



**European Committee
of the Regions**

SPEECH BY 1ST VICE PRESIDENT TZITZIKOSTAS

213TH MEETING OF THE CoR BUREAU

PRAGUE CONGRESS CENTRE

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SPEECH

**CONCLUDING REMARKS ON THE WAR AGAINST UKRAINE AND ITS IMPACT ON
LOCAL AND REGIONAL LEVELS**

Dear President, dear Mr. Klitschko, dear colleagues,

I was very much impressed by the discussions in today's Bureau meeting. And I am proud to verify that, after six months of war and after having assessed all its consequences in political, security and economic terms for our communities, European Local and Regional Authorities strongly stand united behind Ukraine, its people, and its mayors.

We mentioned today several issues concerning our communities – I refer in particular to the shelter for refugees, and to the rise of the cost of energy in front of us - and we have discussed the first European proposals on how to contribute to the alleviation of the war's impact.

But, more importantly, we have been forward looking on how we will be supporting Ukraine to withstand economically and to rebuild infrastructure in its cities and villages.

I saw the outbreak of this war when I was the President of the CoR. We did our best back then to mobilize our members in order to send first humanitarian aid to Ukraine and to address the refugee crisis in the bordering regions.

Moreover, we called for granting Ukraine a European perspective, and we welcomed last June the granting by the European Council of the status of candidate country: cities and regions will support the future steps which are necessary for Ukraine to become a member of the European Union.

In so doing, we constantly put at the centre of our talks the successful decentralization process of Ukraine, and the role played by its mayors before and during the war: this role will be pivotal in the future phase of reconstruction and it will catalyse the accession process. In fact, the overall remarkable resilience Ukraine has shown against the aggressor over the last six months is largely based on strong communities, on the sense of ownership that was supported and developed through the decentralisation process in the past years.

We need now to address together the reconstruction. In the rebuilding process, we must secure the help of European experts in urban and spatial planning, but also the establishment of a new operational instrument, a

Facility that would allow the reconstruction of cities and villages in partnership with European cities and regions.

Ukraine has estimated more than 18 billion euros are needed for the reconstruction, including 3 billion for internally displaced people. The EU and international donors must act quickly and identify how to finance this new challenge. From our side we will lobby the EU's institutions in order to secure that loans are granted as soon as possible.

To this end, we will talk with key players in the European Parliament, which is about to start discussing the mid-term review of the Multi-Financial Framework of the EU. I also hope that the European Commission will be willing to consider exploiting the experience of European cities and regions in managing a wide range of European funds, and allow them to directly work with their partners in Ukraine in view of the reconstruction.

In this context, I would like to underline that repurposing the EU's cohesion funds is not the solution to alleviate the consequences of the war. I therefore call for a new specific facility to be put at the disposal of EU's regions in order to help Ukraine's regions and cities rebuild their infrastructures.

To achieve this, and to coordinate the efforts of local and regional authorities in helping Ukraine rebuild, the CoR, together with its long-standing partners launched, on 30 June, the European Alliance of Cities and Regions for the reconstruction of Ukraine.

The Alliance will work closely with the European Commission, within its instruments created to support the rebuilding of Ukraine: the Ukraine reconstruction Platform. There, we will play our political influence in order to ensure that the reconstruction has a strong bottom-up component.

The Alliance will also serve as a coordination platform for the joint efforts that European cities and regions are ready to deploy to support a smart reconstruction. The work of the Alliance will be driven by the needs of our Ukrainian partners and can become a privileged hub for peer-to-peer initiatives.

Dear colleagues,

At the Ukraine Recovery Conference in Lugano on 4-5 July, Ukraine announced a National Recovery Plan, complemented by a more operational Fast Recovery Plan, which is the guiding document for reconstruction. In this context the importance of regional and local authorities was explicitly underlined. Indeed, without a coordinated effort of local leaders, recovery will not be possible. Here, the direct exchange of experience through city-to-city partnerships, peer-learning, peer-to-peer cooperation, will play a crucial role, and I invite all stakeholders to use the Alliance to this end.

Moreover, the CoR will continue supporting local communities in their wish to embrace good governance and transparency. This could be done under the existing funds and programmes, such as the U-LEAD programme – and under the coordination of our Working Group for

Ukraine chaired by Ms Dulkiewicz. As the composition of the Working Group was recently enlarged, may I express my hope that it will become the driving force of the CoR's concentrated action on Ukraine, in the questions of reconstruction, and beyond, towards the EU membership of Ukraine.

I would like to conclude by saying that together we will be able to help Ukraine to build back better its cities, which will be greener, more energy-efficient, sustainable and open to their citizens.

I am confident our Alliance will bridge people, mayors and regional leaders of Ukraine and the European Union for a common future of freedom. Slava Ukraini.

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