

Cultural Dialogue in the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership

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2008: A Year Rich in Cultural Events

Operation Cast Lead, directed by Israel against the Palestinians of the Gaza Strip from 27 December to 18 January, tragically marked the end of 2008 and beginning of 2009. This notwithstanding, the contribution of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP) in 2008 was significant, and the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue equally rich. To be more specific, the meaning of the word 'culture' has evolved over time. It now includes highly diverse societal phenomena, from tourism to the media, which often have greater influence than literature or the arts. The latter must therefore be given support.

Of the main events occurring in 2008, we will discuss seven: 1) the positive evolution of the Anna Lindh Euro-Mediterranean Foundation for the Dialogue between Cultures (ALF); 2) the colloquium organised by the European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMed), entitled Intercultural Dialogue between Europe and the Mediterranean, in Barcelona on 23 May; 3) the meeting of the Euro-Mediterranean Forum of Cultures (FEMEC) in Bari (23-25 May); 4) the Euro-Mediterranean Conference of Ministers of Culture in Athens (28-29 May); 5) the Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean, launched in Paris on 13 July on the initiative of President Nicolas Sarkozy, and the adoption by the Foreign Affairs Ministers meeting in Marseille of the Final Declaration of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM); 6) the Euromed Civil Forum (ECF) organised in Marseille (31 October - 2 November)

by the Euromed Non-Governmental Platform; and 7) the Euromed Ministerial Conference in Marseille (4-5 November).

Before discussing each point, it is indispensable to first define a few concepts.

The Six Shores of Our 'Mother Sea'

Paradoxically, we almost always speak of the 'two shores' of the Mediterranean, i.e. the northern and southern one, most often to contrast them, if not keep them separate. However, our 'Mother Sea' is a mosaic of peoples, with their languages, dialects, traditions and political regimes.

To my eyes, there are actually six shores:

- The Eurasian eastern shore, the ancient Greek and Byzantine Asia Minor, which has become Turkey, the only Muslim country to have adopted secularism, proclaimed in 1923 by Atatürk.
- The Asian eastern shore, cradle of the Hebrews and Phoenicians, including five countries: Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Palestine, Israel. With a predominance of Muslim Arabs, it has Christian and Jewish minorities, as well as non-Arabic ethnicities (Armenians, Druses and Kurds).
- The African south-eastern shore, that of Egypt, the oldest nation-state on the planet, and linchpin of the Arabic world, between the Mashreq and the Maghreb.
- The south-western shore, that of the Maghreb, from Libya to Morocco and Mauritania (on the Atlantic), deeply Amazigh, Islamised and Arabised.
- The north-western shore or Latin Arc, consisting of the 'Latin sisters' (Portugal, on the Atlantic coast, and Spain, France and Italy) primarily Catholic, but where secularism is progressing.

- The north-eastern shore, that of the Balkans and Greece, with a predominantly Orthodox, Catholic and Muslim population.

It is therefore important to know their evolution, exchanges and how they have mixed, for, despite wars, the flame of civilization has not ceased to circulate from one shore to another since Antiquity. The UfM should protect the diversity of languages and defend their being taught better than the EMP did.

Transformation of the Anna Lindh Foundation in Alexandria

Founded in 2004 and officially inaugurated in 2005, the ALF (www.euromedalex.org), based in Alexandria, underwent significant transformation in 2008: its charter was seriously revised and André Azoulay was unanimously elected president. Political scientist and Advisor to Kings Hassan II and Mohamed VI, he also holds the positions of, among other things, member of the High Level Group of the UN's Alliance of Civilisations and Member of the Board and President of the Executive Committee of the Three Cultures Foundation (Fundación Tres Culturas), based in Seville. Just as important was the election as Executive Director of Andreu Claret, former Director of the European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMed, see www.iemed.org), previously the Catalan Institute of the Mediterranean (ICM). In 2005, the first director of the ALF, a German appointed by the Member States, knew little about the Mediterranean Region. Then the situation improved. André Azoulay has Moroccan, Andalusian, Arabic-Amazigh, Jewish, Mediterranean and European links. The ALF groups together 43 countries and 2,000 organisations, with a weak budget of 14 million Euros for three years. The new executive body intends to obtain greater funds, play a political and cultural role of great scope, and provide support to multidisciplinary projects lending value to initiatives between actors and countries. The aim is to foster the creation and structuring of a collective Euro-Mediterranean cultural space.

