

Regions and Development The role of Regions in a new global framework

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ADDRESS FROM THE PARTICIPANTS TO MEMBER STATES, EU AND INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

Gathered within the European Platform of Local/Regional Authorities for Development, the European Regional and Local Authorities (RLA) meeting in Marseille with their partners from the South for the second seminar of this platform recall:

- the importance of the long-standing and uncontested involvement of European RLA in development aid and decentralised cooperation;
- the importance of relations established with regional and local authorities and more generally partners in the south, which help them to meet the jointly identified needs of these territories;
- the willingness of RLA to play an active role in effectively delivering the Millennium Development Goals within the territories;
- their desire and awareness of the fact that RLA active in the field of development need to work within a more global and partnership-based framework to help contribute towards effective aid, in line with the Paris Declaration on aid effectiveness;
- their extensive, diverse and numerous areas of technical and political expertise and know-how (water, sanitation, training, primary education, etc.), which are exactly those areas that contribute towards the development of the territories;
- the significant amounts of funding represented by actions led by European RLA: these are all the more important in a period of global crisis where fears are that States will be cutting funds directed at their southern partners while, on the contrary, it is essential to carry forward and step up such support;
- the importance of the role RLA play in promoting values such as democracy and implementing good territorial governance. Democracy cannot be exported. It is built up step by step on a daily basis, in connection with the economic and social development of the territories.

Regional and Local Authorities wish to promote a territorial approach to development:

- Globalisation of trade and finance has changed the situation. Whilst globalisation may bring opportunities as well as pose threats to RLA, it undoubtedly makes some territories even more vulnerable and sensitive to the imbalanced impact of growth. Paradoxically, this change makes it necessary to focus on the very same territories in order to formulate acceptable and sustainable responses to the negative effects of globalisation.
- RLA call for local aspects to be taken into account, as well as territories' constraints and assets, in order to develop a suitable response to promote sustainable development. The term territory is used here to mean a social system, and not just a geographical area. It is the combination of a geographical area with the stakeholders involved (citizens, representatives of civil society, local and regional authorities and institutions, central government representatives, businesses, etc.). **A local or regional territory is an appropriate level for developing integrated solutions that have a long-term structural impact, in partnership/ close collaboration with the other authorities at local, regional**

national and international level. It is one of the solutions to the current difficulties, notably the lack of effectiveness, the dispersal and increased number of uncoordinated stakeholders. This new dimension of development aid is a means of taking into account in a coherent manner all the factors that contribute to or hamper a territory's development, by involving all the partners from the local level to international financial backers.

- In order to improve the effectiveness of development aid, part of the budgetary aid of the UE has to be decentralised to RLA in Southern partner countries in cooperation with their European partners.
- Generalist policies cannot sufficiently take into account the disparities between territories, or the assets that are specific to such or such an area. Economic growth is partly dependent on a method of spatial organisation that is determined by its institutional organisation and method of governance as well as by social changes, technological development and market mechanisms.
- Territorial policies help to forge a consensus between the different forces underway in a given territory. The aim is to strengthen and forge the conditions so that these areas' own dynamism and that of their stakeholders promotes the development of the territories concerned.

RLA want to reinforce their participation in existing programmes and ask for new mechanisms to be set up together with all the institutions and partners involved in development policies:

- As a consequence of improving the way the regional and local level is taken into account and taking on board the territorial approach, RLA appeal for **new working practices and methods** to be introduced, **in partnership** with all stakeholders at local, regional, national, European and international levels, especially development agencies and the main financial donors, in order to participate more effectively in aid policies.
- They commend the already existing programmes and mechanisms mainly promoted by the biggest donor, the European Union. These are important for RLA since they allow territorial authorities to join in European networks, cooperate with other authorities, and learn and improve their practices together. They represent a not inconsiderable source of leveraged funding.
- RLA ask for these programmes to be improved in order to help RLA participate better in providing effective and coherent aid. In order to achieve this, there needs to be greater consultation of RLA from the north and south on the part of European officials, including prior to the actual launch of the programmes so as to ensure that the proposed actions for funding correspond to the realities on the ground and the requests of partners from the south. European Commission delegations should also play an active role in consulting RLA in partner countries.
- RLA welcome the fact that the European Union has taken on board the special and unique nature of action in the field of development led by territorial authorities under these programmes and ask for this to be reflected to a greater extent in the way participation in these programmes is evaluated and conducted;
- The inclusion of RLA in the new development aid programmes and mechanisms means that RLA have to adapt their ways of working to the new context, and therefore to be trained accordingly. RLA ask for joint consideration to be given to this issue of good practice and capacity-building.
- Information and dialogue are keys to making these programmes a success, and it is necessary to deepen the relations between RLA and their associations both in the north and south, and the European institutions. In this context, RLA welcome the organisation of the **“Assises” on Decentralised Cooperation** and call for this event to be prepared jointly by European institutions and RLA associations so that it can be a real forum for constructive dialogue to support development.
- They recall that they are keen and willing to implement the atlas of decentralised cooperation mentioned by the European Commission, which is a necessary tool for gaining a better understanding of the actual practices of RLA in the area of development;
- They call for the Code of Conduct on Complementarity and Division of Labour in Development Policy to be revised to include RLA;

- They recall that all these considerations will only be useful if they concern not only RLA from the north, but also their partners from the south. This implies strengthening decentralisation policies wherever possible and supporting RLA in the south and their national and international associations so that they can become real discussion partners of their national governments and financial donors, against a background of improving the effectiveness of aid.

In conclusion, Regional and Local Authorities wish to underline their support for a strengthening of the dialogue and cooperation between the Platform and the European institutions to achieve the goals set out in this address. They invite the European Institutions to carry out these developments in close cooperation with the United Nations Agency, and UNDP in particular.