

Final Declaration of the 3rd European Conference of Mountain Regions

Chamonix (France), 15-17 September 1994

The participants at the third European Conference of Mountain Regions, meeting in Chamonix (France) from 15 to 17 September 1994:

1. Thanking:

1.1 the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe (CLRAE) – which represents the local and regional authorities of the 32 Council of Europe member States – and in particular the Chamber of Regions – which represents the regions in the institutional framework of the aforementioned Congress – for taking the initiative of holding the Conference;

1.2 the municipality of Chamonix for its invitation, its effective collaboration and its generous display of hospitality.

2. Welcoming:

2.1 the opportunity afforded by the Conference to assess the progress made in the work undertaken by the Council of Europe, by other European institutions, and by associations of local and regional authorities of mountain regions, to set up guidelines for a European policy for mountain areas which, through appropriate legal instruments, will be capable of transcending the traditional dichotomy of economic development and environmental protection;

2.2 the fulfillment, in the context of this Conference, of the wish expressed at the European Conference of Mountain Regions held in Trento (Italy) from 9 to 11 May 1988 to draw up the European Charter of Mountain Regions, following a wide-ranging process of consultation with local and regional bodies, both public and private; with the Parliamentary Assembly and with other organisations concerned;

2.3 the opportunity, within the framework of the Conference, to promulgate their observations on the draft European Charter of Mountain Regions, with a view to transmitting these observations to the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe.

3. Considering nonetheless, that:

3.1 the extend of European mountain regions and the functions of general interest which they perform in the environmental, economic, social, political and cultural fields throughout the continent of Europe;

3.2 the specific nature of the problems of mountain regions which make it all the more difficult to satisfy the essential needs of their inhabitants and which necessitate specific manifestations of solidarity from other regions;

3.3 the disparity in the current environmental and socio-economic situations in European mountain regions, which calls for the introduction of different policies according to regional requirements, within the framework of a common European perspective;

3.4 the transfrontier nature of many mountain regions within Europe and the need for transfrontier and inter-regional co-operation between the local and regional authorities concerned.

4. Noting that mountain regions have often been regarded as areas of service to the large urban centres and the communication and transit requirements of such centres, or as areas of expansion for the markets of other regions which utilise the water and energy resources and climatic and landscape features of mountain regions.

5. Considering:

5.1 mountain regions must as a matter of priority provide, in the framework of regional planning policy, the conditions and space necessary for the socio-economic development of the local population, safeguard their natural resources in order to maintain the ecological balance of the continent of Europe as well as, in a spirit of complementarity, fulfil a social function as an area for leisure activities and accommodation for urban populations;

5.2 the traditional activities of mountain regions, such as agriculture, livestock-rearing, grazing, forestry, crafts and small-scale industry, not only enable quality goods to be produced but also play a fundamental role in regulating natural balances since they consolidate the soil, help maintain the hydrogeological balance, are sustainable and help shape attractive and varied landscapes;

5.3 it is imperative that local and regional authorities in mountain regions should be given greater autonomy in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity and in accordance with their capacities to be involved in any public decision-making process of relevance to them and which affects their territories, while the regional identity of the mountain population, as based on its cultural values and traditions, should be enhanced.

6. Having been informed of the state of progress of the ratification of the Convention on the Protection of the Alps and of the protocols for its application:

6.1 express the wish that the proposals presented by representatives of Alpine regions be taken into consideration in order to facilitate the ratification of the Convention by all the Alpine States;

6.2 consider that the Alpine Convention should constitute, for the Alps, one of the instruments for an "ante litteram" application of the European Charter of Mountain Regions;

6.3 hope that, consequently, the Convention will be integrated, in a spirit of complementarity, into the general framework of the Charter, once it has been signed and ratified by the States;

6.4 request that the transposition of the Convention and of its protocols into the domestic legislation of each State be carried out in close collaboration with the regions who are directly concerned;

6.5 consider it indispensable that their implementation be, as far as possible, entrusted to or taken on by the regions concerned, whilst respecting the competencies accorded to them in each State.