In September 2008, the ALF published a four-page brochure in English, Arabic, Spanish and French in order to explain its activities to the citizens of the 43 UfM countries. In December, it adopted its new triennial programme, whose implementation will have to be monitored.

IEMed Meeting in Barcelona

The Meeting between Writers and Intellectuals - Europe Mediterranean Intercultural Dialogue, a concept developed by Maria-Àngels Roque - and held on 23 May at the initiative of the European Commission and IEMed, the latter serving as host as well as co-organiser, gave rise to magnificent presentations and rich debate. The participants, from the different coastal countries of the Basin, approved a number of recommendations, which were immediately submitted to the Euro-Mediterranean Conference of Ministers of Culture in Athens (28-29 May). The text asserts that:

- Culture must be reshaped into an instrument for progress. In addition, intercultural relations need to help address common social, political and economic questions, transcending the frontiers of identities.
- Conditions for establishing dialogue must be created by fostering receptivity, eliminating misunderstandings, respecting pluralism and recognising differences.
- Intercultural dialogue cannot be reduced to focusing between the North and the South. It should also strike up between South-South, East-East and even West-West.
- The importance of the actors must be acknowledged, along with their freedom to act and the role that should be lent to young people, women, immigrant communities, local and regional authorities, cultural operators and industries, and the media.

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- Action in specific areas: education, communication and audiovisual media, and literary and artistic creation. Participants recalled the recommendations unanimously adopted at the Cultural Forum in Barcelona in 1995, which have been either poorly applied or not applied at all. One of the most important ones concerned the 'House of

the Mediterranean,¹ an information centre and meeting place. Each EMP country was to open at least one. In any case, civil society proved not to have the means of funding them. The public authorities (national, regional or local government) should therefore take on the job of creating these Houses in the UfM Member States.

Euro-Mediterranean Forum of Cultures Event in Bari

Conceived of in 2000 at the first Euromed Civil Forum (ECF) in Marseille to make up for the weak place accorded to culture, the Euro-Mediterranean Forum of Cultures (FEMEC) was officially launched in December of 2001. Since then, it has taken place before the ECFs, including that of 2008, for which

FEMEC planned a culture workshop. FEMEC includes stakeholders from the different shores of the Mediterranean, actors not only from the world of culture and arts, but also education and research that carry out Euro-Mediterranean exchanges. Within the framework of the 13th Biennial of Young Artists from Europe and the Mediterranean in Bari (22-31 May), FEMEC organised the Euro-Mediterranean Forum of Art for Peace (23-25 May). Receiving aid from the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Region of Apulia and the Fondation Seydoux, the Forum attracted some 40 participants from a number of different Mediterranean countries. FEMEC also held its general assembly, prepared future action and planned its participation in the Marseille ECF. Its Secretary General, Gerarda Ventura, is the Vice-President of the Euromed Non-Governmental Platform.

A SELECTION OF IMPORTANT PUBLICATIONS

- *Confluence Méditerranée*

This quarterly publication was founded in 1990 by Hamadi ESSID, Head of the Arab League Mission in Paris, and later Permanent Delegate of Tunisia to the UNESCO. The first issue came out in November 1991, a few days before ESSID's death. Since then, it has been directed by Jean-Paul Chagnollaud, a university scholar and writer. Its Editor-in-Chief, Pierre Blanc, is an agricultural engineer. Each issue is dedicated to a specific topic and also includes three sections: History, Current Affairs and Culture (www.confluences-mediterranee.com). In 2008: No. 65, L'Iran, une puissance virtuelle ? (Iran, a Virtual Power?); No. 66, Chrétiens d'Orient (Christians of the East); No. 67, Un automne méditerranéen (A Mediterranean Autumn); and No. 68, Italie : le grand bond en arrière ? (Italy: A Great Leap Backwards?). In addition to the journal, published by L'Harmattan, Paris, there is also a series of associated books, *Les Cahiers de Confluences*, among which is *Le Dialogue interculturel, une action vitale (Intercultural Dialogue, a Vital Measure)*, published in 2008 and edited by Jacqueline Valantin and M.G. Euzen-Dague.

