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TECHNICAL PAPER FROM THE CPMR GENERAL SECRETARIAT

COP21 CONCLUSIONS AND RELEVANCE TO CPMR REGIONS

Background

Climate change constitutes one of the most important challenges for the sustainable human development of the 21st century. It impacts on and/or is impacted by global issues of socio-economic nature, including poverty and inequality, economic development, population dynamics, energy production and provision, resource management and consumption & production patterns, and food security.

In 1992, countries joined an international treaty, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), to consider what they could do to limit global temperature increases and the resulting climate change, and to cope with its impacts. By 1995, countries realised that emission reduction provisions in the Convention were inadequate. As a result, they launched negotiations to strengthen the global response to climate change and the first Conference of the Parties (COP 1) took place, while in 1997, the Kyoto Protocol was adopted. **The Kyoto Protocol** legally binds developed countries to emission reduction targets. The commitments undertaken concerned corresponded to 11% of global emissions. The Protocol's first commitment period started in 2008 and ended in 2012. The second commitment period began on 1 January 2013 and will end in 2020.

UN negotiations have continued with the aim to develop a new, broad, balanced and durable and for the first time international climate change agreement that shall apply from 2020 onwards (i.e. post-Kyoto). Scientific advice had warned that if global temperature increases beyond 2 degrees Celsius global warming would become catastrophic and irreversible. However, the conditions that would override the challenges for a global agreement, mainly the willingness of the larger world emitters to take part, the establishment of a common ground among a wide range of countries and the compromise with developing countries, had not been met so far. The growing pressure for a global agreement in time and well before 2020 had raised immensely the expectations for the recently held Conference of the Parties (COP21), which took place in Paris in December 2015.

The high ambition coalition

In the last years and especially during the months before the COP21, climate diplomacy played a key role. The efforts were led by the EU and the US. However, until the last days of the key talks at COP21 the progress made was not encouraging for a breakthrough. Literally on the last days of the negotiations though, a coalition representing more than 100 countries, which had been formed in secrecy some months before the COP21, was revealed. The so-called "high ambition coalition" consisted of all of EU member states, 79 African, Caribbean and Pacific countries, and the US. Among them the Small Island States, which had been advocating for a long time an agreement that would set a clear long-term goal on global warming, in line with scientific advice. This coalition represented a critical mass of countries and pushed for an agreement, literally beyond expectations. This is the first time that a universal agreement has been reached in the fight against climate change.

Basic points of the agreement

Quoting from the announcement made by the United Nations, “the Paris Agreement is an ambitious, dynamic, universal and monumental agreement”.

Current Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs), the countries’ plans for greenhouse gas emissions reduction, reach out to over 98% of world emissions, while the Kyoto Protocol only covered 11%. The agreement provides a pathway forward to limit temperature rise to well below 2 degrees Celsius, which has been the recommendation by the scientific community, and even to 1.5, the latter being a long lasting request by small island states. The agreement also provides a mechanism to increase the level of ambition and establishes the principle that future national plans will be no less ambitious than existing ones.

The Paris Agreement cover all the crucial areas identified as essential for a landmark conclusion:

- Mitigation – reducing emissions fast enough to achieve the temperature goal
- A transparency system and global stock-take – accounting for climate action
- Adaptation – strengthening ability of countries to deal with climate impacts
- Loss and damage – strengthening ability to recover from climate impacts
- Support – including finance, for nations to build clean, resilient futures

It among others sends a signal to markets that it is time to invest in the low emission economy. It also serves as an important tool in mobilizing financial technological support and capacity building for developing countries. And it will also help to scale up global efforts to address and minimize the so-called “loss and damage” from climate change, referring to adverse effects of climate variability and climate change that might occur despite global mitigation and local adaptation efforts.

The agreement is also legally binding but not to all aspects. Certain legally binding rules will apply, for instance regarding accountability and financing. Parties are obliged to prepare, maintain and communicate every five years updated climate plans (Nationally Determined Contributions), thereby steadily increasing their ambition in the long-term. Also developed countries are obliged to provide developing countries with financial support to enable them to implement the agreement. Finally, the agreement includes a compliance mechanism, overseen by a committee of experts that operates in a non-punitive way.

The agreement will enter into force after 55 countries that account for at least 55% of global emissions have ratified it.

The full text of the agreement can be found [here](#).

What is there for regions?

In 1992, local and regional governments were recognised as one of the nine major actors of civil society for the implementation of sustainable development. In addition, subnational governments and civic society actors gradually began to move towards clean energy and to respond to the threats of climate change on their territories by action on the ground. With that reference to local and regional governments as the starting point, and in recognition of their essential actions on both mitigation of climate change and adaptation of their territories to a new climate reality, local and regional governments have gradually claimed the floor for their voice to be heard. The CPMR had joined its voice with international networks and had endorsed a series of messages and declarations arguing for the recognition of local and regional governances as key actors. As a result, years of advocacy eventually lead to an inclusive global climate agreement. The new agreement, unlike the Kyoto Protocol, is enriched with clear references to Cities and other Subnational Authorities, which they are included under the name “Non-Party stakeholders”.

In the framework of its advocacy in 2015, the CPMR has already collected in a [publication](#) experiences and good practices from its member-regions on mitigation and adaptation. In the same publication regions shared the first signs that could be associated to climate change, observed in their territories. Also, CPMR and its regions were invited to intervene in several events within the COP21, to present their views and experiences with regards to adaptation of coasts, ocean related actions, etc.

Regions are now clearly recognised as actors that can undertake climate action. The importance of cooperation among all levels of governance and all actors is clearly mentioned in the agreement text. This multi-level

dimension and cooperation is highlighted in several clauses, and reference is made to an action plan for the years 2016-2020, which remains to be further specified. Their role in capacity building, especially in developing countries and in the most vulnerable territories, is also concretely mentioned. Such elements, although they might seem obvious, only very recently appeared for the first time in the international negotiations' texts and they should not be taken for granted.

In the [CPMR political position](#) on climate change adopted in June 2015, regions stressed marine and maritime economic activities, such as maritime industries, marine renewable energies and coastal and maritime tourism, as strategic priority sectors with large and untapped potential to contribute to climate change mitigation. Such investments can also boost innovation and investments in their territories and eventually create jobs and sustainable growth. The ambitious agreement is encouraging and gives further perspective to Europe's commitment, within the Energy Union framework, to become the world leader in developing the next generation of renewable energy technologies, e.g. marine energy. Given the criticism that the European Commission received in October 2014 that the proposed EU goals for renewable energy for 2030 were not ambitious enough, there might be ground to **further argue for more EU support to innovation technologies, for complementing the budget of Horizon 2020 in compensation of the 2,2billion euro that were cut and fed to the European Fund for Strategic Investments etc., or even for revision of the EU 2030 climate targets.**

In the same [political position](#), regions also undertook to promote the use of inventories, monitoring methods and reporting of emissions within their territories. Also to mobilise funds and support the implementation of concrete projects on the ground with emphasis on renewable energy, energy efficiency, transport, including maritime, and facilitate maritime energy production technologies. **The European Commission officially recognizes as [Covenant of Mayors Coordinators](#) those regions which officially commits to provide strategic guidance, financial and technical support to Covenant signatories.** Visibility of such actions is now ensured through the recently updated Covenant of Mayors and Pact of Islands. The greenhouse gas emissions reduction commitments that are submitted by local and island authorities respectively will be fed into the United Nations Non-State Actor Zone for Climate Action, known as NAZCA platform, and will feature on the website of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

Finally, in the same [political position](#), regions highlighted adaptation of territories to climate change as an element of equal importance to mitigation. Regions stressed the crucial importance of a comprehensive territorial dimension in adaptation plans and undertook to assume their role in strengthening territorial cooperation, including within sea basins and macro-regions, and in sharing good practices and case studies. There is a wide range of areas of action, such as resilience, risk management, tourism, coastal areas management, biodiversity and protected areas, aridity, water management, infrastructure and transport, data mapping, safety of people and goods, finance, territorial planning and urban development, water resources, agriculture and food security, forests and fisheries management, etc. **Among others, the insurance sector and in particular future insurance policies and coverage of maritime territories and infrastructure against extreme phenomena is a very critical aspect for maritime territories.** This issue could be worth pursuing further by the CPMR Secretariat.

