly regretted the approach being supported by the European Commission, describing it as a “sleeping partner” approach that does not sufficiently integrate the view of partners in the South and ignores the territorial dimension.
Mr. Bodinier wanted to draw attention to the usefulness of envisaging trilateral development, as far as this is possible, in particular as a South South North approach that would involve a few leading emerging countries, increase the leverage effect and lay the foundations for a more integrated solidarity area. In particular, he emphasised the need to work more with local and regional authorities in Latin America or China and consider the training requirements that this would create.

Mrs. Guillet provided further information on the seminars to be held as part of the Palermo II process (in Bamako in April and Lima in July) and pointed out that seminars most specifically aimed at the NSA-LA programme (Non-State Actors – Local Authorities) would be held in Lebanon during the 1st semester and Vietnam in the 2nd semester. Mrs. Guillet also stated that PLATFORMA wanted to set up a steering committee to take part in the organisation of these seminars with DG EuropeAid and she asked the CPMR and its Inter-Med Commission to become involved.

Mr. Marti expressed satisfaction with the draft document submitted by the CPMR and highlighted the need for Regions to be involved in the definition of development policies. He also considered that the subject of effective aid was a priority for Regions which, through their initiatives, comply with key principles such as the appropriation or uniformity of actions taken. He indicated that the Generalitat in Catalonia has launched discussions of the Regions and the effectiveness of aid. He proposed to share this work with the CPMR and its partners.

Mrs. Orihuela concluded by promising to send out a new draft policy position that would take account of the various comments and observations, before the end of December. The final draft will be submitted to the Political Bureau for approval in February 2010.

Progress on the European “Non-State Actors – Local and Regional Authorities” programme

Mrs. Orihuela announced the launch of a new call for NSA-LA projects by the European Commission’s DG EuropeAid, scheduled for November 2009. She described the progress made since the previous calls for tender and noted that they failed to take adequate account of the specific nature of the local and regional authorities and their partners in the South. She said that, in particular, the changes not only covered the application forms and took account of difficulties inherent to partners in the South but also looked at the priorities and objectives of the projects being developed (Cf. document “NSA-LA calls for projects”).

She stated that the call was limited to local and regional authorities and referred to the three priorities in the programme: i. Actions in partner countries (multi-country), ii. Greater awareness of, and education in development in Europe, iii. Coordination, cooperation and networking between local and regional authorities as regards development. She emphasised the need for awareness of certain topics that are specific to regional authorities, support for local and regional authorities and their networks in the South and the importance placed on the effectiveness of aid. There was also a need to maximise an integrated territorial approach that takes account of all the “sleeping partners” present, with a view to meeting the needs of partners in a consistent, coordinated manner. If necessary, an exchange of experiences and good practices could be arranged between local and regional authorities. She insisted on the need for Regions to play a proactive role in this call for projects. The European Commission will pay great attention to the level of participation and the quality of the projects submitted by the local and regional authorities in order to better define their roles in the future.

Preparing for the Assizes of Decentralised Cooperation

In its 2008 paper entitled, “Local Authorities, Actors for Development”, the European Commission proposed to join with the Committee of the Regions in organising annual Assizes on Decentralised Cooperation. The first Assizes will be held on 2nd December in Brussels. Mrs. Orihuela presented the provisional agenda. She mentioned the excellent collaboration with the Commission and the Committee of the Regions, which ensured the presence of many politicians from the South, partners of CPMR Regions, and enabled the meeting to seek full involvement from cooperation partners. However, she expressed regret at the tardy, chaotic organisation and lack of cooperation between the Commission, the Committee of the Regions and the organisations representing the local and regional authorities. The subjects were mainly suggested by local and regional authorities and their representatives, but the choice of speakers was based on criteria that were far from clear. For the 2010 meeting, the CPMR suggested the setting up of a pilot committee including the Commission, the Committee of the Regions and the local and regional authority agencies at the beginning of 2010.
The next discussions turned to the need for the CPMR to strengthen its ties with the RELEX Commission of the Committee of the Regions. It was proposed to get back into contact after February 2010, once the Commission has been renewed.

The CPMR informed those present that it had already contacted the President of the European Parliament’s Development Committee, Mrs. Joly, and that it will be increasing its ties with the Parliament early in 2010 with regard to development and the role of local and regional authorities.

