



WORLD FORUM OF REGIONAL AND SUB-NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLIES

“Manifesto of regional, sub-national and national Legislative Assemblies in Federal States for a true global democracy”

We, in regional sub-national and national legislative Assemblies in Federal States, gathered here in Milan from different Nations and Continents,

Recognizing that our Parliaments, elected democratically and legitimized by the popular will, represent the voice of citizens who live in the territories of our Regions and Countries

Aware that we are called by our citizens and from civil society to give strength, with responsibility, honesty and trust, to the democratic institutions which are based on parliamentary representation,

Aware that politics is the highest form of service to the community to give voice to the will of the people and contribute to the achievement of the common good

Basing our political and administrative action on the fundamental values of the autonomy of each local community, with its own peculiarities, its own history and traditions, its own unique characteristics that make it unique and therefore able to make an original contribution to the global community.

Recognizing the principle of subsidiarity as a benchmark for relations between Institutions and civil society and for the exercise of political and administrative power with a view to a real and constructive multi-level *governance*

We approve and sign

the contents of the "*Manifesto of regional, sub-national and national Legislative Assemblies in Federal States for a true global democracy*", stressing the fundamental values of regional, sub-national and national Parliaments in Federal States as an indispensable pillar for a more closer to territories and citizens democracy, for a more efficient, more participatory and better quality democracy.

The global stage and the task of Legislative Assemblies

We face a time that looks like a complex mosaic, not easy to interpret, characterized by good and bad, light and shadow, opportunities and risks.

In recent decades, the rapid spread of technological innovation has drastically reduced the distances between people and it has improved interconnection among parts of the world that are very far away from each other. These innovations have made communication among people, nations and Institutions easier, encouraging dialogue and debate.

At the same time, the global economic crisis, affecting all our countries in different ways, has brought with it elements of political, economic and social instability. On the world stage never really dormant conflicts re-emerge, old and new nationalisms arise, consistent migration flows occur. Current systems of welfare, citizenship and international relations are taken into discussion.

New answers from our Legislative Assemblies are required at a time when we are frequently witnessing an increased distrust in public Institutions and more generally in politics. Institutions and politics which are not always able to provide appropriate responses to the challenges of the present time.

A tendency to withdraw into an individualistic culture that determines a negative perception of the *other*, seen more as an obstacle than an opportunity, forms the background to this complex scenario. Sometimes it seems that the ideal, civil and cultural roots of our democratic coexistence and the same civilian life in our community are undermined in their foundations, weakening their civic traditions, in the affirmation of a nihilistic vision of the individual, of society and history.

In many cases Nation states have reacted to this difficult situation with a tendency towards a centralization of its functions and prerogatives, by progressively reducing the space of sub national legislatives assemblies.

We, in regional legislative Assemblies, want to relaunch the reasons for efforts towards communities and a positive vision of democratic representation, also as a stop to this growing trend.

We live at a time of crisis, but precisely in this crisis there are elements of a possible restart.

"We can't ask things to change, if we keep doing the same things. The crisis can be a great blessing for people and nations, because the crisis brings progress " said Albert Einstein.

There is a clear need for the relaunch of a bottom up democracy, the care of territorial interests, the need for the enhancement of Representation at the level closest to individual needs and to those of Communities. Local and regional Authorities, in fact, find fulfillment in promoting the good of citizens and territories, as well as in representing their requests in the interinstitutional dialectic.

We have, therefore, before us an additional, large and delicate challenge: to take charge of the request of active participation from our territories, and to gradually reduce the distance between people and institutions.

It is in this that Parliaments, as the closest to territory and local communities legislative level, can make the most significant contribution, and it is for these reasons and in this perspective, that we want to relaunch the role and the task of Legislative Assemblies.

All this is based on the sharing of some principles that can re-found the democratic representation of our Legislative Assemblies and set common and shared values, even in different cultural and political expressions.

Central role of the individual

We affirm **the value of every single person**, unique and unrepeatable, with his dignity and his irrepressible rights, as established in the Charter of Human Rights of the United Nations. We recognize the importance of the **individual**, as an individual and as a protagonist in an economic and social community. It must guide our actions as legislators. Faith in everybody and a willingness to cooperate are the cornerstones on which to build together the common good.

Subsidiarity and multilevel Governance

The principle of **subsidiarity** has its roots in the assumption that society, with its creativity and capacity for initiative, is born and comes before State. So it is not permissible that Institutions with a higher status will replace Institutions with lower status, such as local communities, if the latter can better carry out their functions meeting the needs of their communities.