- *Quaderns de la Mediterrània*

Published by the IEMed since 2000, this journal, a strategic tool for mutual knowledge and dialogue between the Mediterranean's northern and southern shores, has over 400 pages and is directed by Maria-Àngels Roque (www.iemed.org/quaderns). Articles are published in English, Catalan, Spanish and French. In 2008, the Dossier Section in No. 9 was dedicated to "Ramon Llull and Islam, the Beginning of Dialogue", the issue also including the two sections, Overview of Recent Events and Cultural Overview. No. 10's Dossier was entitled "Intercultural Dialogue between Europe and the Mediterranean", and was divided into three themes: Memories and Mingling; Frontiers and Cosmopolitanism; and Representations: Art and Spiritualities. All issues contain a column by Claudine Rulleau, entitled *De la Méditerranée, des hommes et des livres*. The IEMed also publishes a bulletin (No. 66, December 2008), and since 2003: *Afkar/Ideas*, a

quarterly for dialogue among the Maghreb, Spain and Europe; and the Mediterranean Yearbook.

- *Dialogo Mediterráneo*

The quarterly, *Dialogo Mediterráneo*, was founded in Madrid in 1995 when the EMP was emerging. Created by Pedro Martínez Seiquer, who has just celebrated his 90th birthday, it publishes articles in Spanish and French on Strategy, Politics, Economics and Culture. They are available on-line at (www.dialogo-mediterraneo.com). Issue No. 48 (October 2008), nearly entirely dedicated to the UfM, recalls that the EMP "was a Mediterranean powerhouse."

- A Tunisian Initiative

The very rich publication, *La Méditerranée pour l'Union méditerranéenne*, was published in early 2008 in Tunis. Its Editor, Professor M'Hamed Hassine Fantar, is the Ben Ali Chair for Dialogue among Civilizations and Religions. The publication contains some twenty contributions, including articles by such EMP activists as Maria-Àngels Roque and Pedro Martínez Seiquer.

- Dialogue between the Baltic and the Mediterranean

A number of university scholars, various writers and an ambassador contributed to the book entitled, *Building Peace by Intercultural Dialogue - Construction de la Paix par le Dialogue Interculturel*, in tribute to Tuomo Melasuo, founder of the Tampere Peace Research Institute (TAPRI), University of Tampere and Director of the Finnish branch of the Anna Lindh Foundation (ALF). Published in English and French in September 2008, with Kirsi Henriksson and Anitta Kynsilehto as editors, the book thanks and congratulates Melasuo for his many initiatives, which have particularly fostered unprecedented and productive dialogue between the Baltic and the Mediterranean. By way of conclusion, I would like to recall the Institute's meetings to foster cultural dialogue between Israelis and Palestinians.

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The Euro-Mediterranean Conference of Ministers of Culture in Athens

During the course of this conference (28-29 May), the Ministers launched a two-year Euro-Mediterranean Strategy on Culture with two facets: intercultural dialogue and cultural policy. Based on the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, this strategy will emphasise the cultural dimension of the EMP. To accelerate its application, a follow-up mechanism has been entrusted to a Euro-Mediterranean group of experts on culture who will meet before each ministerial conference. At the conference, it was pointed out that “it is necessary more than ever – particularly in the area of culture – to encourage dialogue on the possibilities of understanding humanity today, and on the values of humanity that give meaning to the world.”

