

**20th CONFERENCE of PRESIDENTS
OF THE EUROPEAN UNION OUTERMOST REGIONS
Guadeloupe, February 5th and 6th, 2015**

FINAL DECLARATION

The 20th Conference of the Presidents of the Outermost Regions (OR), meeting in Basse-Terre, Guadeloupe, on February 5th and 6th, 2015, under the chairmanship of His Honourable Victorin LUREL, President of the Regional Council of Guadeloupe, adopts the final declaration hereafter:

REAFFIRMS the scope of article 349 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) as the specific and autonomous legal basis to adapt the implementation of the European Union law to all Outermost Regions.

MANIFESTS its deep concern on the recurring gap between the possibilities offered by article 349 TFEU and the inadequacy of certain policies of intervention in the Outermost Regions.

REMAINS deeply concerned by an aggravated and structural unemployment which consequences lastingly affect the social cohesion of these regions.

CONSIDERS as decisive the development of the social axis introduced in 2012, in the strategy of the European Union in favour of the Outermost Regions, particularly regarding the fight against unemployment.

FEELS that the answers given by the European Social Fund (ESF) and the Initiative for employment of young people (IEJ) remain insufficient and requests therefore, a specific financing instrument for the creation of employment, specifically for the youth.

RECALLS the creation of the OR Employment Network on the initiative of its regions, which among other aims primarily at the adoption of the Shock Plan for job creation which will require operational and financial support from the European Commission.

REITERATES the priority it attaches to the deficit reduction of accessibility across all EU policies, including air and sea transport, competition, environment, energy, information and communication technologies, maritime policies and the cohesion policy.





DEMANDS an accrued vigilance on the part of all the European Institutions to break with the isolation of the Outermost Regions and calls for coordinated actions to take into account the weaknesses of the Outermost Regions in accordance with the principles of equal opportunities and territorial cohesion.

INVITES the Commission to take inventory of the impact of the European legislation on accessibility, accompanied, in the short term, by recommendations allowing the Outermost Regions to have a coherent legal and financial framework conducive to their opening up.

STRESSES the need, given the high vulnerability of its regions, to develop the horizontal control axis against climate change under the renewed strategy.

RECALLS the compromise from the European Commission, included in its communication of 2012, on the joint study of outermost regions and their respective Member States, to consider how best to deploy funding for renewable energies and energy efficiency.

REAFFIRMS the ultimate objective of reducing the dependency on fossil fuels. CALLS on the Commission to put in place and strengthen policies allowing environmental and energy transition taking into account the specific characteristics of the Outermost Regions.

ADHERES to the objectives of growth and employment of the Juncker Plan and alerts on the indispensable taking into account the realities of the Outermost Regions.

REQUESTS the arranging of a specific dialogue with the European Commission to develop a regional version of the said plan, adapted to the economic and financial environment of the Outermost Regions.

ACKNOWLEDGES the legal framework of cooperation as adopted, REMAINS concerned by the weakness of the orientations of the European Commission to facilitate the conclusion of EDF/ERDF cooperation projects.

SHOWS great concern with regard to the lack of progress on the harmonization of standards.

REQUESTS the implementation of flexible solutions to achieve inter-regional cooperation between the Outermost Regions.

STRESSES the need to facilitate the participation of the Outermost Regions, by appropriate and responsive mechanisms, to European initiatives and horizontal programmes such as Horizon 2020, COSME, Easi.



REAFFIRMS emphatically, the need to maintain in the evaluation of the POSEI plan of action, on the one hand, the specific characteristic of agriculture in our regions and on the other hand, the maintenance of the current decentralized approach of the programming method.

REMAINS deeply concerned by the major uncertainties that weigh on the future of the sector of agriculture in the context of markets liberalization, especially regarding the end of milk quotas in March 2015 and sugar quotas in September 2017.

ALERTS on the severe impacts related to the cancellation of the system of milk quotas that already plague the Azores, particularly the decline of the production price.

DEPLORES to this day the lack of anticipation and acceptable practical solutions on the basis of article 349 of the TFEU and considers priority to restore the trust of the professionals in these sectors, ensure their income, preserve their jobs and maintain the competitiveness of the sectors.

Urgently ASKS the European Commission, the Council and the European Parliament to define regulatory mechanisms and an outstanding support to all sectors of agriculture in the Outermost Regions faced with markets liberalization.

NOTES that in the field of fisheries, the action of the European Union towards third countries, can strongly impede the development of this sector in the Outermost Regions.

PLEADS for an enhancement of the exceptional potential of fisheries in the Outermost Regions to turn this sector into a real economic source of employment.

INVITES the Commission and the Member States to a suitable implementation of European and national legislation allowing the Outermost Regions to mobilize European funds available to update structural facilities necessary for the sustainable management of water and waste.

STRESSES on the importance of State Funds as an instrument for Outermost Regions and as such, calls on the European Commission to quickly approve the 4th Scheme for the Free Zone of Madeira.

TAKES NOTE of the extension of dock dues system until June 30, 2015 and notes that the regime that will come as a replacement will have a validity of 5 years and 6 months. REGRETS its limited time span with regard to the



permanent and structural character of the constraints related to the Outermost Regions.

UNDERLINES the legitimacy to permanently stabilize the mechanism of dock dues with regard to issues of economic development and maintenance of employment in the Outermost Regions.

REGRETS the penalizing character of the discriminatory treatment applied to Saint-Martin and Mayotte compared to other European regions particularly in the context of the cohesion policy.

RECALLS that in the context of the revision of the regulation on the NUTS classification, Saint-Martin and Mayotte will become European regions at NUTS II level; therefore requests the establishment of tools necessary for the production of statistical data.

In this regard CLAIMS their full right to benefit from the Funds under the same conditions as the other European regions.

ENCOURAGES the continuation of the tripartite partnership Commission-Member states-OR that has demonstrated its relevance and efficiency in the much needed consideration of the reality in the Outermost Regions.

STRESSES the high importance of the partnership spirit and dialogue set up with the European Commission.

AGREES that the autonomous region of Madeira will preside the upcoming annual Conference of Presidents of Outermost Regions.

Signed in Basse-Terre, Guadeloupe, on February 6, 2015, in nine original copies, of which six in the French language, two in the Portuguese language and one in the Spanish language.

AZORES

CANARIES

GUADELOUPE

FRENCH GUIANA

MADEIRA

MARTINIQUE

MAYOTTE

REUNION

SAINT-MARTIN

Annex to the final Declaration

The Presidents of the Outermost Regions have taken note of the impediment of the President of the Department of Mayotte, Mr Daniel ZAÏDANI, to attend the 20th Conference of Presidents, for reasons beyond his control.

The Conference, therefore charges the President of the Regional Council of Guadeloupe with the forwarding to the General Council of Mayotte, of the original copies of this final declaration to be signed by its President.

The President of the Regional Council of Guadeloupe will then send the signed documents back to each one of the Presidents of the Outermost Regions.

Outermost European Regions

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