

Declaration of Euskadi: “A new Compromise in favour of Regions”

On March 7, 2007, presidents and delegates of Region Networks, governments of regions, intermediate or subnational and Federated States of all continents were gathered in Marseille, Provence-Alpes-Côte d’Azur (PACA) region, France. The United Regions Organization (Fogar) came out and approved the statement “DECLARATION OF REGIONS ABOUT THEIR PARTICIPATION IN GLOBALIZED GOVERNANCE”, in which they claimed for a more active role of intermediate governments or sub-national in the consecution of the Millennium Development Objectives, adopted by the United Nations in the year 2000.

The “*Declaration*” urged regional governments to play a role in Global Governance and it intended to make the regional voice heard in global debate instances. In the year 2007, just before the beginning of the global crisis, regional governments could claim for this role in Global Governance, because during years, they had been achieving an increasingly important role in the governance of many countries. They were increasing their power inside each state and they were being recognized by international organizations like European Union.

This thrust was supported by a very compact corpus of ideas. Perhaps as a part of the Post-Cold War’s democratic optimism, it was thought that empowering regions was a way to approach the decision-making center to citizens. Thus, Decentralization imposed itself as a trend, not only because administrative efficiency but also because it was thought that a political action addressed from capital cities was not able –in a complex world- to reach every corner of the territory. Afterwards, with the practical exercise of regional power, it was seen that regions could be seen as “identities protectors”, and as important as that, they could be seen as the right scale for economic growth in the so difficult scenario of globalization.

Ten years later, exceptions aside, the regions do not have the same political prominence, nor do the ideas that protected them have the same force. The economic crisis, behind all the transformations, is unfavorable to share power and budget with the territory. Thus, it is found that, in many cases, regionalization was more of a benevolent grant by the nation-state, when funding is available, than a process convinced of the greater efficiency of a decentralized structure. The center did not lose power, as some had thought. But some countries are, re-nationalized, re-centralized in spite of elected representatives and population.

Fortunately, in Global discussion area, regions have progressed and they have had a growing participation in all the debates of global agenda, from the development of the Sustainable Development Goals, SDGs, to the New Urban Agenda.

In Europe, the regions have not achieved a status of greater recognition within European Union. Meanwhile, outside European Union, many regional governments survive by assuming a marked role of political representation, but with a limited margin of competence and a very serious lack of financial resources. Other countries from different continents highly centralized have achieved the decentralization and territory’s autonomy. Thus, the Arab Spring promoted a decentralization reform in North Africa. Political changes in Latin America led to constitutions that recognize cultural and national diversity.

Facing all these changes, ten years later, members of the Organization of the United Regions - Global Forum of Associations of Regions, ORU Fogar, we want to reiterate and renew our engagement: **“A New Commitment in favour of the Regions”**. So, we want:

1. Reaffirm ourselves as a lobby for decentralization and improving the financing of regional governments. These governments need adequate skills and sufficient. It is time to recover a concept: subsidiarity, that is, the principle by which it is established that a matter must be resolved by the authority closest to the object of the problem.
2. Manifest our conviction that, in the scenario of globalization, decentralization accelerates development. Decentralization is a process that facilitates the global agenda of the SDGs. The regional scale is the key space for local economic development.
3. Reiterate our commitment to an integrated and territorial vision. We believe in the need for a territorial development that integrates big & intermediate cities, towns and rural world. And we also defend the need for infrastructures and communications, which create a network. We want a balanced and cohesive territory.
4. Renew our will to continue defending the rural scope. In front of speeches, especially in the global debate, which only take into account cities and their reality, regions we position ourselves in defense of non-urban space and we are committed to the policies against rural exodus.
5. To affirm that we firmly believe that the strengthening of regional governments is key to the democratic renewal and the new governance that a complex world demands. Global crisis, as well as the crisis of confidence in political systems and representation, far from recentralization, demands a management that is closer to the citizenship. The regional government is government of proximity, dimension and human face.
6. State that we assume decentralization requires an exercise of responsibility on the part of all levels of government and, peculiarly, of the regional level. Therefore, against corruption, we must commit ourselves to demanding accountability, which is part of our democratic legitimacy.
7. Reiterate our commitment to global agenda and the challenge of meeting Sustainable Development Goals by 2030, both as contributing to the challenges of the fight against Climate Change and the development of New Urban Agenda, giving it a territorial focus. We believe that the non-state level is the key actor in the implementation of this whole agenda.
8. Continue claiming to participate, both in the national political dialogue in which the SDGs are defined, and at the global level. Regions must participate and contribute to the objectives and the overall development program. For this, we want to continue to be present, with our own voice, in the areas of definition, monitoring and evaluation of the international agenda.
9. Commit ourselves in the defense of identities. Region must be an institutional instrument to protect the existing diversity within each state. Dignify different cultures in the territory should be enriching objectives to global heritage of humanity. The protection of cultures and indigenous life must be a mission in which regions are committed and linked. The protection of biological diversity must go hand in hand with the protection of cultural diversity.
10. Express our confidence in ORU Fogar as a global instrument to articulate regions, as a unified voice in the debate of global agenda, but also as a space where its partners, in a spirit of mutual support, find opportunities. An organization provider of models, technical assistance, training, exchange and opportunities for interregional cooperation.

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