

**CLIMATE SUMMIT FOR LOCAL AND REGIONAL LEADERS IN MARRAKESH**

**THE COVENANT OF MAYORS FOR CLIMATE AND ENERGY**

— A GLOBAL NETWORK

**MARKKU MARKKULA, PRESIDENT EUROPEAN COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS**

**14 NOVEMBER 2016, 14:30 – 17:15**



Ladies and gentlemen, Dear guests,

Let me welcome you to this event organised by the European Committee of the Regions together with the European Commission and the Union for the Mediterranean.

Our Committee is the EU's assembly of 700 local and regional elected leaders coming from every member state. We work with national and EU politicians to shape the European Union, its laws and its direction.

The Committee was created as we – regions and cities – not only deliver 70% of the EU's policy, but because we are closest to its citizens. We listen and engage with our communities, sharing their ideas on what the EU does right and what needs to improve.

It's this philosophy of subsidiarity and multi-level governance that gathers us here today.

We know climate change is one of the greatest threats to our future.

The Paris Agreement did show global and national leaders have the political courage to tackle climate change but today the urgency is so great that we need to do more. As I said earlier today, Paris was historic but even if the promises are met temperatures will still rise by 3°C.

Across the globe cities and local governments are already making a difference. We are building resilience to natural disasters. We are cutting pollution and creating energy efficient communities. We are creating more green jobs for our citizens.

Today you will hear how local and regional governments are exceeding expectation, taking innovative ways to co-create sustainable green communities.

But we are also here because we want to learn. We want to collaborate. We want to be climate pioneers.

This is why the Committee has been a life-long supporter of the Covenant of Mayors. The EU's Covenant was launched in 2008 and asked local and regional governments to voluntarily – **let me stress voluntarily** – to exceed the EU's target of cut 1990 levels of greenhouse gas emissions by 20% by 2020.

Today it has over 7000 signatories representing over 220m EU citizens. It has exceeded expectation cutting emissions by nearly 30%.

This level ambition led to a new 40% emission target being set, a testament that when national governments set the bar high, cities and regions go higher.

Take the Portuguese city of Almada which is using smart technology for traffic lights saving €80,000 and cutting 96 tons of CO2 each year.

Or Dobrich municipality in Bulgaria which refurbished several schools in only 3 months saving €135,000 and taking over 1000 tonnes of CO2 out from our atmosphere every year.

These steps are what will make the difference in delivering Paris.

Earlier this year the Covenant and the Compact of Mayors was merged presenting a great opportunity. An opportunity for all cities, regardless of their size or economic power, to be part of the largest coalition on earth united in the fight against climate change.

When it is launched it is expected to be supported by 7,100 cities and regions across 6 continents and 119 countries, representing over 600 million people!

Today, we will hear why so many are joining this global movement. I have no doubt these experiences will be a source of inspiration for us all.

Financing and access to financing is of course fundamental. Tailor-made instruments are needed to unlock bankable and sustainable projects. The Covenant success stories offer a wealth of good practices that can be replicable elsewhere on how to do just this.

With the European Commission, we are also encouraging regions and cities across Europe to develop their own investment plans. To create smart sustainable local economies of the future. One of our members, Ahmed Aboutaleb - the Mayor of Rotterdam - has already begun this process.

We want to scale this up to build a new smart economy transforming our regions and cities, their transport, energy and infrastructure. We need to share our wisdom to use the latest innovation entrepreneurs have to offer. To light our buildings with solar energy or drive our buses with green fuel.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Local and regional authorities will not win the climate battle alone but the Covenant shows national governments can ill afford to ignore us.

The Covenant shows we are here, ready, to help but we need to be a partner.

It shows that only by all governments working side-by-side can we build a safer future for our children.

**That is why we need a new global climate governance that formally brings local and regional governments into the UN process.**

That's why if you would all like to leave a legacy for and future generations, this is it.

This is the time to stand up and be counted by joining this global movement for our climate

Thank you for listening

**End**

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