

Europe, the Mediterranean and the Arab Revolutions in the Current Geopolitical Puzzle

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The Great Opportunity for Transformation

Since the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership was launched in 1995 with the Final Declaration of the Barcelona Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference, Europe and its Mediterranean partners have tried to build a common area of peace, security, shared economic progress, dialogue and intercultural understanding around the Mediterranean Sea. *The launching of the Barcelona Process sparked an immense wave of hope – and even optimism – regarding the final step towards modernity that Arab and Mediterranean countries would take as a result of the economic progress that their trade integration and association with Europe would trigger. The agreement reached was moreover based on a firm commitment to the jointly declared principles and values of advancing towards democracy, political pluralism, human rights and respect for civil liberties. Fifteen years later, the general feeling was that the economic triumphs and guaranteed social gains had fallen far short of what people had been led to believe and, above all, that the promises of democratisation and of political opening had been completely circumvented.* Ossified regimes held tight to an authoritarian system that awarded the benefits of progress to a strict dominant minority, leaving the vast majority of the population on the sidelines. The EU's financial, economic, technical and political support did not give rise to the desired social and political transformation, but rather, to the extent that it was effective at all, was increasingly seen as providing support for the current regimes, objectively con-

tributing to perpetuating authoritarianism to the benefit of the groups in power and the associated economic elites. The economic progress of a few therefore co-existed with the frustration of the many, the much greater numbers of the middle and lower classes. These citizens were moreover increasingly aware of and knowledgeable about the situation due to years' of accumulated educational efforts and the emergence of new media and social networks, in particular Al-Jazeera television, that had broken the former monopoly of the official and western social media.

In this context, the heroic act of self-immolation, spurred by rage and dignity, of the young Mohammed Bouazizi unleashed not only a democratic revolution in Tunisia, but also a wide-ranging grassroots democratic revolutionary movement throughout the Arab world. Had it been limited to just Tunisia, the revolution might have remained an isolated phenomenon, and the regional environment would no doubt have made sure that it was fleeting, too. However, the triumph of the revolution in Egypt, a major demographic, geographic, cultural and political hub in the Arab world, ensured that, one way or another, its effects would be felt in all the countries.

The revolution began and first triumphed in Tunisia, the first country to sign an Association Agreement with the European Union in 1995, precisely because it was the site of the deepest discrepancies and contradictions between the oppression of the Ben Ali regime and the economic and social progress and modernised outlooks achieved thanks to the sustained efforts of the entire Tunisian society from the early days of independence under President Bourguiba. The modernising policies adopted in education, enhanced women's rights, creation of a modern state and government, move towards Europe, efforts to industrialise, etc., that were the legacy of the Bourguiba government were joined,

beginning in 1995 and despite the growing authoritarianism and oppression, by the continuation of these efforts by ordinary Tunisians, who moreover took full advantage of the facilities provided under the Association Agreement with the EU, the Barcelona Process's Euromed programmes and the sectoral policies that they promoted.

The Arab democratic revolutions are thus not the expression of the failure of Euro-Mediterranean policy, but rather of the triumph of its principles and, to the extent that its admittedly limited means could be put to use, the fruit of both a possibilistic policy and the failure of the repressive regimes that severely curtailed its implementation.

It is still too early to know the immediate outcome of the different civic movements that make up the Arab world's democratic revolution. In the short term, it might differ from country to country; however, in the medium term they will all be touched by the transformation. The awakening of civic consciousness cannot be undone and, once it has been awoken, the survival of traditional authoritarian regimes is unthinkable.

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The internal and external consequences of this democratic civic revolution are moreover immense, whether it triumphs immediately or, in the case of certain recalcitrant countries, in the medium or long term. The internal transformation of the countries will be huge, both in terms of their political systems and economically and socially, but the consequences will not stop there. They will also affect the international environment, these countries' relations with the EU and the rest of the world. Democratic revolution alters the geopolitical environment itself, opening new avenues of interaction between internal transformation and the geopolitical environment of foreign relations.

It is thus of utmost importance to determine what has changed in the Arab world, what changes the various Arab springs have wrought in the geopolitical environment and how these changes will open

new channels for evolution. Once again, the relationship with the EU will be pivotal for the Mediterranean world; however, Euro-Mediterranean policy must be adapted to ensure that the lofty goals of the Barcelona Process, set in 1995, can once and for all be achieved.

