



PRESS RELEASE

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REGIONS IN ACTION TO TACKLE CLIMATE CHANGE

Over 600 delegates representing 98 Regions and 59 Countries congregated in Saint-Malo (France) on 29 and 30 October 2008 for the 1st **World Summit of Regions on Climate Change** organised by the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions (CPMR) and nrg4SD (Network of Regional Governments for Sustainable Development¹), at the invitation of **Jean Yves Le Drian**, President of Brittany Regional Council, and in partnership with the Forum of Global Associations of Regions (FOGAR).

The Summit, organised in association with the six-month French Presidency of the EU, the Committee of the Regions and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), demonstrated the fact that climate change is an issue where the regional sphere cannot be left aside.

“Because of its closeness to the population”, stated Jean-Yves Le Drian, “the regional level is perfectly aware of the nature of the issues at stake for its inhabitants. Because it has planning responsibilities within its territory, it is able to design low-carbon methods to protect its area. Because it has influence over its economic fabric, it is able to encourage the development of new more environmentally friendly technologies. Because it has an informative role, it must be unrelenting in its efforts to convince, debate and raise awareness on the fight against climate change. More than ever,” concluded the President of Brittany “the regional institution must be a vector for cohesion in a world that is having to cope with unprecedented shocks.”

These “unprecedented shocks” we are experiencing today were also the focus of the speech delivered by Claudio Martini, President of Tuscany Region and President of the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions (CPMR). *“The Poznan and Copenhagen meetings lie ahead, but for a number of Governments, the priority number one is to save the economy and to put Kyoto on the back burner. However this is a dangerous kind of view. There is no contradiction between defending economic interests and defending the interests of the planet. The Regions need to state this loud and clear.”*

These positions were also shared by **Nicolas Hulot**, who affirmed that we are at a *crossroad of crises, crises that are the result of the current model of development which does not hold the solution.* According to the ecological campaigner who is highly popular in France, this crossroad is fuelled by the food crisis, the energy crisis and the ecological and climate crisis. These crises are rooted in a common cause which is humanity’s chronic inability to set limits. Nevertheless, Mr Hulot sees this crossroad of crises as an unexpected opportunity to imagine a different world based on new values that are surely more sustainable.

¹ The Network of Regional Governments for Sustainable Development, nrg4SD, was set up in Johannesburg during the World Summit on Sustainable Development. Nrg4SD’s aim is to act as a mouthpiece and representative for regional governments at a global level, by fostering sustainable development and partnerships at regional level worldwide. <http://www.nrg4sd.net>

Danuta Hübner, Commissioner in charge of Regional Policy contributed to the proceedings with a video message that underlined the EU's leadership in the fight against global warming. She reminded the audience that the European Commission was preparing a White Paper on Adaptation to climate change. She also underlined the role of the regions in this global challenge:

"Regions are at the front line to combat climate change; maybe they need to be better coordinated but they have to make their voice heard in order to feed the discussion with their direct experiences and best practises."

Cecile Molinier, Director of UNDP for Europe also recalled that the Regions represent an essential tier with regard to good governance. *"It is for this reason that the high-level United Nations bodies are presently working in partnership with these sub-state levels and are appealing for their voice to be heard within the framework of intergovernmental negotiations. We feel that a territorial approach to development allows us to better grasp the concerns and priorities of the populations in terms of development. The United Nations have, moreover, chosen the Saint-Malo Summit as the venue in which to make official the new territorial strategy to tackle climate change."*

Jean Pierre Jouyet, French State Secretary for European Affairs also made his contribution to the proceedings on behalf of the six-month French Presidency of the EU by highlighting the close links between the financial crisis and global warming: *"We have reached the limits of a certain model,"* said the State Secretary, *"and we will not get out of having to look at new ways of adapting a more sustainable model of development"*. Finally, Mr Jouyet welcomed this action on the part of the Regions, which can be *"ambassadors for climate change within the territories."*

The Regions also put forward their views through the channel of the Committee of the Regions. **Kay Twitchen**, *rapporteur* on the issue of climate change, stated that renewable energy must be a big opportunity not only to reduce greenhouse gas emissions but also to boost the job market and foster regional development.

A written declaration (<http://www.worldsummitofregions.org/en/index.php?act=8>) was also approved by the participants (http://www.worldsummitofregions.org/pub/focus/3_liste_des_regions_24oct.pdf).

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