



**European Committee
of the Regions**

SPEECH BY PRESIDENT VASCO ALVES CORDEIRO

OPENING PLENARY SESSION " LOCAL AND REGIONAL SOLUTIONS FOR GLOBAL CHALLENGES "

10TH EUROPEAN SUMMIT OF REGIONS AND CITIES

MONDAY, 18 MARCH 2024 2 PM

Welcome to the 10th European Summit of Regions and Cities!

C'est pour moi un grand plaisir et un grand honneur de vous accueillir ici à mons, en Wallonie, en Belgique pour cette occasion spéciale. Je voudrais remercier nos hôtes, la Région Wallonne et son Ministre-Président Elio di Rupo pour cet accueil exceptionnel et si chaleureux.

C'est aussi grâce à vous que nous sommes ici !

Merci pour votre engagement sans faille aux côtés du Comité Européen des Régions !

30 years ago, not far from here, a few hundred mayors and regional leaders were gathering for the first time for the inaugural session of the European Committee of the Regions.

A new democratic assembly was born.

And today I would like to recall here one of the founding fathers of the committee who recently passed away, Jacques Delors.

He once said that the goal of the European Committee of the Regions was to draw every individual citizen into this great collective venture.

The Committee of the Regions was created to be a voice.

The voice of each and every local and regional community of the European Union.

The voice of more than 1,2 million local and regional representatives that every day in every corner of Europe work to improve those communities and the lives of their citizens, with a spirit of service, responsibility and vision.

Every day, everywhere in Europe, big or small assemblies and large or small governments are in action to deliver concrete answers to their citizens concerns.

To represent them, and to stress the unequivocal role and importance they have in this union of ours, it's not only a personal honour.

It is a democratic duty because the European Union is made of its regions and cities.



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It is the sum of all the places where people live. Regions and cities are the beating heart of this union.

2024 will be a record year for democracy and elections, as billions of people will cast their vote across the world. It is very true in Europe as in less than three months, more than four hundred million citizens will go to the polls to elect their representatives in the European parliament.

Today, we open our 10th European Summit of Regions and Cities, bringing together mayors, councillors, regional leaders from across Europe and beyond to debate, exchange, and shape a common vision for the future.

We are racing against time to address the climate crisis. We face the horrors of war in Europe and in the Middle East where, in both places, the slaughtering of innocents reveals everything about the abyss of the lack of humanity of its perpetrators and nothing about any reason, any right or any merit of their fight.

We see rising inequalities while there has never been so much wealth. We feel powerless in front of fast-changing technologies. We see our fundamental values and our democratic system too often questioned.

All these challenges, and so much more, are felt across the world, with differences and with similarities. And while it seems they are an overwhelming issue, they all ultimately require action from the local mayor, the provincial councillor, the regional minister.

They all also depend on the action of the subnational level of government.

This is why we need to bring our voices to the front stage.

This is why we need to take a stand.

This why this summit is global.

This summit is global in its audience, but it is also global as it is comprehensive.

No issues are left behind: investments, digitalisation, gender equality, youth participation, democracy, public services, environment, resilience. All issues that are essential for our regions and cities.

This summit is also bridging with other key initiatives, such as the Ukraine reconstruction conference, which will take place later in June in Berlin or the preparation for the European Elections.



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Today, opening the summit in Mons, in Wallonia, also makes us reflect on the importance of history and culture as a powerful instrument of integration, of dialogue and of transformation.

Since the first days of the European project, social progress and the willingness to reduce inequalities across its regions have been a compass for European policies and funds, in particular cohesion policy. Looking at Mons and Wallonia, we see the results of this. But we also see its huge potential to continue being a region of innovation, social cohesion and ambition for its people.

Dear members,

Dear friends,

We have a lot of work to do in these coming days. The task is immense, so is the energy that animates all of us to find solutions so that we provide a better quality of life to all our citizens. This is our mission today, as it is every day, in all our regions and cities.

I thank you for your attention and I wish you all an excellent European Summit of Regions and Cities