**PLATFORMA, the Platform of Regional and Local Authorities for Development**

Mrs. Guillet, PLATFORMA’s project manager, reminded the meeting when and why the Platform of Regional and Local Authorities for Development was set up. It came into being at the end of 2008, co-funded by the European Commission as part of the NSA-LA programme. PLATFORMA is an umbrella organisation for some twenty national and European LRA associations including the CPMR, all of them proactive in the development sector. The aim is to make LRAs and their concerns heard by European bodies and ensure that they make a useful contribution to the definition and implementation of European development policy. The platform is also designed to facilitate work carried out jointly by LRAs involved in development, and projects involving LRAs and civil society, notably NGOs.

Now at the end of its first year of operation, the results have been positive (Cf. the document entitled “Summary and Follow-up of Consultations from the Commission”). The European Commission is gradually recognising the structure as a partner which must be taken into account and which tables relevant proposals that reflect the realities in the field. The Platform is a useful transmission belt, linking European institutions and the LRAs and their partners in the South. In particular, it draws attention to LRAs during major events linked to development e.g. the European Development Days that were held in Stockholm in October 2009. PLATFORMA was present and was able to increase awareness of its members’ actions. PLATFORMA also enables LRAs to get to know each other better and discuss their work and their ideas for development.

Mrs. Guillet then described the actions undertaken in 2009 including various seminars such as the one organised by the CPMR in the PACA Region at the end of May and the ones planned for 2010 including a seminar in Bucharest in March on education for development and in April or May in Andalusia on LRAs and climate change. A final conference will be held in Brussels at the end of 2010 to look at the outcomes of the PLATFORMA initiative. In addition to the actions contractually scheduled as part of the project, the platform is expected to take a position in 2010 on the preparation of Europe’s future development policy, the interim review of the NSA-LA programme, and the water and energy utilities. Effectiveness of aid should also be considered by the platform with a view to carrying the message on the contributions of LRAs to this central topic, which will be the subject of a conference in Seoul in 2011 (follow-up to the Accra Conference on the effectiveness of aid). Mrs. Guillet concluded by referring to the support provided to the European Charter on Cooperation through support for local governance.

**Discussion:**

Mrs. Orihuela thanked Mrs. Guillet and emphasised the CPMR’s wish to be involved in the platform. She pointed out that the CPMR promotes an integrated, territorial approach to development through the platform and that PLATFORMA should be an instrument and a sounding board through which to defend the Regions’ positions in a collaborative manner. She stated that a decision would have to be taken early in 2010 on the CPMR’s involvement in a new development phase for the platform. She suggested that, if it were decided to continue, it would be appropriate to suggest a realignment of the platform’s work so that it was more concerned with basic approaches than with the organisation of seminars. Meetings are necessary during a launch phase as they increase general awareness of the structure but now the platform should focus its attention on a certain number of areas such as effectiveness, a territorial approach and the involvement of LRAs in defining EU foreign policies.

Mr. Gizard considered that the platform’s work in 2010 should include preparation for the European Council in June that will be looking at development-related issues. He described the contacts made with the future Spanish Presidency of the European Union. He also suggested, with regard to the topic of development and climate change, that the issue should be worked on with the UNDP which has developed a programme for a territorial approach to climate change, with Regions from all five continents.

Mr. Hueso stated that it was important to extend the CPMR’s involvement in the platform but that its work should be more specifically focussed on fundamental proposals on the role of Regions in development.
Mr. Martix returned to the importance of the question of effectiveness when providing aid and on the need to prepare for the Seoul conference on this very point. He stated that, within ECOSOC (the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations), there was a forum to discuss a cooperative approach to development, and that it might be worthwhile for PLATFORMA to join the forum. He also emphasised the idea of continuing the work undertaken by the platform although he agreed that it should focus on think tanks and working parties to consider the role of the Regions in development rather than on the organisation of seminars.

Mr. Gizard replied that it would be very worthwhile joining the forum and drawing ECOSOC’s attention to the territorial approach.

Participants at the meeting wanted to be kept informed of future developments regarding the continuation of the platform’s work.

Session 2: Neighbourhood policy and territorial cooperation

Before turning to the specific topic of the European programme for neighbourhood cooperation in the European Union, Mrs. Orihuela handed over to Messrs. Bodinier and Papadimitriou who described the situation in the Mediterranean and the Balkans – Black Sea Commission.

Mr. Bodinier referred to ARLEM1 whose aim is to provide a territorial view of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership through the promotion of LRA participation in think tanks and projects within the Mediterranean area as a whole (North, South and East). The aim of ARLEM is to become the consultative body of LRAs as part of the Union’s work to provide good governance for the Mediterranean area. After stagnating in 2009, ARLEM is now due to be officially set up on 21st January 2010 in Barcelona. The CPMR and its Inter-Med Commission will be members of ARLEM. Mr. Oriano Otočan, from the Istria Region of Croatia, added that its president is also a member of ARLEM. Mrs. Repullo rounded off the information from Mr. Bodinier about the days in January and also informed the meeting that the next Forum of Mediterranean LRAs would be held in Barcelona on 2nd and 3rd May under the aegis of the Spanish Presidency of the European Union.

