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Press release on the EU Strategy for the Alpine region

Macro-region for the Alps: We are ready!

The EU gave the go-ahead for a macro-region for the Alpine region five weeks ago, but civil society has been left in the dark ever since: national and regional governments are still discussing whether civil society should be permitted to play an active role in the steering group and have again adjourned the debate. NGOs and networks are ready to help build the “House of the Alps” as long as they are given access to the construction site.

Eight NGOs and networks in the Alps have a vision: They see the macro-region as a house, as a protective roof for the Alpine space. The house offers its residents a good quality of life and fits in with the natural environment in a spirit of respect. The ecological materials it is made of have been sourced in the region. It is well served by public transport, and there is room for pedestrians and cyclists. The house does not have any energy problems, as the residents are aware of the importance of energy efficiency. As representatives of civil society, these eight NGOs and networks – CIPRA International, ISCAR, Alliance in the Alps, CAA, Alpine Town of the Year Association, WWF, proMONT-BLANC and IUCN – are ready to build this house together with the governments of the countries and regions of the Alps, the EU and the Alpine Convention.

RSVP!

The NGOs and networks produced a document explaining their ideas for a roof for the Alpine space – a macro-region for the Alps – and laid it on the table for discussion. Today, almost six weeks since the decision was taken in Brussels on 19 December to develop a macro-regional strategy for Europe, they are still waiting for an answer to the question whether and how they may participate in the process.

Building a house involves the services of various planners: architects, construction engineers and the trades. It is unwise to delay consultation with the people who are going to live in it until the house is finished. If they do not like the house, they will try to alter it, rebuild it or simply demolish it. But if they feel at home there, they will fill the house with life. That will also gladden the hearts of the architects, construction engineers and tradespeople. As representatives of civil society, NGOs and networks are mediators for Europe’s macro-regional strategy. They have networking experience to share with

Europe. But that means they must be directly involved in the development of a European strategy for the Alpine region. Civil society must play an active role in shaping the macro-region from the start and not be made to wait until the shell of the building is already standing. RSVP!

This press release and the joint position paper of the eight participating organisations can be downloaded from the CIPRA website at <http://www.cipra.org/en/press/press-releases>

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CIPRA International, ISCAR, Alliance in the Alps, CAA, the Alpine Town of the Year Association, WWF, proMONT-BLANC and IUCN are official observers of the Alpine Convention. Therefore they participate in the development and implementation of this international agreement.

The **Alpine Convention** is an agreement between the eight Alpine countries (Austria, Germany, France, Italy, Liechtenstein, Monaco, Switzerland and Slovenia) and the European Union, which aims to promote the protection of the Alps and their by sustainable development. The Alpine Convention is the world's first legally binding international Treaty for the protection of mountain regions.