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PRESS RELEASE

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THE REGIONS' ROLE IN DEVELOPMENT

A seminar on *"Regions and Development: the role of Regions in a new global framework"* took place in Marseille today, organised by the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions (CPMR), with the support of the French Region of Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur, in the framework of the **"European Platform of Regional/Local Authorities for Development"**, set up by the principal national and European associations of regions and cities.

The seminar continued the debate opened by the European Commission's Communication on *"Local Authorities: Actors for Development"* and suggested ways in which Regions and cities could play a greater role in development while also helping to improve the effectiveness of aid.

Opening the seminar, **Michel Vauzelle**, President of Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur Region, explained that the Platform of Regional/Local Authorities for Development had been launched in Strasbourg in November 2008 during the European Development Days.

Mr Vauzelle, who is also President of the Intermediterranean Commission went on to say that, *"development aid has been steadily decreasing over recent years. The overall amount of public aid for development is less than private transfers made by migrants. What is worse, development aid can also be used as an instrument of domination, or at the very least as a means of exploiting commercial opportunities and sometimes is of greater benefit to the donors."* However, President **Vauzelle** also believes that the fairly recent arrival of regional and local authorities on the scene, even if their contribution is relatively modest in terms of resources, is significant in terms of a possible alternative development model. *"We work on a people-to-people, or territory-to-territory basis, in synergy with many actors and on the basis of a participative, local-level diplomacy. Of course, the local and regional authorities on their own can achieve nothing: a whole new structure of public decision-making needs to be created and this must necessarily involve multi-level cooperation."*

Claudio Martini, President of Tuscany Region, of the CPMR and of FOGAR (Forum of Global Associations of Regions) made a comparison between the EU's cohesion policy and development policies. *"In Europe, over the last twenty years, we have gradually built up a partnership for regional policy, based on cohesion between territories and the link between cohesion and the growth and development of the Union. We have moved on from a donor-receiver relationship to one of a necessary partnership. What we need to do now is, together, to build the same type of partnership for development. In this way, we can make globalisation more balanced, just, and citizen-oriented."*

In the CPMR's view, what puts development aid in jeopardy today is the reduced volume of funding, the dispersal of aid, and its lack of effectiveness. Mr Martini drew these points to the attention of the European Commission, represented at the seminar by DG Development and DG AIDCO. *"We especially need this 'Atlas of decentralised cooperation' that you have mentioned. It will give us a better understanding of the scope, including the financial scope, of regional and local authorities' actions."*

The numerous delegates included Moroccan, Senegalese, and Zimbabwean representatives, who spoke for the "Southern Regions" which could, no doubt, help to improve the focus and effectiveness of aid. As far as the "North" was concerned, all the European countries were represented, from Wales (UK) to Brittany (FR), Hessen (DE), Calalunya (ES) and the city of Bucharest (RO).



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The importance of the role of Regional and Local Authorities in development policy was also underlined by **Cécile Molinier**, Director of the Geneva Office of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). *"The regional and local authorities, as well as other more recent actors such as civil society and the private sector, have an essential role to play in combating poverty and achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). For this reason, in the spirit of the new multilateralism, UNDP has developed multi-level and multi-actor coordination at territorial level, focusing in particular on building the capacities of regional or sub-national authorities in the fields of local economic development, climate change, and information and communication technologies."*

Jeremy Smith, Secretary General of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR), one of the instigators of the platform meeting in Marseille today, expressed a similar point of view. *"The Regions and cities are increasingly active in the specific area of development aid, in a variety of ways, with varying degrees of involvement and different levels of funding, but with the same commitment to delivering the Millennium Development Goals."*

The participants adopted an *"Address to Member States and to the European and international institutions"*, calling for a part of the EU's financial contribution to development aid to be decentralised to the Regional and Local Authorities in the partner countries and for the participation of Regional and Local Authorities in existing programmes be strengthened.

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LINKS

The agenda, presentation of the platform, list of participants, and Address to Member States and Institutions can be found at:
<http://www.crpm.org/en/index.php?act=6,1,2,129>