Social Transformations, the International Environment and the Crisis of the Arab Authoritarian System

1. *What we are witnessing with the democratic revolutions is, in reality, the crisis of the Arab authoritarian system*, which arose from the liberation movements that won independence by overcoming colonialism in the context of the Cold War. The new states generally embraced an ideology of Arab nationalism, which interpreted independence as a step forward on the road to progress and pan-Arab nationalism as a new force for modernity and the promotion of economic development. To a greater or lesser extent, all the new regimes were interventionist, steeped in the anti-colonialist philosophies and Third Worldism of the 1950s and 1960s. This was true of both the moderate and radical regimes into which the Arab world was divided, which variously aligned themselves with one or the other Bloc in the bipolar confrontation. In general, the monarchies, such as Morocco, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and the Gulf monarchies, as well as monarchical Egypt, took a pro-Western line. In contrast, the more radical countries, including post-1952 Nasserist Egypt, the Baathist republics of Syria and Iraq, Algeria under the FLN, Gaddafi's post-1969 Libya, etc., were more or less pro-Soviet.

Both groups of countries adopted interventionist, bureaucratising policies, which were considered the best way to promote development in the context of a predominantly traditional society. The crisis of Third Worldism and the collapse of the USSR were interpreted as signs of the triumph of economic liberalism and the implementation of the policies advocated by the international financial institutions as a remedy for the recurring crises into which the Arab economies were plunged throughout the 1980s.

These financial adjustment and economic liberalisation policies were accompanied by continued efforts on basic policy, especially in education and health. Efforts to promote economic development and

industrialisation likewise continued, guided by intervention or the market, depending on the country, or by the somewhat more arbitrary decisions taken by governments with considerable oil revenues. These efforts led to a definite, but insufficient economic and social transformation. In some countries especially, such as Tunisia, *a middle class emerged and values and mentalities were steadily modernised*. However, a growing economic gap separated them from Europe and, at the political level, the authoritarian systems, in most cases born of military coups, remained rigidly in place. As a result, the first cracks and contradictions emerged between, on the one hand, societies that, despite lagging increasingly behind Europe, were nevertheless modernising and, on the other, hard-line regimes that sought to perpetuate themselves in power.

2. The persistence of the Arab authoritarian model is also threatened by sweeping transformations in the increasingly globalised *international context*.

- From an economic point of view, we are witnessing a series of successive waves of economic booms, of *successive economic "miracles,"* which first began in the 1950s in Germany and the core of the EEC, reached countries such as Japan and Spain in the 1960s and 1970s, swept the so-called Southeast Asian "tigers" in the 1980s, and, finally, reached China and India in the 1990s and, at the dawn of the new millennium, Latin America. It is a process of economic globalisation, marked by exponential trade growth and, above all, the rise of major emerging countries that are transforming the international economic arena, causing the relocation of industry and growth and drawing trade along with them. China has become the world's factory and India, increasingly, its office. New technologies have emerged that both promote and accentuate the phenomenon of globalisation. The computer revolution has transformed both production, trade and finance and social media.

- At the political level, we are likewise witnessing a transformation of the international arena through a series of *successive waves of democratisation*. While in the post-war period the first wave primarily affected Germany and Japan, the second wave began in the 1970s with the democratisation of the countries of Southern Europe – Spain, Portugal and Greece – before reaching Central and Eastern Europe in the 1980s and, in the 1990s, Latin America.

In this increasingly democratised world, *the Arab world remained politically anchored in its entrenched authoritarianism*, even as it underwent a hesitant transformation. The Gulf countries used their oil revenues to accelerate their path to economic modernisation without apparent political or social transformation, while in the rest of the Arab countries insufficient economic growth and induced social change co-existed with a lack of political change. The spike in oil prices beginning in 1973 led to continuous and massive income transfers from industrialised countries to oil-producing ones, resulting in the equivalent of a sea change both domestically and with regard to the functioning of the global economy and financial systems. In the Arab world, the Gulf countries became exponentially more important and influential. The arch-conservative Saudi monarchy, in particular, strengthened its claim to primacy as the origin of the Arab world and the Islamic holy land, providing generous funding with a clear religious, ideological and political bent.

The Transformations of the Geopolitical Context: New Realities and New Opportunities

Attention should be called to the following features of this *increasingly globalised world*:

- In the context of globalisation, the *growing weight of the new emerging countries* is shifting the global economy's centre of gravity. Paradoxically, however, the *rise of Asia-Pacific* with regard to the traditional fundamental relationship between Europe and North America *has injected new value into the Mediterranean*. Both energy products and general freight are once again being shipped through the Suez Canal and the Mediterranean as the shortest path for the flourishing trade between Asia and Europe in the context of the new globalisation.

