

Brussels, 7 October 2009

Mayors from Europe and America join forces to fight against climate change

Mayors from both sides of the Atlantic have pledged today in Brussels to work together to highlight the key role played by the local and regional level in adapting to the effects of climate change. The leaders of big municipalities of Europe and America aim at ensuring recognition of this role in the conclusions of the UN climate change summit in Copenhagen next December.

Invited by the Committee of the Regions (CoR) to take part in high-level debate on climate change during its October Plenary Session, the vice-president of the US Conference of Mayors, representing cities of populations of 30,000 or more, **Elizabeth B. Kautz**, also took the opportunity to meet with CoR President **Luc Van den Brande** and EU Energy Commissioner **Andris Piebalgs** to discuss ways in which her organisation can work more effectively with its EU equivalent, the Covenant of Mayors.

"US mayors stand solidly with mayors across the globe who believe that climate disruption is an urgent threat to the environmental and economic health of our communities. Although our national government did not sign the Kyoto Protocol, almost 1,000 US mayors have subsequently signed the US Mayors Climate Protection Agreement, pledging to meet or beat Kyoto Protocol targets. Mayors continue to devise successful, effective strategies for climate protection and to push national leaders to support these efforts," said Kautz.

Luc Van den Brande, President of the CoR, added: "I am delighted that our colleagues from across the Atlantic have agreed to look at ways in which we can all work more closely together towards the shared goal of adapting to climate change at the local and regional level. The Covenant of Mayors, which is strongly supported by the Committee of the Regions, now has more than 700 signatories from across the EU, and its message to Copenhagen – that regions and cities are already working tirelessly to reduce tackle climate change at the local level, in many cases going further than their national governments – will be all the more clearly heard and understood if it is combined with that of the US Conference of Mayors."

Commissioner Piebalgs said: "If the battle against climate change is to be won, it will have to be fought in the cities. I'm very proud that the mayors of America and Europe are willing to work together in this endeavour, and I am convinced that the role of the administration which is closest to the citizen, the municipalities, will play a major role in mobilising efforts to reach an ambitious agreement in Copenhagen".

Among the possible collaboration opportunities discussed by the three politicians were 'green' twinning programmes that would allow cities in the US and Europe to share best practice on climate change adaptation and mitigation, as well as combining their efforts to raise awareness among citizens of the need to do save energy and reduce emissions. A formal agreement on working together could be signed by both parties during the UN talks in Copenhagen in December, where the

CoR will have observer status on the official EU delegation led by the Swedish Presidency.

Ahead of their meeting with the Commissioner, Mayor Kautz and President Van den Brande joined members of the CoR and other regional and local representatives on the Esplanade in front of the European Commission headquarters to take part in a media event designed to highlight the issue of local and regional authorities and climate change. A three-metre high inflatable globe printed with a map of European regions will be sent from Brussels to Copenhagen as a visible reminder to negotiators of the commitment of the local and regional level to tackling climate change. Leaders marked that commitment by signing their name across their region on the map.

Contacts:

Ferran Tarradellas: +32/2.296.62.93, +32/498.966.293 - ferran.tarradellas@ec.europa.eu

Marilyn Carruthers: +32/2.299.94.51, +32/498.999.451 - marilyn.carruthers@ec.europa.eu