And so we must **open up the fields for the society** that expresses itself especially in local communities, and recognize and promote the leadership of social, economic, cultural players who drive our civilized coexistence in our communities and territories. This should be granted in **accordance with the responsibilities** of each person, be they civil or institutional, and with the perspective of the definition of a **multilevel governance** system, intended to encourage a political dialogue and cooperation between the various institutional levels of government and the civil society, aiming at the protection and enhancement of territories and individual Communities.

Global Democracy

We all believe in parliamentary democracy as the most mature form of expression of the popular will, and we aspire to a full and complete global democracy. It cannot come from the top but rather must start at grass roots level, it must enhance specificity, cultural and territorial differences without trying to standardize them.

We are aware of the importance of Parliaments, as places in which collective decisions are made, and in which disputes between men, communities and people through the use of words and dialogue have to be settled.

Through history, Parliaments have asserted themselves as the place where the word won the sword. As the only effective alternative to violence, as a tool for the development of the relationship between men. For this reason, Parliaments have become the protagonists of modern history as place and symbol of democracy, pluralism, participation and freedom.

The voice of our legislative Assemblies is therefore an essential bulwark for the free expression of the will of our communities, without which it is not possible to build a true global democracy, condition for the implementation of an authentically human growth and of an integrated development.

Responsibility and Representation

In our legislative Assemblies the use of **legislative power**, based on democratic representation, is the main instrument through which we can exercise authority in the service of our territories. But there is no true representation without concrete responsibility.

We recognize the essential role of a **policy** pursued with a strong sense of responsibility, dignity and honor, in the service of society, in order to make decisions that meet the needs of the community, respecting at stake liberties and exercising political activities as the pursuit of the **common good** and the public interest.

Therefore, considering the challenges we are facing and the founding principles of the democratic representation of our regional, sub-national and national legislative Assemblies in Federal States we identify the following political priorities as the main lines of the political, administrative and institutional work.

Competitiveness and new paradigms of growth

Strengthening the competitiveness of economic systems plays a crucial role in boosting growth and employment.

Our priority must be to promote sustainable growth for everybody and a fair distribution of resources. We must develop a "*global partnership for development*" as suggested by the Millennium Goals of the United Nations through the development of a trading and financial system that is open and non-discriminatory.

In an increasingly globalized world, it is important for policies to embrace new forms of cooperation between the public and private sectors so as to increase the competitiveness of all localities. It is also important for all citizens to benefit from the rewards of economic growth.

We need to create new and more inclusive models of development which are able to counter the negative effects of financial, commercial and geopolitical shocks. Policy-makers require local instruments to be deployed to improve the competitiveness of their local economies. Policies should also ensure a balanced economic development: the pursuit of competitiveness and economic growth must be accompanied by social cohesion.

Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger

We share and support the first objective of the Millennium Goals: "*Eradicate Extreme Poverty and Hunger*". In recent years, the data on extreme poverty show us that major improvements have been achieved, but we still need a hard and meticulous work starting with cities, regions and territories.

In line with the Objectives of the United Nations for a sustainable development, and adopting the content and the principles of the Charter of Milan, drawn up at EXPO2015, we highlight the importance to introduce effective legislation for accessible food for everybody, the right to food and sustainable at general and local levels food policies.

We should deal with the following aspects: promoting healthy food in schools; stimulating research projects on healthy and sustainable food; promoting agriculture (i.e. adding value and recognition to the profession of farmers); fostering programs for an equal distribution of food and the distribution of wasted food to people who suffer from hunger; stimulating local production and enhancing the quality of locally produced food; strengthening intercontinental collaborations.

Territorial welfare: social rights, immigration and institutional opportunities

We have to promote adequately funded policies, keeping into consideration the specific financial contributions provided by each country, that ensure the progressive and full affirmation of social rights and full opportunities of social integration, by paying particular attention to gender issues, with the overall aim of adapting the different welfare systems in the light of the ongoing demographic and social changes, both globally and locally.

Social integration and co-operation should be facilitated by specific spaces where meetings, which guarantee opportunities of exchanges and debates, could take place on a continuous basis. Migration policies must take advantage of the new opportunities offered by the recent evolution of technology in order to increase its overall effectiveness .

Our primary objective must be to ensure to communities full access to social rights, to adequate social protection systems, a proximity and rights-based welfare that, faced with difficult situations, is able to involve local communities and governments more closely, according to a principle of shared responsibility and promotion of social innovation.

Sustainable development and Regions

We need to cooperate to ensure genuine environmental sustainability and social progress, according to the priorities of the Millennium Development Goals.

