

Check against delivery

## Saint Malo Summit

### Transcription of the speech by Mrs Kay Twitchen, Committee of the Regions *Rapporteur* on climate change

Wednesday 29 October, morning

Good morning everybody. I do wish my French was good enough to enable me to listen without having to use the headphones, but it is just not good enough! I'm delighted to be here with you this morning. Thank you very much for giving me this opportunity. The President of the Committee of the Regions, Luc Van Den Brande, was hoping to be with you, but he had to go off to something in Tbilisi, so this is my opportunity to join you on this very special occasion.

To explain a little about what the Committee of the Regions does, we are a political assembly. We represent European local and regional authorities at the political level, and we hugely welcome your initiative launched by the regional government network and aiming to raise awareness in all regions around the world of the climate change challenge, and I know that you are part of the United Nations pilot project. I was amazed at how many regions and countries from around the world are represented here today, because globalisation and climate change are closely interlinked at a political level and it is so important that we all talk to each other.

The scale of the challenge which climate security presents means that efforts to adapt to climate change, and let us not forget also the importance of mitigating the consequences, can only work if the whole of society is involved in this effort. And that means local and regional authorities; it means consumers too, members of the public - we have got to carry people with us; and businesses, Europe and its worldwide partners. And for me the important thing is that the majority of the solutions to climate change will only work as part of an integrated package of measures. As Monsieur Le Drian said in his opening remarks, regions are the natural level for action.

So let me tell you some of the things that the Committee of the Regions has been doing. We have two plenary sessions coming up and the key priority issues that we will be discussing are climate change and renewable energy policy. We will be examining the outlook opinion of the regions' contribution to the Covenant of Mayors, which is one that I had the huge privilege of writing, and the opinion on the proposal for a directive on the promotion of the use of energy from renewable resources, as well as the opinion on the proposal for a directive to improve and extend the greenhouse gas emissions allowance trading system, which the previous speaker just referred to, within the EU.



So these are the opportunities for local and regional government political representatives to have their say on these issues, and to lodge with the Commission and with the European Parliament our views from our perspective.

Recent discussions within the Committee of the Regions helped to highlight the benefit the production of renewable energy creates. It is a huge opportunity for us I think to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, improve security of energy supply, promote technological development, create new jobs and to contribute to regional development.

Some of the recommendations made by the Committee of the Regions do look much further afield as well. We underlined the fact that to achieve effective adaptation to the effects of climate change on the global level and development which is truly sustainable, we need to look at several things:

- The scale of, and procedures for development aid. The trickle-down approach is no longer an option, given the growing gap between rich and poor countries. We really have got to revisit this issue.
- The growth model deriving from globalisation and its sustainability.
- The relative priority and the relations between the European regional market and its capital and international markets and capital, particularly important now with the very uncertain financial climate that we are all coping with.
- The drive in WTO negotiations to privatise public services and goods such as water. The Committee of the Regions calls for this to be definitively abandoned and certainly revisited for discussion.
- And then finally, subsidies, incentives and other measures that create trade barriers for developing countries.

I forget which one of the previous speakers - I think it was Mr Martini - said "we are one planet". We either work together to achieve these things or we risk not succeeding.

So the Committee of the Regions calls for European cooperation with developing countries to make it possible for those countries to set out adaptation strategies and also recommends that the EU's external policies support such efforts. We believe that local and regional authorities can provide crucial support for this by sharing best practice.

And I am going to pause there because sharing best practice is a phrase that we all use so glibly, don't we? It means being generous. It means being generous with your ideas. One of the mantras - I don't know how this will translate, but I'll have a go - is that there is no limit to what you can achieve if you don't mind who takes the credit for it. Does that work in translation? I hope so. We must be generous. We must not be selfish and hold on to our ideas of innovation. We must share them with each other and with developing countries through existing links and networks. And the funds which the European Union earmarks for this purpose must be proportionate to the needs of developing countries and our responsibilities in this area.

We believe that the fundamental aim of any sustainable development strategy must break the link between economic growth and environmental decline, which means we must monitor, reduce and stabilise the flow of energy, materials and associated waste that feed the economic system before returning to the ecosystem in less usable forms. These are challenging ideas.

The Committee of the Regions is also in favour of providing additional support for research and development activities, because these two areas play an important role in stimulating innovation and generating up to date technologies and innovative products to tackle

climate change. In this way, businesses whose activities are linked to the consequences of climate change will benefit from an environment highly favourable to the development of innovative goods and services.

Local authorities and of course regional authorities are involved in energy in a multitude of ways. We provide public transport, we provide street lighting, we own buildings, we can set standards when we grant planning consent, standards in new buildings of offices and homes, and we are involved in the promotion of green public procurement. The local level is the level of government closest to the public, and local politicians are very well placed to gauge public opinion and to lead it. The Committee of the Regions very much welcomes the Covenant of Mayors, which is a European initiative, and we have recently expressed the view that the opportunity to join the Covenant of Mayors should be extended to other regional and local authorities. That will be debated at our next plenary session. I shall be leading the debate and if I don't succeed in achieving agreement to that, I shall be very unhappy indeed. It is an opportunity to spread best practice and to broaden the initiative throughout the whole of Europe. More than 150 cities have already expressed an interest in participating in the Covenant, and I hope it will act as a practical source of inspiration and a real driver, both within Europe and with our partners around the world. And maybe the regional leaders who are attending the Summit today might like to hear a little more about that, but not now.

Finally I want to stress once more that the fight against climate change is everyone's business. The scale of the challenge is huge, the efforts to adapt and to minimise the consequences will only be truly effective if we all work together: local and regional authorities, businesses, and of course not forgetting the all-important consumers and members of the public. Most of the solutions that are being proposed will only work as part of integrated packages of measures, and the approach to multi-level governance is particularly relevant in this context. We do need an ambitious and progressive and courageous European policy in this area, which has the capacity to energise and inspire not only Europeans, but also our partners and friends around the world. What you are talking about over the next couple of days will contribute hugely to this end, and I wish you well in your deliberations.

Thank you for your attention.