

Belfort Appeal

The regions: a force for change *Regions mobilise in the fight against climate change*

With the upcoming Copenhagen summit, it has become clear that we, the regions of Europe, are emerging as main actors in the energy revolution, a revolution that our citizens are expecting in this fight against climate change.

Given the declarations made at the Singapore Summit, it is unlikely that there will be any firm commitment from United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change negotiators. This uncertainty is likely to cause problems and we cannot afford not to react.

With this appeal, the AER regions call on negotiators to promote and implement an ambitious climate policy that fully addresses the energy challenges of the 21st century.

This environmental and energy crisis requires a broad response that cannot be achieved by state levels alone. Indeed there cannot be an effective response unless regions are included in a collective effort to fight climate change.

As clear evidence of this, data published by the Inter-Governmental Panel on Climate Change shows that 50 to 70% of mitigation and adaptation measures are expected to be implemented at sub-national level, in addition to the state level competences already decentralised to the regions.

A large number of regions in Europe are already putting in place policies on renewable energy sources and actively promoting energy efficiency in their territories. Indeed, it is the regions that, rather than waiting for the States to hammer out an ambitious agreement in Copenhagen, are already engaged in concrete ways in tackling climate change.

With intelligent energy policies, regions not only contribute to fighting the effects of climate change; they also open up new economic opportunities and prospects for their citizens.

That being so, we, the member regions of the Assembly of European Regions (AER), maintain that a responsible European solution must be based upon innovation and take account of territorial diversity if it is to be able to contribute to sustainable growth and jobs. We therefore:

1. Recognise that climate change is one of the most significant social, economic and environmental threats facing regions worldwide and that this fact should be considered in all aid and development policy and funding.
2. Appreciate the impact climate change will have on our societies and our citizens' health, and believe that regions should start planning now to respond to the crises that climate change may bring in the future.
3. Recognise that cities, local and regional authorities are critical when it comes to practical climate actions and that if genuinely empowered and resourced, they have the potential to lead emission reductions to ensure that ambitious targets for the reduction of global greenhouse gas emissions are met.
4. Are committed to strengthening cooperation between the regions of Europe and regions from emerging and developing countries, and to reinforce ongoing cooperation between local and regional authorities to promote good practices in sustainable development, especially in the promotion of energy efficiency, alternative energy sources and the use of clean technologies.
5. Believe that regions need to work together across European borders to define the tools and methodologies necessary to adapt to climate change and reduce its impact.
6. Call upon national governments and international institutions to recognise and take properly into account the principle of subsidiarity and the role of regions in the fight against climate change, particularly in light of the 15th conference of negotiators in Copenhagen. To this end, we demand the explicit recognition of the role of regions in the future post-Kyoto agreement.
7. Underscore that energy challenges cannot be solved by technical solutions alone, and therefore that additional strategies must be developed to raise public awareness and promote an energy-saving culture in Europe.
8. Are prepared to seize the opportunities offered by renewable energy sources for a decentralised energy supply, and those for businesses and industry offered by the world's choice to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, by investing in renewable energies, energy-efficient buildings and appliances, low-carbon technologies and environmentally-friendly infrastructure.
9. Will ensure that responsible energy and climate change policy affords opportunities to all citizens regardless of their gender, age or social background, and contributes to fighting the economic crisis and its consequences in the regions.

Richard MEDIC 27/11/09 14:02
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