We look at the Conference of the Parties (COP21) of the Framework Convention of the United Nations to be held in Paris next November 2015 as a turning point to tackle one of the most important challenges for human kind.

We need a responsible management of the "natural and environmental capital ", which has to take into consideration the active involvement of local communities together with regional and local governments.

We need to develop global climate change adaptation and prevention by developing good energy policies together with sustainable land use strategies at local levels.

As a win-win strategy, we look at the process towards 'smart regions', in which advanced technologies are integrated with environmental sustainability and economic development.

Multilevel governance and partnership requirements.

In order to ensure an effective and "bottom-up" democracy, civil society needs to be engaged from the start of the policy process in meaningful ways. Sub-national legislatures have a pivotal role in connecting citizens with national and supranational authorities. This is vital to promoting a fully-fledged multi-level governance system.

In a world that is becoming increasingly interdependent and competitive, political institutions at all levels must seize the opportunity to work **together** with socio-economic partners and civil society. Multi-level governance systems must be able to think critically about their practices and adapt flexibly in an increasingly globalised, multi-actor world.

In the context of increasingly severe global policy challenges, we have a real chance to create an international network of multi-level actors committed to building a stronger global democracy.

Fiscal and financial policies

In the light of fiscal and financial policies, both at supranational and supra-territorial levels, which are increasingly influenced by the reduction of public resources, we need to ensure a more efficient and effective use of available resources in order to offer our citizens public utility services, that should be increasingly appropriate and accessible to the evolution of the socio-economic development.

In full respect of the principle "*no taxation without representation*" the territories should not only represent the end of structural policies, implemented through the tax system, but also have to be put in a position to administer and control, actively and independently, the financial resources.

So we need to promote the effective and responsible financial autonomy of local and regional authorities, which can contribute to economic stability and social equality, also by redistributing resources among the local authorities.

Local and regional governments should participate in the administration of taxes. When citizens pay taxes they should know where the revenue goes, to which level of government they are paying and what public services will be provided with these taxes. Transparency and visibility are fundamental issues in decentralization.

Development and evaluation of policies

The analysis of territorial requirements and needs, the development of laws and measures and the subsequent evaluation of public policies should be based on a process of dialogue and cooperation between Governments and Parliaments in order to ensure higher quality of legislation and greater transparency and awareness within the democratic territorial system.

In order to achieve important results it is clear that it is appropriate to recognize the growing importance of the evaluation systems, within the decision-making of legislative assemblies; in this regard, it is necessary to cooperate in order to promote the exchange and sharing of best practices with regard to systems of public policy evaluation and accountability, at all stages of the decision-making process.

Therefore policy evaluation activities should be utilized at all stages of decision-making, and they should be based on high professional support.

Value of the rule: subsidiarity and rights

It is necessary to reiterate the importance that the rule of law has in a human and orderly coexistence. Regional, sub-national and national Parliaments must first of all ensure full respect for the law and for the culture of legality, as well as the implementation of a code of ethics, the adoption of a citizens' charter and rules of accountability and responsiveness.

Moreover, in a constantly changing society, it is necessary to look back on the function and importance of rules as a guarantee of the new social and economic needs and to take up the challenges of new rights with active policies.

At the same time, it is necessary to continue to ensuring freedom and rights at the territorial level so as to restore the central role of citizens.

Finally, it is crucial to rethink the function of political parties within the framework of a multilevel governance and their relationship with new economic and social actors.

By virtue of the shared principles and policy priorities, regional, sub-national and national Legislative Assemblies

hope that this manifesto will be adopted and deepened in its contents within national and international Associations, and in the daily work of each regional, sub-national and national Parliament in Federal States to make it clear to the World that the defense and promotion of autonomy and popular sovereignty are the cornerstones of a true and concrete global democracy.

They reiterate the importance and usefulness of meetings and moments of confrontation and they hope that these opportunities for cooperation and dialogue will become increasingly common with the objective of sharing values, experiences and *best practices* at national, continental and global levels, following what happened during the Forum in Milan, with the hope that meetings like this can be held periodically.

They wish to make international relations between Countries and Regions more concrete and effective by launching a common platform for ongoing dialogue and exchange of information and good practices of the Legislative Assemblies, a "*think tank*" widespread and interconnected in order to make it clear that freedom and democracy go through the places of regional and local representation.

They will continue to speak with one voice in asserting the importance and the need of their political and institutional mission in the service of territorial democracy always looking forward to the positivity and fruitfulness of our territories, true beating heart of our free Institutions and cornerstone of a true global democracy, truly respectful of the rights of the individual, of society, of territories and local communities.

