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PRESS RELEASE

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THE WORLD'S REGIONS ARE PREOCCUPIED WITH THE CRISIS

The financial and economic crisis was at the centre of the debates at the **Annual General Meeting of the Forum of Global Associations of Regions (FOGAR)** in Florence (IT) on 12 and 13 March 2009, held at the invitation of Claudio Martini, Leader of Tuscany and FOGAR's President.

Two years after the launch of this network, the world's Regions were gathered around the table to discuss how to cope with a dramatic crisis that is gravely affecting them. They are currently doing all they can to find the appropriate short-term emergency solutions to repair the immediate damage and keep the chain reaction under control.

During the debates, a number of proposals were put forward to find a way out of the crisis. [The participants](#) stressed the importance of strengthening the major "regional" groupings such as the European Union, Mercosur, UEMOA¹ and ASEAN², and of the rising influence of the Regions in these groupings and at global level. This also needs to be accompanied by policies for territorial equity and cohesion.

"The European example can help to reinforce these ways and means" recalled Claudio Martini, "the aim is not to export one-size-fits-all solutions, but rather to consider territorial authorities as partners in development and give them the means to fulfil this role. The European example of partnership between the EU, States and Regional and Local Authorities for instance has proved to be effective in improving economic, social and territorial cohesion throughout our continent. I believe that this example can be used elsewhere."

Priscilla Wohl, Executive Director of the Northern Forum³, an international association of Regional Governments from the Arctic Circle, commented, *"our members are generally suffering significantly from the low price of oil, the low demand for natural resources and the reduction in manufacturing. The City of Anchorage, for instance, has a shortfall of \$17 million, and also Hokkaido in Japan and the Russian regions have been all hit hard by the recession."*

Abdourahim Agné, Senegalese Minister for Spatial Planning and Decentralised Cooperation, recalled that in the developing countries, the global economic crisis is having repercussions on the food crisis: *"At present, the resources the developed countries have earmarked for development will be reduced on account of the recession; the only solution is to have a better allocation of resources with well-defined targets. And there is none so urgent as the food crisis that needs to be resolved. The innovative approach is to work with the regions to see through this crisis."* In this regard, the Minister announced that a Summit of the World's Regions on Food Security will be organised in Dakar on 18 and 19 January 2010. Furthermore, FOGAR has signed today a [Memorandum of Understanding](#) with the FAO.

In the [Final Declaration](#), FOGAR's regions are keen to underline the productive dialogue they have established with the European institutions, which has materialised in improving the way the territorial approach to development is taken into account in European co-funding for Regions from the North and South involved in decentralised cooperation projects. In this respect, a conference on *"Regional Governance in a Global Context"* will take place in Brussels on 11 and 12 May 2009, organised jointly by the European Commission and FOGAR.

FOGAR plans to meet again in Yukon (Canada) on 1st September 2009 at the invitation of the Northern Forum³, and in Latin America in 2010 at the invitation of OLAGI⁴ and ZICOSUR⁵, with a view to pursuing their debates and progressing together towards a more sustainable world.

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1 West African Economic and Monetary Union - <http://www.uemoa.int/index.htm>

2 Association of Southeast Asian Nations - <http://www.aseansec.org/>

3 Association of Regional Governments from the Arctic Region - www.northernforum.org

4 The Latin-American Organisation of Intermediate Governments - www.olagi.org

5 The Integration Zone of the Centre-West Region of Southern America - www.zicosur.com