All in all, the clear –and equal- recognition of adaptation in the Paris agreement is a very important element. Advocacy efforts of the CPMR together with cities, other subnational governments and international networks continue in view of the annual meetings of the Conference of the Parties (COP), with the aim **to further establish cities and regions into the follow-up decisions that will be taken in the following COPs, integrate them in global plans for the implementation of the new climate agreement, argue for direct funding to regions for the implementation of the agreement's components on the ground, etc..**

APPENDIX: REFERENCES TO REGIONS IN THE AGREEMENT TEXT

The regional level in particular (among other subnational levels) is recognized as an actor in the following areas of defined action from the Parties (*parts in italics* are extracted from the agreement text):

Contribution to the mobilisation of stronger and more ambitious climate action: *The parties agreed to uphold and promote regional and international cooperation in order to mobilize stronger and more ambitious climate action by all Parties and non-Party stakeholders, including civil society, the private sector, financial institutions, cities and other subnational authorities, local communities and indigenous peoples.*

(73 d and g) Fostering global, regional, national and subnational cooperation, as well as **Identifying opportunities to strengthen capacity at the national, regional and subnational level** in the framework of a *work plan for the period 2016–2020*.

Furthermore, the Conference of the Parties:

(117) *Welcomes the efforts of non-Party stakeholders to scale up their climate actions, and encourages the registration of those actions in the Non -State Actor Zone for Climate Action platform.*

(118) *Encourages Parties to work closely with non-Party stakeholders to catalyse efforts to strengthen mitigation and adaptation action*

(119) *Also encourages non-Party stakeholders to increase their engagement in the processes referred to in paragraph 109 above and paragraph 124 below*

(120) *Agrees to convene, pursuant to decision 1/CP.20, paragraph 21, building on the Lima-Paris Action Agenda and in conjunction with each session of the Conference of the Parties during the period 2016–2020, a high-level event that: (among others)*

(d) Provides meaningful and regular opportunities for the effective high-level engagement of dignitaries of Parties, international organizations, international cooperative initiatives and non-Party stakeholders

(121) *Decides that two high-level champions shall be appointed to act on behalf of the President of the Conference of the Parties to facilitate through strengthened high-level engagement in the period 2016–2020 the successful execution of existing efforts and the scaling-up and introduction of new or strengthened voluntary efforts, initiatives and coalitions, including by:*

(b) Engaging with interested Parties and non-Party stakeholders, including to further the voluntary initiatives of the Lima -Paris Action Agenda

(133) *Welcomes the efforts of all non-Party stakeholders to address and respond to climate change, including those of civil society, the private sector, financial institutions, cities and other subnational authorities*

(134) *Invites the non-Party stakeholders [...] to scale up their efforts and support actions to reduce emissions and/or to build resilience and decrease vulnerability to the adverse effects of climate change and demonstrate these efforts via the Non-State Actor Zone for Climate Action platform [...].*

Furthermore, the Parties to this Agreement:

(Article 7, paragraph 2)

*Recognize that **adaptation is a global challenge** faced by all with local, subnational, national, regional and international dimensions, and that it is a key component of and makes a contribution to the long-term global response to climate change to protect people, livelihoods and ecosystems, taking into account the urgent and immediate needs of those developing country Parties that are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change*

(Article 11, paragraph 2)

***Capacity-building** should be country-driven, based on and responsive to national needs, and foster country ownership of Parties, in particular, for developing country Parties, including at the national, subnational and local levels. Capacity-building should be guided by lessons learned, including those from capacity-building activities under the Convention, and should be an effective, iterative process that is participatory, cross-cutting and gender responsive.*