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EU welcomes 20 Belarusian cities – new Signatories of the Covenant of Mayors

December 13, 2017, Minsk (Belarus) - Today the 2-day International Conference ‘Covenant of Mayors East: Joining Forces for Climate & Energy Action’ has gathered together over 150 participants from Eastern Partnership countries to discuss the common challenges of the CO₂ reduction and energy efficiency in municipalities that signed up to the EU Covenant of Mayors initiative. The international event takes place in the Victoria Hotel located at the Pobediteley Avenue, 59, Minsk, Republic of Belarus.

The Belarusian policy on energy efficiency and climate change as well as the Covenant of Mayors’ developments in other Eastern Partnership countries are in focus of the Conference discussion. Today during the signing ceremony the Covenant of Mayors community is enlarged by 20 new Signatories from Belarus committing to reduce CO₂ emissions at least by 30% by 2030. New signatories are Babrujsk, Bychaŭ, Vierchniadzvinsk, Viciebsk, Vaŭkavysk, Haradok, Dokšytsy, Ivacevičy, Kalinkavičy, Krasnapollie, Karma, Masty, Mscislaŭ, Niasviž, Navapolack, Pružany, Svetlahorsk, Sluck, Slaŭharad, Smarhoń.

Mr. Vasilis Maragos, the Head of Unit, Directorate General NEAR, European Commission, welcomed the new Belarusian Signatories as a part of the Covenant family of thousands of local and regional authorities voluntarily committed to implementing EU climate and energy objectives and highlighted: *“Today we are marking the success of the Covenant of Mayors initiative in the Eastern Partnership countries. With over 300 signatories in all six countries, and 20 more joining today from Belarus, it is safe to say that the Covenant has a strong brand in the Eastern Partnership countries. The EU is on track in supporting the roll out of the initiative and to help municipalities implement their energy and climate goals. Up to now, we have provided at least EUR 20m for demonstration projects, technical assistance and a Covenant secretariat. The EU is committed to continue supporting this important initiative as it delivers tangible benefits to the citizens by building resilient cities and so contributing to quality of life for their inhabitants.”*

Mr. Mikhail Malashenko, the Head of Energy Efficiency Department of State Committee of Standardization of Belarus Republic confirmed that *“Belarusian cities and towns have a keen interest in this initiative - number of participants increased twofold over the past year. By joining the initiative, municipalities not only commit themselves to reduce CO₂ emissions by implementation of energy-saving and energy-efficient technologies as well as using of renewable energy, but improve the quality of life of its residents. We are glad that Belarus became a venue for such international conference dedicated to the implementation of the Covenant of Mayors in Eastern Partnership countries this year.”*

Mr. Christophe Frering, the Team Leader of the ‘Covenant of Mayors East’ (CoM East) Project, underlines that *“the EU support in preparing and implementing the Sustainable Energy and Climate Action Plans helps municipalities get broader strategic vision of urban development and elaborate their local energy and climate policies”.*

The conference provides an excellent opportunity for stepping up joint efforts for sustainable municipal development and sharing the experience of successful modernization of municipal infrastructure in the EaP cities. **Mr. Jan Waanders**, the Team Leader of the ‘Covenant of Mayors – Demonstration Projects’ Programme emphasized that *“Cities and towns have huge demands for implementation of energy-efficiency projects, we are talking about of tens of millions of euros of projects in each city, and it is important that they learn from other cities (like Polotsk) which already have implemented similar projects. Such projects are not rocket science, but do require a high level of professional capacities within the cities.”*

The International Conference and Covenant of Mayors signing ceremony is attended by the representatives of the European Commission, Eastern Partnership countries’ ministries and



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departments, civil society organizations, international financial institutions, mayors and deputy mayors from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bulgaria, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine.

The “Covenant of Mayors East: Joining Forces for Climate & Energy Action” International Conference is organised by the EU-funded Programme “Covenant of Mayors - Demonstration projects” and the EU-funded project “Covenant of Mayors - East” in close cooperation with the Energy Efficiency Department of the Republic of Belarus.

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Background:

Covenant of Mayors for Climate & Energy is an urban climate and energy initiative of the European Union bringing together local, regional and national authorities voluntarily committed to implementing the EU climate and energy objectives. With over 7700 signatories representing more than 240 million citizens, it has become the world's largest climate and energy initiatives.

Covenant of Mayors East (CoM East) is the EU-funded Project aimed at bringing together local and regional authorities of the Eastern Partnership countries in implementing sustainable energy policies, reducing their dependence on fossil fuels, increasing security of energy supply and facilitating the global movement on climate change mitigation. Out of more than 300 communities from the Eastern Partnership countries 32 Belarusian local government bodies committed themselves to reduce carbon dioxide emissions to 20% or 30%.

Covenant of Mayors – Demonstration Projects (CoM-DeP) is the European Union Programme supporting municipalities from EaP countries, which are signatories of the Covenant of Mayors, with the population of less than 200 thousand inhabitants. The CoM-DeP provides technical assistance and financial support to small cities in the course of implementing energy efficiency measures included in their Sustainable Energy Action Plans. As part of the Programme, 19 Demonstration Projects are being currently implemented in the Eastern Partnership countries: 11 in Ukraine, 3 in Belarus, 3 in Moldova, 1 in Armenia and 1 in Georgia.

EU4Energy Initiative covers all EU support to improve energy supply, security and connectivity, as well as to promote energy efficiency and the use of renewables in the Eastern Partner countries Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. It does this by financing projects and programmes that help to reform energy markets and to reduce national energy dependence and consumption. Over the longer term, this makes energy supply more reliable, transparent and affordable, thus reducing energy poverty and energy bills for both citizens and the private sector.