- In this ever more globalised world, however, the *highly interdependent and complementary nature of the Mediterranean* has become much clearer. The North and South Mediterranean are increasingly aware of their complementarity. Europe needs the energy, demographic strength and emerging young markets of the South, while the Arab Mediterranean countries need the technology, investment, markets, industrial relocation and tourism of

the European countries, among many other complementarities.

▪ Separately, the *collapse of the USSR and the Communist Bloc* not only encouraged the reunification and democratisation of the European area, but also facilitated the integration of the Euro-Mediterranean area and the assumption by Europe of a new, revitalised role in the region. The historical division of the Arab world into pro-Western and pro-Soviet countries was overcome, giving way to an environment conducive to a more unifying policy, such as that pursued by the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership. This was unthinkable in the context of the bipolar confrontation, during which both Europe and the Arab world were divided, with countries such as Egypt, Syria and Algeria more closely tied to the Soviet Bloc, and the moderate countries remaining in the pro-Western ranks.

Following the fall of the Berlin Wall and the re-emergence of Central and Eastern Europe, the European Communities first launched a wide-ranging policy towards the East under the initiative of Germany with a view to bringing those countries into the area of stability and progress that was Western Europe. It was this context that the Southern European countries, primarily at the initiative of Spain, seized to promote the major European policy towards the Mediterranean that would culminate in the Barcelona Process in 1995.

▪ The disappearance of the bipolar world also facilitated the undertaking of a peace process in the Middle East through *Oslo* and the *Madrid Conference* in 1991. It was a time in which it was believed that the broad understanding between Europe and the Mediterranean Partner Countries (MPCs) would yield dividends of peace.

▪ However, the *emerging Islamist movements* had trouble finding an outlet, given the alignment of all the countries with possibilistic and pragmatic policies. The persistence of both a widespread sense of humiliation, a legacy of the colonial past that was fuelled by the continuing humiliating conflict with Israel, and of the development gap with the Western world spawned radical Islamist movements and the proliferation of terrorist groups. The extraordinarily traumatic experience of Algeria in the 1990s was followed by a rise in Islamist terrorism, especially al-Qaeda from its safe haven in Afghanistan in collusion with the Taliban, and the occasional attacks

against the West and the United States reached their climax on 11 September 2001 in Washington and New York.

▪ The *US reaction after 11 September*, and especially the expansion of the war to Iraq, signified, among other things, an extraordinary intensification of the eternal tension between Shiites and Sunnis in the Islamic world. Since its theocratic revolution of 1979, Iran had proposed an Islamist model, but its Shiite status stripped it of force in the predominantly Sunni Arab world. The fateful mistake of the Bush administration in deciding to attack and destroy Saddam Hussein's Baathist regime in Iraq has since been revealed to have been one of the biggest change agents in the always complex game of the Middle East. The US's mistaken and failed destruction of Iraq has not only strained the complex relationship between Shiites and Sunnis to the breaking point, but also thrown into complete disarray the margins for manoeuvre of other actors in the region. Iran stood by as the US itself got rid of the Iraqi strongmen that had kept it at bay from the start of its revolution with a full-scale war. *The disappearance of Saddam Hussein's secular and anti-Islamist regime not only gave Iran and the radical Islamist movements throughout the Middle East a major advantage, but also left Saudi Arabia itself* and its allied countries in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) *on the Sunni frontlines in the Shiite-Sunni conflict in the Islamic world*. The fundamental division and struggle of the Islamic world is now being played out on both sides of the Persian Gulf.

▪ Interestingly, the growing *strategic vulnerability of Saudi Arabia* and the GCC countries – due to the fall of the Iraqi strongman, the growing influence and capacity of theocratic Shiite Iran and the Sunni Arab world's own democratic revolutions – has opened new possibilities for alliances with their Western friends. *Saudi Arabia is now seeking to diversify its nearly one-to-one relationship with the US through possible partnerships, above all, although not exclusively, economic ones, with its client countries in Asia and, ultimately, with the EU*, providing the latter manages to get its relations with the Gulf countries on track and give them the priority that the situation requires. They are the source of much of the energy that Europe needs, as well as of a significant share of the financial and direct investment in many sectors of its economy, and they may also be the source of stability or in-

stability, depending on how things play out in the rest of the Arab world, which is largely influenced by Saudi Arabia.

