



Press Release

“Belfort Appeal”

Together with the AER, the UNDP, the Climate Group and GE Energy, regions are on the way to Copenhagen

Belfort, Franche-Comté (F), 27 November 2009.

In Belfort, during the last major international climate change conference before the Copenhagen summit, **Michèle SABBAN**, President of the Assembly of European Regions (AER) and its 270 member regions, together with its partners from the United Nations development programme (UNDP) represented by **Christophe NUTTAL**, the Climate Group and its President **Steve HOWARD**, along with **Ricardo CORDOBA**, President of GE Energy West Europe and North Africa, launched an urgent appeal for the recognition of the role of regions and federal states in the fight against climate change.

This appeal, adopted by the AER General Assembly held this year in Franche-Comté (F), affirms that the success of the post-Kyoto negotiations, meaning the implementation of adaptation and mitigation measures, mainly depend on the regions. In fact, according to the UNDP, **between 50 and 70% of these measures should be implemented by regions and federal states.**

Speaking today to an audience of 500 regional politicians, experts, and EU officials, AER president Michèle Sabban said: *“This appeal sends a strong message on the eve of the Copenhagen summit: national governments must recognise and take advantage of the crucial role the regions play in tackling climate change and energy challenges. If they fail to secure a truly multi-level response to these challenges, our national leaders will be putting our environment and economic security at grave risk, it’s as simple as that.”*

AER is the largest organisation of regional authorities in Europe, bringing together 16 interregional associations and 270 regions from 33 countries. AER’s General Assembly was held at the GE Energy production plant in the heart of Europe’s “Energy Valley”, a fitting location for the adoption of an appeal consolidating the regions’ commitment to sustainable energy solutions.

More from AER’s General Assembly in Belfort, “Energising Europe Responsibly: Regional Innovation and Diversity for Growth and Jobs”:

Press releases: <http://www.aer.eu/news/2009.html>

Videos: <http://www.aer.eu/events/governing-bodies/2009/generalassembly/generalassemblyvideos.html>

Photos: <http://www.aer.eu/photo-gallery/governing-bodies/2009/generalassembly.html>

*The **Assembly of European Regions (AER)** is the largest independent network of regions in wider Europe. Bringing together more than 270 regions from 33 countries and 16 interregional organisations, AER is the political voice of its members and a forum for interregional co-operation.*

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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 regions of Europe and regions from emerging markets 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.



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.

Adopted by the AER General Assembly in Belfort (F) on 27 November 2009.

