



European Committee
of the Regions

CONFERENCE ON THE FUTURE OF EUROPE

PLENARY SESSION

FRIDAY 11 MARCH 2022

Dear colleagues,

We all grow up in our home city or village. We go to our school there, see our family doctor, use local buses and apply for our first passport at the local administration.

No one can imagine one's home attacked, burning, bombed and destroyed. And yet, it is happening. Here – in Europe.

This war is killing children. It is bombarding maternity hospitals. It is vanishing people and their peaceful life in every local community of Ukraine.

Crises, like the war near our eastern borders, remind us that the European Union does not exist in a vacuum.

Imagine we would have this terror in the symbolic city of Strasbourg...

Dear friends,

In the last weeks we have witnessed brave citizens and mayors

staying behind with their people.

Today, all across Europe, regions and cities gather food, medicine, and first aid supplies, and send them to Ukraine, and to border regions of Poland and Romania, that are providing help and shelter, to the almost two million of Ukrainians, who fled their country.

Like in the migration crisis, it is regional and local authorities in border regions, who shoulder most of the immediate support.

From Marseille, the twin sister of Odessa, President Muselier from Region Sud is channelling humanitarian aid by the "Convois pour l'Ukraine". The City of Gdansk in Poland is raising funds to support Kyiv and Lviv hospitals, and my region, Central Macedonia in Greece, medical supplies.

And while our efforts for Ukraine prove that we are united, regional and local authorities need to be better and concretely supported by the European Union.

We therefore call on the EU to think diplomacy both globally and locally, to make use of existing people to people and city to city partnerships.

We are the ones who fill international cooperation with life.

A future European foreign policy needs to look beyond the capitals and offer a special role and adequate resources to the regional and local level.

Dear colleagues,

We are standing on the side of our Ukrainian partners. Because their fight, is our fight for freedom and democracy in Europe.

The time has come to move forward, for a common European defence and foreign policy, to not only protect our external borders, but to uphold what we all cherish most: freedom and democracy.

For this, we support the citizens' panel calling for an increased strategic autonomy of the EU.

The time to act is now.

Check against delivery