The Ministers inaugurated the plenary session with the awards ceremony for the EuroMed Journalist Prize for Cultural Dialogue, the award-winners chosen from among 76 candidates from 37 countries. Organised by the ALF and the International Federation of Journalists, this was the award’s third edition. Entitled the Youssef Chahine Award in honour of the Egyptian filmmaker, its theme was “Dialogue through Arts” as essential instruments for building the bridges necessary for dialogue.

The members of the jury were the leaders in the following networks: Malta, Cyprus, Tunisia, Palestine, Israel and Syria. The laureates, two from the South, two from the North, were: Gideon Levy (Israel), Jamila Zekhnini (Belgium), Verichan Ziflioglu (Turkey) and Uros Skerl (Slovenia).

The Anna Lindh Euromed Award for Dialogue between Cultures was awarded in Naples on 27 September to Rima Maroun, a Lebanese photographer, for her *Les Murmures* (photographs of Lebanese children). The works were on exhibit for a month at the headquarters of the Fondazione Mediterraneo (www.euromedi.org), whose president is Michele Capasso. The Anna Lindh Foundation and Fondazione Mediterraneo designated Ms. Maroun Good Will Ambassador for Dialogue through the Arts.

The Euromed Civil Forum in Marseille

After Barcelona in 1995, the successive ECFs have taken place on Malta and in Naples (1997), Stuttgart

(1999), Marseille (2000), Brussels (2001), Valencia (2002), Chania on Crete and Naples (2003), and Luxembourg (2005). In 2006, the ECF was held in the South for the first time, namely in Marrakesh (4-7 November).

The ECF of Marseille (31 October - 2 November 2008) organised by the Euromed Non-Governmental Platform directed by Abdelmaksoud Rachdi (Morocco), attracted 250 representatives of civil society organisations from the EMP countries. This ECF, dedicated to the theme of *Moving and Living Together in the Euromed Space*, was broken down into six workshops: 1) Culture; 2) Human Rights; 3) Environment; 4) Youth and Education; 5) Women; and 6) Socio-Economic Issues and Impact on Urbanisation.

Final Declaration

The following are the main passages from the eight proposals put forth therein:

1. “We urge the end of short-stay visas which impede family ties and human exchanges and endanger artistic, scientific and educational exchanges.”
2. “We claim that all countries of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership ratify all international conventions, especially the Geneva Convention on the right of asylum and the Convention on the Rights of Migrants [...]”
3. “We claim that all the Euro-Mediterranean partner countries recognize and respect the freedom of association, the freedom to form syndicates, the independence and autonomy of civil society [...] and that they “support civil society in all instances of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership [...]”
4. “We urge the organization in 2009 of the Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference for the follow-up of the Istanbul Action Plan [...]” This historical summit (14-15 November 2006) was the first to focus on strengthening the role of women in society.
5. “We claim that all Euro-Mediterranean partner countries implement educational policy acting against discriminations, sexism, xenophobia and racism [...]”
6. And “that environmental and natural resources preservation in the Mediterranean be considered by States as the highest priority since we believe

that degradation of ecosystems impairs sustainable development and worsens phenomena of forced migration [...]"

7. In the face of the world crisis, "we call upon the Euro-Med community to revise the social and economic agenda from an approach that addresses poverty eradication, decent employment and comprehensive migration policies based on human rights [...] Aid within the economic partnership should not be a condition used to promote economic liberalization or security measures on migrations or terrorism. In achieving that, spaces for civil society's full participation should be assured and promoted."
8. "We call for the support, protection and assistance of independent and alternative Medias in the context of a new regional plan to be created [...] Thanks to alternative Medias and their networks Mediterranean people, in their cultural diversity, will be able to create their own image and writings."

The Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean

On 28 February 2007, when he was still a candidate to the Presidency of the French Republic, Nicolas Sarkozy stated his desire to launch a 'Union for the Mediterranean'. After his election, on 6 May, he proclaimed: "I want to issue a call to all the people of the Mediterranean to tell them that it is in the Mediterranean that everything is going to be played out, that we have to overcome all kinds of hatred to pave the way for a great dream of peace and a great dream of civilization. [...] The time has come to build together a Mediterranean Union that will form a link between Europe and Africa."