Mr. Papadimitriou informed the meeting that the CPMR’s Balkans Black Sea Commission had obtained partner status for the sectoral dialogue with BSEC2. This means that the regional dimension was taken into account for certain very specific topics. He also outlined the Commission’s involvement in the Civil Society Forum organised as part of the Eastern Partnership being promoted by the European Union. Finally, he referred to the 1st call for projects, part of the territorial cooperation programme for the Black Sea area, and explained how the Commission worked on the promotion of projects.

With regard to neighbourhood policy, Mrs. Orihuela indicated that considerations had been given to it after the discussions at the 1st meeting of the working group. The considerations are being discussed in the CPMR’s territorial cooperation working group. A joint seminar will be held in May 2010 in Valencia with the title, “Territorial Cooperation, European Union and neighbourhood policy: what contributions can be made to the EU’s strategy objectives for 2020?” The aim of this seminar will not be to discuss current projects and programmes but to draw lessons from their operation and learn something from which to build more effective cooperation projects in the future. Mrs. Orihuela thanked the Inter-Med and Balkans Black Sea Commissions for their hard work and called on them to continue in the same vein in the future. She also called upon the Baltic Sea Commission to become more involved. A steering committee will be set up to organise the seminar and will include Catalonia as Chair of the external cooperation group.

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1 ARLEM: Euro-Mediterranean Regional and Local Assembly
2 BSEC: Black Sea Economic Cooperation set up in June 1992 by Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Georgia, Greece, Moldova, Romania, Russia, Turkey and Ukraine. The aim of BSEC is the promotion of multilateral political and economic initiatives to promote interaction and harmony between Member States and to ensure peace, stability and prosperity within the Black Sea Region.

"External Cooperation" Group - 19th November 2009 - Barcelona
Minutes - Ref. CRPMRPV100006 A0 - page 4
Session 3: External cooperation

Agriculture/Food Security

Mr. Gizard presented the thoughts of the CPMR, with the support of FOGAR, on the topic of agriculture and food security, considerations that are linked to the discussions on the post-2013 CAP. They are also linked to the question of how to feed a population that will soon reach 9 billion. After presenting the conclusions of the UNDP/FAO seminar on agriculture and climate change, which was held in Brest in October, Mr. Gizard presented the Summit of the World’s Regions on Food Security to be held in Dakar on 18th and 19th January 2010. It is important to look at partnerships with the FAO to put together projects on decentralised cooperation in the sectors of agriculture and food security. Mr. Gizard then handed over to the FAO representative who described the proposals for the after-Dakar period and the continuation of cooperation between Regions and United Nations agencies.

Mr. Bertoulx referred to the FAO’s interest in the territorial approach and its contribution to more effective aid. The FAO proposes to increase its work with Regions to implement the projects and priorities identified in Dakar in a more effective manner in the field. In particular, he mentioned the importance of investing migrants’ savings in the territories.

Mr. Gizard referred to the Memorandum of Understanding signed by the CPMR and FAO in June 2009 and expressed his agreement to the idea of a support framework within which to implement decentralised cooperation projects involving Northern Regions, Southern Regions and the FAO.

Mr. Marti indicated that Catalonia shared this view. He also stated that his Region was already working with the FAO on certain projects but that the work should now be completed by a shared strategic vision. There was also a need to involve other stakeholders. The involvement of Regions should not be restricted to projects; it should also be political.

Mrs. Guichet-Lebailly gave her full backing to Catalonia’s view. The Regions are acquiring international policies because it is becoming a necessity. It is fundamentally a political issue, not a financial one. The Regions need a political vision and partners. In Basse Normandie, the terms “international solidarity” and “aid process” have been replaced by the word “partnerships”. In this respect, the Region supports the need for a territorial approach.

Mr. Hueso believed that the involvement of Regions in discussions on food security should become systematic after the Dakar Summit and hoped that this could be achieved within a clearly-defined framework.

Mr. Bodinier indicated that food security was not a priority issue in his Region but that the territorial approach was well-established for numerous topics such as water. He admitted the need for real functional partnerships. The Region had signed a partnership agreement with the FAO but it was not used.

Mr. Gizard suggested that a working group should meet before and after Dakar to consider the actual follow-up to the Summit. He referred to the last steering committee meeting before the Summit, to be held in Rome on 14th December, and invited the Regions to attend. He also mentioned the fact that the FAO’s CWFS3, with a membership of States, agreed to take part in the think tank as a representative of civil society and that, being so, the Regions were involved.