- As the budding movements for democratic revolution in the Arab countries prevail and become established, in particular in Egypt, this *democratisation should foster and give new chances to the Middle East peace process*. The Arab authoritarian regimes have traditionally shielded themselves behind the need to confront the Israeli Zionist enemy in order to retain their hold on power in each country. As the new democratic systems gradually replace the old authoritarian ones, Arab public opinion will find other means of understanding and progress for the region as a whole to be more constructive. However, for these opportunities to prosper, Israel must seize the moment to carry out a major shift in favour of true understanding with the Palestinians and the Arab world, accepting the prospect of a solution that can fulfil the aspirations of both sides.
- The democratic revolution and civic movements that have emerged in all the Arab countries have ultimately exposed *the fallacy of the so-called Arab exception*. It is now clear that Arab citizens aspire to the same things as the citizens of the rest of the world, to live in countries with representative and democratic governments that respect differences and means of social understanding. This thus opens new avenues for the third wave of democratisation to reach the Arab world and for it to cease to be an exception in the international arena.

The democratic revolution and civic movements that have emerged in all the Arab countries have ultimately exposed the fallacy of the so-called Arab exception

- Since the late 1990s, a large number of MPCs have gradually made economic progress, albeit to different degrees, primarily through their special relationship with Europe. Turkey, for example, has met with such economic success that it is now one of the new major emerging countries. *The countries in which the democratic and civic revolution of the Arab world is most likely to prevail are precisely those that have made the greatest economic strides,*

fundamentally through their partnerships with Europe, whether their political path is now openly revolutionary, as in Tunisia or Egypt, or reformist, as in Morocco and Jordan. While this same economic success has not managed to overcome or lessen the economic gap between the North and South Mediterranean, it has nevertheless been one of the key factors facilitating the modernisation of society and mentalities that has nurtured the democratic civic movements of the Arab springs.

- The Arab springs and, above all, the democratic civic movements in each country have confirmed the theory of the *failure of radical Islamism* and also that Bin Laden's death has simply certified the gradual failure of al-Qaeda. The group may continue to launch punishing attacks, with particularly deadly consequences for Arab societies themselves, beginning with Iraq, but it is now clear that public opinion in all Arab countries rejects it and has instead undertaken a movement of self-affirmation and dignity based not on radical Islamist tenets, but rather secular movements of modernising citizens, especially young people.

▪ This same failure and weakening of radical Islamism is one of the factors that favours the *integration of moderate Islamism* into the new political systems to follow the Arab springs. Certainly, the secular civic movements will have to leave room in the political arenas of their countries for the brand of moderate Islamism able to drive a more or less important share of public opinion. However, it likewise seems clear that this will indeed be a moderate Islamist movement, which, drawing on the *Turkish model* of President Erdogan, will help to strengthen the democratic systems of the respective countries, keeping them away from other temptations. Sharia law seems to be far from the ideals and aspirations of young people and new Arab citizens.

- *Turkey's success as a new emerging country* is transforming the regional panorama as a whole, opening the door to new possibilities. President Erdogan and his government have managed to harness Turkey's economic growth and social development, keeping the country's prospects for EU membership alive and gradually chipping away at the control exercised by the military and Kemalist establishment over the country's political evolution. Today, no one questions the democratic nature of the moderate Islamism of President Erdogan's AKP, and the stubborn Kemalist rumours regarding Erdogan's possible secret agenda to create an Islamist state

despite his proclamations in favour of democracy and moderation are fading away.

The political and, especially, economic success of President Erdogan's Turkey have granted it a *new and growing role in the context of the Middle East*. First, it has re-established its ties with the Turkmen world of Central Asia, which had previously been isolated behind the Iron Curtain, against which the traditional Kemalist Turkey had served as NATO's sentry. Second, the Turkish authorities have rejected the rise of so-called *neo-Ottomans*, aware of the reserves that the former Ottoman domination still awakens in Arab public opinion. This new approach to Turkey's foreign policy and its regional positioning supplements the re-establishment of its ties with its cousin countries in Central Asia with a new type of relationship with the countries of the Middle East itself. Turkey's growing economic influence, although primarily based on trade, investment and industrial relocation with the EU as a whole, also offers growing possibilities for its relationship with the Arab world. From a political point of view, this is even truer precisely because of its non-Arab but nevertheless Muslim status and its special relationship with Israel. Turkey has emerged as a major power able to act as a mediator in the region precisely because, unlike the Arab countries or Israel itself, it is not directly involved. It has close ties with Syria, Egypt and the Gulf countries and Israel alike. Its role as a bridge between East and West is strengthened for all these reasons, as well as by its military membership in the West and its ever-valid candidacy to join the EU. However, anti-Turkish sentiment in France and Germany and the Cyprus issue pose problems due to the complications they may create for its bid for EU membership.

