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TECHNICAL PAPER FROM THE CPMR GENERAL SECRETARIAT

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN A GLOBAL WORLD

1. A new stage in globalisation.

"The World Is Flat" was the title used recently by Thomas Friedman to give an account of the new stage in globalisation. By this, he wanted to characterise the consequences of the digital revolution: a globalisation process developed between nation states (16th to 18th century), then between corporations (19th and 20th centuries), would be succeeded by one where 6 billion people would become direct competitors and potential partners by virtue of the new generations of communications technologies. This would finally put everyone on a level playing field to capitalise on his or her talents, a far cry from the unequal domination-based relations built up over the last 500 years.

Although such a vision is (quite literally) virtually exciting, it hardly reflects the real situation. Even though the technological core offers a chance for the World to be flat, the same cannot be said of mankind. The world's 6 billion inhabitants belong to profoundly different regional space-times, giving the Earth the immense and beneficial variety of its cultures and civilisations. It is obviously this wealth of diversity which goes against a simplistic globalisation aimed at abolishing age-old human constructions by regarding their specific characteristics as useless barriers to a pre-conceived model of planetary unification.

There must be no doubt as to two of the factors which contribute to the growing interdependence between 6 billion human beings:

- The media through which exchanges take place, bringing about the acceleration and the intensification of the circulation of information, goods, people and capital,
- The threats of universal concern hanging over the very conditions of human life (climate change and risks of pandemics).

A question of no lesser importance is how each of us is able to adapt to this irreversible interdependence. It is within the social, cultural and political structures with which humans have equipped their communities, that their ability to participate in or be excluded from the now planetary course of mankind's existence will be decided.

In the initial stages of globalisation, the sovereign state constituted the most complete form of human organisation. Its borders protected a specific model of individual and collective identity. In a world with a low level of interdependence, the leading minorities had the responsibility of deciding how "porous" their territory would be, by negotiating, defending or extending it with neighbouring countries as well as on a continental and global scale.

The protective borders have shattered under the effects of the new interdependences. Consequently the whole of society once enclosed within these borders now finds itself confronted with the high winds of globalisation and needs to be equipped to sail these winds, not suffer them passively - or even sink.

2. Governance, territory and globalisation

Thus the question of the governance of globalisation is posed at all tiers of organisation of public life. There is no central administration whatsoever capable of orchestrating the response to such a huge challenge any more. In such an open world, power needs to be shared and disseminated by all levels of authorities to permeate society as a whole, so that each individual can form part of the exchange.

This is what, at world level, the debate between Member States on the reform of the United Nations and existing global instruments is seeking to express.

It is to this end that, as of the end of World War II and at the initiative of the States concerned, continental structures have emerged and are being developed (European Union, NAFTA, MERCOSUR, ASEAN, etc.)

At the same time, the large majority of States have undertaken reforms within their borders to create or strengthen sub-national local and regional levels, thus breaking down the number of spheres for organising collective life and involving citizens.

3. Regional development and globalisation.

It is within this context that the Regions have found themselves faced with demands from two sides:

- their populations and economic fabrics have expressed their hopes and concerns and the need to be geared up to cope with the effects of the new stage in globalisation.
- their States and the international institutions have deemed that the regional tier constitutes a new strategic level for organising development activities.

“Decentralising globalisation” is the alternative that could allow everyone in his or her area of life, civilisation and culture, to be a player in the process.

This option also promotes fairness through the **requisite of territorial cohesion**. No prospect of a peaceful 21st century can envisage global integration in which the disparities between territories remain as they are or increase within each State or likewise on a continental and world scale.

From this point of view, the experience led in the European Union allows us to draw many lessons. In this continent hit by the upheavals of inter-state conflicts over many centuries, the emergence of a supra-national Community and its gradual enlargement to include new Member States with wide-ranging levels of development have only been possible at the cost of the requirement known as “economic and social cohesion”. The main instrument of this was and still is a highly active policy to support regional development and territorial cohesion. It is through a **territorial approach to development** that the people of the continent have helped to create a large area designed to eliminate national borders and the wars for which they had long been responsible.

Over the last few years and on the basis of the same premises, the United Nations Development Programme has for its part organised the launch and promotion of the ART-GOLD programmes (Support to territorial networks, local governance and development) in some forty countries.

4. Regional participation in the governance of development activities

It is on the basis of these analyses and experiences that the European Union, the United Nations Development Programme and the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions of Europe have decided to look at possible areas of activity where they could join forces to promote a territorial approach to development:

- For its part, the European Union – the world’s biggest donor – has extended its eligibility criteria to the Regions with regard to the decentralised areas of its external action for the period 2007-2013. This includes its relations with other continents as well as action the framework of its neighbourhood policy.
- The UNDP, in coordination with the other UN agencies, has set up a hub for innovative partnerships in charge of developing and disseminating the ART-GOLD methodology.
- The CPMR has mobilised its 152 member Regions and other European and global networks of Regions with a view to making a more coordinated contribution towards the regional development strategies of other continents.

During the “first international convention for a territorial approach to development” and beyond, these three players hope to streamline the regional development instruments and methods at their disposal for aiding cooperation projects between Regions of the world, in order to help control the territorial effects of globalisation.

This cooperation will be taken forward with an emphasis on:

- Designing and promoting a regional dimension to development strategies within States and continental or sub-continental entities,
- Providing skills support for regional players to help them formulate and implement their development projects,
- Exchanging good practices between Regions throughout the world in terms of regional development and participation in the globalisation process.