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German Chancellor Angela Merkel insisted that the EU be allowed to join the Union. President Sarkozy thus invited 43 Heads of State and Gov-

ernment to Paris on 13 July 2008, namely, the 27 EU Member States and 16 Mediterranean Non-member Countries (MNCs). Only Libya refused to join the Union. They approved the name of Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean, later shortened to Union for the Mediterranean (UfM).

Innovation: the UfM has two presidents, in the North, Nicolas Sarkozy, and in the South, Hosni Mubarak of Egypt, selected by consensus for a two-year, non-renewable term. The Secretariat-General, entrusted to Spain, is located in Barcelona. The Deputy Secretary Generals are to be from the Palestinian Authority, Greece, Israel, Italy, the League of Arab States and Malta.

The Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), essentially political and economic, wholly neglected the fundamental sphere of culture. In view of the fierce reactions in both North and South, Nicolas Sarkozy consulted Jacques Huntzinger, French Ambassador who had contributed to launching the 5+5 Dialogue in Rome in October 1990. On 9 June 2008, the Euro-Mediterranean University was inaugurated in Piran, Slovenia, though it is but an empty shell. In the end, it is the Anna Lindh Foundation that embodies culture for the UfM.

Final Declaration of the UfM in Marseille

The Foreign Affairs Ministers meeting in Marseille (3-4 November 2008) completed the work started by the Heads of State and Government, adopting a Final Declaration of some twenty or so pages. First and foremost, six major commitments were made: 1) De-pollution of the Mediterranean; 2) Maritime and Land Highways; 3) Civil Protection; 4) Alternative Energies: Mediterranean Solar Plan; 5) Higher Education and Research, the Euro-Mediterranean University; 6) the Mediterranean Business Development Initiative. As you can see, the sphere of culture is missing.

The Ministers decided that "important steps need to be taken in 2009 to implement the Barcelona Five-Year Work Programme and the declaration of the Paris Summit in order to advance the regional integration process." The fields for cooperation to be pursued in 2009 were: a) Political and Security Dialogue; b) Maritime Safety; c) Economic and Financial Partnership; and d) Social, Human and Cultural Cooperation. The main issues to be addressed in the latter field were:

Developing a Genuine Social Dimension; Health; Human Development; Towards a Euro-Mediterranean Higher Education and Research Area; Promoting Dialogue among Cultures and Cultural Diversity; Strengthening the Role of Women in Society (the ministerial conference by the same name in Istanbul in 2006 will be followed by another in Morocco in 2009); Euromed Youth (the Euromed Youth IV Programme will be followed by the Youth in Action Programme); Cooperation with Civil Society and Local Actors (the Ministers announced that they “take note of the recommendations of the Marseille Civil Forum.” They also emphasised that “civil society should be further empowered and its capability enhanced through improved interaction with governments and parliaments.”); Enhancing the Visibility of the Partnership (the four components of the new programme will cover: “media activities; journalist training and networking; campaign support; and opinion polling/surveys.”)

For the UfM, the Anna Lindh Foundation represents culture

In the second semester of 2009, a ministerial meeting will be held to review the progress made in implementing the work programme and prepare the Summit to be held in 2010.

The Mediterranean Cultural Forum in Marseille

Organised on initiative of Jacques Huntzinger, the Forum (4-5 November 2008) brought together some 300 actors and representatives of civil society organisations from the EU and the whole of the Mediterranean Basin. This force, with great development potential, constantly comes up against the indifference of policymakers on both sides of the Mediterranean. The participants once more emphasised the importance of culture and artistic creation for the development of the Euro-Mediterranean Region and the strengthening of intercultural dialogue. The work to be done remains immense for, as Huntzinger pointed out, the UfM did not include a basket on culture, and this will have no opportunity to be integrated before the ministerial conference in 2010. Indeed, for the UfM, the Anna Lindh Foundation represents culture. This Forum allowed numerous artistic initiatives fostering ties between the North-South Mediterranean shores to be put forth.