Separately, the growing embrace of Turkey as an example and mirror for the democratic movements of the Arab world places it in a predicament and grants it an especially relevant role in this new stage. In all likelihood, the different governments and political movements of the Arab springs will continue to measure themselves against Turkey, especially with regard to the integration into the political system of the moderate Islamist parties and movements, whether they are in power, as in Turkey, or in the opposition.

The EU has an interest in integrating Turkey within the Union not only due to the major contribution it can make to the future EU's weight and economic

and political strength in the world. It also has an extraordinary interest in *inheriting Turkey's historical ties to its regional environment, just as it has inherited and developed Spain and Portugal's historical ties with Latin American and the Mediterranean*, which have been especially cultivated for this reason since the incorporation of the Iberian countries into the EEC in 1986. Now the EU should benefit from Turkey's network of foreign relations with its historical environment, through its relations with the Turkmen peoples or through Turkey's new relations with the Arab world as both a Western and Eastern country, as a European and Muslim country and, above all, as a major new political and also economic model for Arab countries that aspire to its demographic transformation and economic progress in this new stage. Additionally, Turkey's presence will serve as a counterweight to the perennial claims of primacy by the Gulf countries and, in particular, Saudi Arabia. Europe has an interest both in inheriting Turkey's set of privileged relations and in the growing role it plays in the region, due to its strategic position on the Black Sea, the straits, the Mediterranean and the Middle East, and due to the special relationship it can develop in the post-Soviet world with Russia as a whole and with the other Black Sea countries, such as the Ukraine or Bulgaria and the Caucasus or Balkan countries.

The Arab Springs and the Search for a New Paradigm in Euro-Mediterranean Relations

1. The democratic revolution of the Arab countries both needs and offers a major opportunity to make the overall approach of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, which, according to its stated principles, is traditional, albeit only in theory, a more effective reality. It is worth noting some of the factors that will affect this possibility:

- The Arab democratic revolutions have done away with the myth of the Arab exception and, therefore, are paving the way for the Barcelona Process's principles of democracy, pluralism and human rights to become the effective reality of the Arab countries.
- The democratic civic movements of the Arab world are defeating Islamism from the inside. They are certainly, and convincingly, defeating and rendering completely obsolete the radical Islamist movements involved in terrorism. However, even beyond this, the

secular and clearly modernising nature of the revolutionary and democratic movements will have an undeniable effect on shrinking the space that, in the absence of other actors, had been occupied by clandestine political Islamist movements in many Arab societies. Movements such as the Tunisian *Nahda* or even the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt will certainly find their niche, but in a less favourable context than they thought when they were locked in a more or less blatant struggle against dictatorships. *All democratic transitions, as has already been seen in those of Southern Europe, especially Spain and Portugal, ensure that, in the process of the transition, moderate parties gradually prevail over extremist ones, which are ultimately relegated to a marginal role. This was the experience in those countries.*

EU must launch a major effort to support the Arab springs in order to secure their triumph and consolidation

- The prevalence of new *democratic governments in the Arab world will encourage the rule of law and the fight against corruption*. That is, the Arab springs will foster not only a political regeneration, but also the effectiveness of an environment conducive to legal certainty and confidence and, therefore, to both domestic and foreign investment.
- The Arab springs will foster understanding between peoples to the extent that *conflicts had previously been manipulated by dictatorships* in a bid to perpetuate their hold on power. This applies to the entire region, both in terms of improving the chances for understanding between the different peoples of an increasingly democratic Middle East and with regard to other conflicts, such as that in the Sahara.
- If certain MPCs – in particular Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt and Jordan, in addition to Turkey – are able to guide their political process in such a way that it does not interfere with the economic growth of recent years, this same economic success *will, in turn, facilitate the re-launching of their relations with the EU*, their main trading partner and the complement of their economic, demographic and political reality in every sense of the word.
- To take advantage of this set of opportunities, the *EU must launch a major effort to support the Arab springs in order to secure their triumph and consoli-*

ation, which are not yet guaranteed. It is imperative to support the stability and progress of any new Arab democracies that might emerge from the civic and revolutionary movements. The economic moment is particularly complicated for these countries, beginning with Tunisia and Egypt. Continued instability in the region and the clashes between civic movements and those regimes that have responded with repression, such as in Libya, Syria and certain other countries, may damage the economy and, therefore, the social and political stability of different countries. The EU and the countries of the international community at large must thus provide effective and unwavering support for the new Arab democracies. Only then can they help them not miss the boat with regard to the new wave of democratisation that, in this sense, too, is doing away with the Arab exception.

