



**European Committee  
of the Regions**

**SPEECH BY PRESIDENT TZITZIKOSTAS  
COVENANT OF MAYORS - EUROPE CEREMONY 2021**

**TOWARDS A FAIRER AND CLIMATE-NEUTRAL EUROPE FOR ALL  
7 OCTOBER 2021**

Mayor Arve, local leaders, ladies and gentlemen,

The Covenant of Mayors is a movement of local leaders who understand the urgent need to act against the climate emergency.

10,700 signatories from 53 countries, representing 325 million people. These are not only numbers, but stories of local ambition, local investment and local projects.

Our Committee has always championed the Covenant of Mayors. That is why we launched a Chamber of National Covenant Ambassadors – one for each member states – to support the Covenant in our home countries

What does it matter to us?

Because it falls to us to work with our local communities to cut emissions, make our transport cleaner, homes energy efficient and ensure we reduce, re-use and recycle our waste.

We have heard of the incredible ambition by Mayor Arve and her city of Turku that aims to be carbon neutral by 2029.

Under the leadership of the Mayor of Gabrovo in Bulgaria – my friend Tania Hristova – they are procuring super capacitor electric busses.

The Mayor of Prague - Zdenek Hrib - launched “Adopt a Tree” as part of a commitment to plant 1 million trees.

Ladies and gentlemen,

It also fell to local leaders who worked with emergency services responding to the many fires and floods that tragically hits so many regions across Europe. It is local leaders who are rebuilding in the aftermath of natural disasters

The UN has said we now have five times the number of recorded weather disasters than we had in 1970, and they are seven times more costly.



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It now falls to local leaders to make our communities more resilient.

Delivered right, the European Green Deal will support Europe's recovery and set it on a path to carbon-neutrality. Europe's one million local and regional leaders must take centre stage in its design and implementation to make it a success.

In needs investment: the EU's budget and recovery and resilience plans were unprecedented in ambition and proportion.

Yet our Committee's study showed across Europe, national investment plans are being designed without cities and regions. This will make our recovery will be more painful and the green transition slower.

Climate targets and funding are meaningless without strong climate governance. We need a true partnership between every level of government - local to international.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We must use the Conference on the Future to have an honest discussion about our Union.

If we want it to be more inclusive and responsive to the needs of our people and our planet, we need a new governance model. We need local and regional governments to have a bigger say in EU laws that fall under our competencies.

This is how we can enable our regions and cities to be the drivers of Europe's green economic recovery.

This is why our Committee launched its Green Deal: Going Local campaign which set 10 actions to mobilise local and regional governments. From planting trees, to holding local debates – this campaign is open to every local or regional leader in Europe.

Ladies and gentlemen,

At a global level, together, we must make the case for true multilevel governance.

We deliver of 70% of climate change reduction measures and up to 90% of climate adaptation action: the sub-national level of government must – finally – be given a formal seat in the UN's climate talk negotiations.

It seems absurd our climate contributions are not taken on board:



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I call on the European Commission, ICLEI and Covenant of Mayors to work with our Committee to develop a model so that locally and regional determined contributions are measured, monitored and formally taken into account in the UN climate talks.

We know the climate emergency will be won or lost in our regions, cities, towns and villages.

I therefore call on Executive Vice-President Timmermans as the EU's negotiator to ensure the regional and local dimension is included in the COP26 conclusions.

To every local leader: You are acting today to overcome the climate emergency. You are protecting biodiversity. You are sparking innovation, creating local jobs and driving Europe's green recovery.

You are Europe's future.

It is time for the EU to have the courage to change from within. It is time for a stronger, more democratic, greener and inclusive Europe.

A Europe that is closer to people. A Europe that works with, for and in its cities, regions and villages.

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY