**RESOLUTION ON THE ROLE OF REGIONAL LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLIES IN PROTECTING THE RULE OF LAW**

**With reference** to the 1997 Oviedo Declaration, the founding act of the Conference of Regional Legislative Assemblies, which states that the regional, national and European levels must be closely linked in order to properly apply the democratic principle within the European Union;

**Aware** of the importance of the values of the European Union, enshrined in Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union, in particular respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. These values are common to the Member States in a society in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men prevail;

**Whereas** the European Union must be a driving force for the development of democratic principles, including respect for the rule of law and human rights;

**Whereas,** with the aim of strengthening democratic principles, the legislative assemblies of the Member States from all levels, national and regional, must have greater involvement in the process of European integration;

**Whereas**, in addition to being a fundamental value of the European Union, the rule of law is an existential condition for its functioning;

**Whereas** good local and regional governance implies full respect for human rights;

**Whereas** democracy underpins strong, inclusive and sustainable democratic societies, and in particular the regional assemblies with legislative power in the EU have a crucial role to play in fostering citizens' engagement in democratic processes and in ensuring their confidence in democratic institutions;

**Bearing in mind** the growing threats to democracy, the rule of law, human rights and democracy, which are becoming increasingly recurrent and serious, making it all the more urgent to implement awareness-raising actions to promote their protection and strengthening at all levels;

**Whereas** the role of local and regional authorities in protecting the rights of citizens, in maintaining and defending democracy, in transmitting European values at the level closest to the citizen, and in responding to their needs during multiple crises, has grown considerably in recent decades;

**Mindful** that the regions must not be disconnected from the European and national levels but must, on the contrary, be perfectly interlinked if democratic principles are to be properly applied within the Union;

**Remaining convinced** that cooperation between parliamentary institutions helps to strengthen democracy, in particular through the benefits created by the mutual exchange of experience;

**Whereas** respect for democracy and human rights are interdependent, implying that in general democracy cannot exist without respect for human rights;

**Whereas**, although challenges and crises affect all levels of governance and generally transcend national boundaries, local and regional authorities are on the front line in responding to emergencies.

Multi-level governance is important and requires central and local governments to act together to respond in an effective and sustainable way;

**Remaining convinced** that the assemblies have a crucial role to play in defending human rights, taking into account the fact that they have a clear vision of the reality of the regions, and that they are made up of representatives elected by the people;

**Bearing in mind** that the principle of subsidiarity obliges local and regional authorities to play a key role in the day-to-day application of the fundamental values of democracy.

**Further considering** that, although international human rights conventions are negotiated and concluded by States, regional authorities must take over to ensure their implementation in the event of failure at national level;

**With reference** to the role of members of parliament as representatives of the people and spokespersons for citizens, with the responsibility of defending the rights and interests of the population;

**Bearing in mind** the fact that local and regional authorities are broadly associated with the citizens they serve, receive requests and complaints from them and draw up policies that directly affect their lives;

**Bearing in mind** that human rights violations and issues affect all areas of daily life, in particular those that fall within the remit of local and regional authorities, which deal with these issues on a daily basis;

**Bearing in mind** that human rights violations sometimes stem from a lack of understanding and implementation by local authorities;

**The Conference of European Regional Legislative Assemblies**

**Supports** any initiative aimed at defining strategies and policies that involve the regions and their assemblies in order to guarantee democratic stability, develop resilient societies and thus contribute to meeting the needs and expectations of citizens;

**Reminds** that the values of the European Union must remain paramount and guide all policies established at European Union level, but also at national, regional and local level;

**Calls** for greater involvement of regional legislative assemblies in promoting and disseminating a strong culture of the rule of law;

**Highlights** that one of the roles of regional parliaments is to act as the voice of citizens with a view to strengthening the democratic principles of the European Union and establishing multi-level governance, what needs to be given greater consideration;

**Reaffirms** the importance of effective multi-level governance, and the crucial role played by regional authorities in responding to emergencies on the front line;

**Points out**, in this regard, that in the EU's multi-level governance all player at European, national and in particular regional level are required to act together to respond effectively and sustainably, given that today's challenges transcend national borders and require cooperation between neighbours;

**Points out** that respect for human rights in our regions requires close cooperation between the various regional institutions and players, as well as listening to citizens and getting them actively involved;

**Welcomes** initiatives to encourage collaboration and the exchange of practices promoting democratic values between regional legislative assemblies.

**Stresses**, in this regard, that interregional collaboration is reflected in the activities of certain CALRE working groups, in particular the "Migration policies" and "Fight against gender-based violence" groups;

**Recalls** however, that questions of parliamentary procedure and the legal status of parliamentarians are to be governed primarily by national law according to Article 4 paragraph 2 of the Treaty on European Union. Tendencies to undermine national characteristics, for example in the area of parliamentary immunity by the proposed directive on combating corruption, COM(2023) 234 final, or the possible application of the GDPR on legislative bodies conflict with the principle of subsidiarity;

**Urges** regional MPs to examine all policies from the point of view of respect for human rights, given that human rights affect all matters of concern to them, and calls on public institutions themselves to respect human rights in their actions and commitments;

**Urges** regional legislative assemblies to consider their responsibility to monitor and ensure that national and European laws relating to the defence of human rights are effectively implemented and enforced in their own territories;

**Also urges** local and regional authorities to take action to put a stop to human rights violations and ensure that human rights are protected when the national authorities fail to do so;

**Underlines** the ability of MPs to promote the protection of human rights through the development of regional laws, adopted in collaboration with citizens, civil society organisations and experts;

**Encourages** any initiative aimed at raising awareness of the responsibility borne by elected officials in human rights issues affecting the daily lives of citizens at the local level;

**Also encourages** any initiative aimed at training regional authorities and public officials in human rights, and raising their awareness of the subject. Training staff will enable them to be more proactive and feel more responsible when it comes to preventing human rights violations in the implementation of local policies;

**Stresses** the importance of disseminating information to citizens about their rights, particularly to the most vulnerable groups, in order to raise their awareness and empower them to take action to assert their rights;

**Promotes** the exchange of best practices, which can serve as inspiration for regions to develop new means and policies to protect democratic values;

**Calls on** the different levels of governance to cooperate on the protection and implementation of human rights to ensure that this protection is applied in all sectors of public life;

**Invites** local and regional authorities to cooperate with civil society human rights organisations with a view to guaranteeing better application of fundamental rights, the pooling of resources, sharing of knowledge and mediation between actors;

**Calls on** the regions to promote equality, diversity, social justice and individual freedoms, and to ensure that the rights of vulnerable groups, such as minorities, refugees, migrants and people with physical, mental or social disabilities, are fully respected and protected;

**Invites** the Committee of the Regions to organise structured dialogues between associations of local and regional authorities and the European Commission in order to strengthen institutional cooperation between the two institutions and discuss possible coordination mechanisms at all levels of European governance to achieve better protection of fundamental rights and a strengthening of the rule of law;

**Supports** the need for a preventive approach, through a process of annual review of the rule of law, and calls on the Commission to pay attention to possible violations of the rule of law at local and regional level;

Concluded in Brussels, on