2. It is therefore essential for Europe to undertake a major effort to *re-launch the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership*. It is time to move onto a new stage in the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) towards the South. In March 2011, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and the European Commission released a joint communication entitled “A Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity with the Southern Mediterranean,” in which they set out an initial approach to the European response in support of the democratic movements of the Arab world. This was subsequently followed by another joint communication by the High Representative and the Commission in May, entitled “A New Response to a Changing Neighbourhood: A review of European Neighbourhood Policy.” Both documents initiated an as-yet unfinished profound rethinking of the ENP with a view to adapting it to the new opportunities and demands of the MPCs and their new international context. To this end, significant groundwork can be found in the efforts and accomplishments of over 15 years of Euro-Mediterranean policy, which today may finally find the necessary environment to achieve its full potential. However, a *substantial increase in the funding* for this new stage is required, even if the current time of economic and financial crisis is not a particularly propitious one for Europe to do so. The allocation of approximately one billion euros a year from the Community budget for the Neighbourhood Policy towards the South pales in comparison to the figures bandied about for the bailouts of even small countries within the EU. Indeed, one billion euros for

the entire set of MPCs now seems ridiculous compared to figures that consistently top seventy or eighty billion per Member State with shaky finances in need of rescue, even if the latter funding will, theoretically, be repaid.

Additionally, *from the point of view of its conceptualisation and instruments, Euro-Mediterranean policy will likewise require major transformations.* The Euro-Arab and Euro-Mediterranean dimension of the Neighbourhood Policy towards the South should be singled out for specific attention, so as to allow the MPCs to be effectively integrated into the large area of economic, social and political progress that the European project has entailed throughout the different stages of its development. This radiating prosperity and progress, which have fully encompassed Central and Eastern Europe in the last twenty years, must likewise spread to the new democratic countries of the Arab world.

This singling out of Euro-Mediterranean policy was already initiated with the creation of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) as the great expression of the partnership between Europe and the MPCs from the Arab world and Israel. Until the new democratic governments of the Arab world can be consolidated and the new opportunities for peace in the Middle East become clear, it will be difficult to specifically define and promote the UfM's political institutional structure beyond the ministerial meetings. The summits will continue to be problematic, but both the Foreign Affairs and sectoral ministerial meetings must continue to be held regularly, in order for the projects and greater agreement to prosper.

In addition to the EU's bilateral relations with the MPCs, conducted through the bilateral ENP and the specific Action Plans for each country, *regional projects should be implemented through the UfM Secretariat. The Secretariat should be the main new instrument* for agreeing, identifying and seeking support and funding for the implementation of projects with a real impact able to serve as examples for the region's countries.

3. The key to the effective functioning of the UfM is the involvement of the EU's institutions. To date the UfM has been excessively influenced by President Sarkozy's primitive approach based on re-nationalising Euro-Mediterranean policy to the detriment of the Community character it so clearly had during the classic stage of the Barcelona Process. For this new stage of Euro-Mediterranean policy conducted through the UfM to be strong and effective, *the EU institutions must reclaim their pivotal role as the European party to the Partnership.* The EU institutions – the Commission, the Council and the External Action Service – must view the UfM and its permanent Secretariat as their main instrument for Euro-Mediterranean relations and projects.

- An initial step is for the EU institutions to assume the Northern Co-presidency of the UfM, finally taking over from France, whose time in the position has already been prolonged far longer than originally envisaged.
- The second step is for the European Commission, in particular, which today controls the purse strings for the budget and instruments of the ENP – the only policy currently included in the budget – to become fundamentally involved in the UfM and in the functioning of its Secretariat and to make them the venue for reaching agreements and a suitable instrument for designing and implementing effective Euro-Mediterranean regional projects.

These truly urgent initial steps will need to be followed by many more, especially to *provide short-, medium- and long-term political and economic support to the democratic movements and for the stability of the new Arab democratic governments.* An effort to re-conceptualise and update Euro-Mediterranean policy and the UfM itself will likewise be required, to be carried out jointly by all stakeholders in order to promote the greater shared endeavour, the high hopes for which must not be dashed.