Climate change: the results of the last UNFCC negotiation meeting and preparations for COP15

Mr. Gizard opened the discussion with a look back at the Regions’ involvement in global discussions on climate change. He then handed over to the representative of Catalonia, who was also speaking on behalf of nrg4SD. Mr. Samitier began his paper by indicating that, despite the difficulties, there was still a possibility of reaching an agreement in Copenhagen and that the Kyoto Agreement was valid until 2012. The points put forward by the Regions in negotiations are as follows: the need to recognise the role of the Regions in the adaptation and mitigation of climate change. To date, this point has been retained in the document currently circulating, which is due to be presented at Copenhagen. The importance of integrating it in discussions and actions in Regions North and South and the need to support inter-Regional benchmarking were also mentioned as key points. Mr. Samitier went on to state that, of course, the responsibility for negotiations lay with the States but that the regional and local tiers have a fundamental part to play in the success of climate-

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3 CWFS: Committee on World Food Security
related policies if they are to be effective. He then recalled the various “Regional” events that would be held during the Copenhagen Conference, organised by the Climate Group, nrg4SD and the Committee of the Regions. He concluded by referring to the draft territorial approach to climate change being led by the Regions in developed and developing countries, various regional networks such as nrg4SD, the CPMR and FOGAR, the UNDP and the UNEP. Initial results will be presented at the nrg4SD Annual General Meeting in Montevideo in Uruguay in April 2010.

**Strategy for lobbying the United Nations: The links between the CPMR and global Regional organisations (nrg4SD, FOGAR, etc.)**

Mr. Cortadelles reminded the meeting that the Regions were already working on numerous projects with various UN agencies. However, the Regions should not be seen solely as “sleeping partners” or supporters present during the start-up phase. They should be listened to on a political level and be involved in the definition of the priority actions that will then be implemented in the field. Mr. Cortadelles went on to describe the possible ways in which FOGAR could be recognised as a global network of Regional organisations by the United Nations. In the short term, the best solution seemed to be its recognition by ECOSOC as an NGO; in fact, this seems to be the only possibility for the moment. Despite this, the final aim remains recognition as an intergovernmental organisation. The Regions are public authorities. They cannot be seen in the same light as representatives of civil society, NGOs or the private sector. In the long term, the Regions must be recognised as a category in their own right within the United Nations system. They are governmental stakeholders but are distinct from States.

Before opening the debate, Mr. Gizard stated that the CPMR would be holding a discussion during its next Political Bureau meeting in Asturias in February 2010 on the continuation, in 2010, of the CPMR’s support for FOGAR. With regard to the network’s priorities for 2010, Mr. Gizard referred to the Dakar Summit and its follow-up, as well as assistance with projects involving a territorial approach to climate change. He pointed out that 2010 was also the year in which the network, after 3 years of existence, would be reviewing and developing its Memorandum and Articles of Association. In particular, there would be discussion of whether or not Regions should be directly involved in FOGAR. At present, FOGAR is a “network of networks” and, as such, does not allow for individual participation. However, given the importance, experience and visibility of certain Regions, the question should be raised of potential individual participation through the creation of two colleges of members – individuals or networks of Regions.

Mr. Cortadelles wished to know what those present thought of the potential direct involvement of Regions in the network.

Mr. Papadimitriou replied that the issue was not relevant for the Balkans Black Sea Commission where it was more important, at the moment, to promote regional membership of the CPMR. In this respect, he asked for greater support from the CPMR.

Mr. Hueso indicated that the two-college system existed already within nrg4SD and he thought that it was useful.

Mrs. Guichet-Lebaillly said that FOGAR was necessary since it took discussions out beyond the European Union, meeting a key need. A region such as Basse Normandie would not be heard if it was acting on its own.

Mr. Marti believed that the Regions were much less organised than civil society, globally speaking, and that under-representation was the consequence of a lack of political awareness of the Regions’ role. Better organisation is required if the Regions are to have an effect on global discussions.

Mr. Cortadelles made one final point, indicating that, if necessary for greater impact, FOGAR should complete and extend its areas of work. There should be no limits.

Mr. Minoves described the multilateral development cooperation strategy that had recently been taken up by the Generalitat of Catalonia. It leads straight on from the afternoon’s discussions on the importance of political recognition for the Regions on a global level and their role in providing more effective aid that more closely meets the needs of partners.

The meeting ended with expressions of gratitude on the part of members for the welcome extended by Catalonia and the quality of the day’s debates.
# List of Registered Participants

(As at 18/11/09)

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