7. Invite the governments of the member States of the Council of Europe to:

7.1 recognise explicitly, within a legislative framework, the specific nature of mountain regions and their socio-economic and environmental problems and guarantee for the inhabitants of mountain regions living conditions comparable with those of other regions;

7.2. focus particular attention on mountain regions and implement an appropriate policy enabling the regions concerned to carry out their functions of general interest and to guarantee an appropriate role of local and regional authorities in the definition of this policy, taking into consideration the interests of the populations they represent;

7.3 ensure that environmental impact studies are carried out during the process of approval of projects which may have a harmful effect on the environmental resources of mountain regions;

7.4 take into consideration, when planning and developing fast, modern transport networks for people and goods, their integration into the landscape, respect for the environment, and mobility within mountain regions, while bearing in mind the requirements of local populations;

7.5 promote the exploitation of endogenous energy resources, particularly alternative and renewable resources, in a way which is compatible with environmental requirements and with a view to ensuring that local populations benefit from them.

8. As Local and Regional Authorities:

8.1 promote the implementation of a regional/spatial planning policy for mountain regions, which, through targeted and multidisciplinary sectoral policies, would ensure the durability and balanced development of traditional activities and, in a spirit of complementarity, the introduction of new economic activities compatible with the mountain environment;

8.2 encourage integrated environmental management programmes, produced in consultation with the local population, in order to ensure that the natural and landscape resources of mountain regions are properly protected;

8.3 draw up programmes for tourist development, adapted to the specific features of the area and compatible with the conservation of natural resources and with traditional mountain activities, and ensure that tourists are fully aware of the need to respect the mountain environment;

8.4 encourage inter-municipal and inter-regional co-operation, with a view to gradually reducing the socio-economic differences which exist between some local and regional authorities in mountain areas and provide the infrastructure and the facilities necessary to preserve the quality of life of the population and to enable people to continue living there.

9. Ask the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe and in particular its Chamber of Regions to:

9.1 speed up the finalisation and the adoption of the European Charter of Mountain Regions by the Council of Europe, so that all mountain regions in Europe may have at their disposal a legal international instrument capable of correcting the existing socio-economic imbalances within a framework of sustainable and balanced development; and, by so doing, to make the

necessary contacts with the Committee of Regions of the European Union, taking into account paragraph 11.1;

9.2 play to the full its role as an institution representing Greater Europe, and take upon itself the defence of the interests of its mountain regions and, to this end, co-operate with the associations representing them;

9.3. strengthen whilst applying the principle of subsidiarity, the legal framework permitting closer inter-municipal and inter-regional co-operation between local and regional authorities, by recommending that the Committee of Ministers quickly adopt the additional Protocol to the Outline Convention on Transfrontier Co-operation between Territorial Communities or Authorities;

9.4 review the implementation of the recommendations contained in this Declaration at a fourth conference to be held on a suitable future date, in order to assess the situation and, if appropriate, to accelerate the ratification and application of the Charter.

10. Ask the Parliamentary Assembly to:

10.1 continue to give its support to the elaboration of the final version of the European Charter of Mountain Regions;

10.2 recommend to the Committee of Ministers and to governments, at an appropriate juncture, the adoption and ratification of the Charter.

11. Invite the Institutions of the European Union to:

11.1 take the necessary steps to accede as soon as possible to the European Charter of Mountain Regions;

11.2 determine the criteria for defining a typology, within territories classified as mountain areas, with a view to identifying "intervention zones" which have specific economic, productive or social features requiring the attention of targeted policies;

11.3 implement a specific and effective European policy for mountain regions, based on the principle already recognised in the "Own-Initiative Opinion" of the Economic and Social Committee, approved on the occasion of the Plenary Session of 28 April 1988 and request the recognition of:

a. the specific nature of the problems suffered by mountain regions within sectoral policies and in strategic zones;

b. endogenous development as one of the solution to socio-economic problems suffered by mountain regions and as an essential basis for policies pertaining to mountain areas, taking the form of "integrated programmes for the development of mountain areas" (IPDMA);

11.4 intervene, via specific financial measures, and in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity, to enable socio-economic integration of underprivileged mountain regions.