

Other Cooperation Initiatives in the Mediterranean

1. NATO Mediterranean Dialogue and Istanbul Cooperation Initiative

Through the Mediterranean Dialogue (MD) and the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI), NATO is developing closer security partnerships with countries whose security and stability are closely linked to Euro-Atlantic security. The Mediterranean Dialogue and the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative are two different but complementary initiatives addressed respectively to the countries of the Mediterranean region and of the broader Middle East. Many of the security challenges these countries must face are common to NATO Member States and, consequently, require common responses. Besides recognizing the centrality of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process to the stability of the broader Middle East, other important concerns to underpin NATO involvement in these initiatives are political instability, social and economic issues, as well as energy security (with as much as 65% of Europe's oil and natural gas imports passing through the Mediterranean).

The Mediterranean Dialogue is launched in 1994 by the North Atlantic Council with the aim of contributing to regional security through improved mutual understanding. Initially the MD is conceived as a forum for confidence-building where Allies can learn more about the security concerns of Dialogue countries and at the same time dispel misperceptions about NATO's aims and policies. Five non-NATO countries join the MD at the beginning (Egypt, Israel, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia). The MD is progressive in terms of participation (Jordan joined in 1995 and Algeria in 2000), and content is evolving over time.

Since 1994, political discussion has become more frequent. In the 1997 Madrid Summit, an Annual Work Programme is established; it lays out different areas of practical cooperation with a number of issues and activities including military cooperation, civil emergency planning, and scientific and environmental cooperation. During the same summit, a Mediterranean Contact Group (MCG) is created as a steering body having the overall responsibility of the MD and a forum within which political discussions take place either bilaterally or multilaterally.

Through the Washington Summit (1999) and the Prague Summit (2002), a package of measures increase the political and practical dimension of the Dialogue, but it is with the Istanbul Summit (2004), on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the Dialogue, that a more ambitious and expanded framework is established. The aim is to elevate the MD to a genuine partnership with the following objectives: enhancing the existing political dialogue through the possibility to meet at the level of ambassadors as well as of ministers and Heads of State and Government; achieving interoperability through the participation in selected military exercises and training activities; developing defence reform; and contributing to the fight against terrorism. The guiding principles of the MD can be summed up as follows: joint ownership (the Dialogue is about taking into account the specific regional, cultural and political context of respective partners and mutual interest), non-discrimination and self-differentiation (all partners are offered the same basis for cooperation but the level of participation is tailored to each country's needs and interests), complementarity (the MD complements

other international initiatives such as the Barcelona Process and the OSCE, Mediterranean Partner Countries for Cooperation), progressiveness (allowing its political and practical dimension to be enhanced regularly and the number of participants to grow).

The political dimension of the MD is based on regular meetings at different levels and formats between NATO and MD countries. Political consultations on a bilateral basis (NATO+1 MD country) are held regularly both at ambassadorial and working levels. Since the June 2004 Summit, with the upgrading of the relationship, regular multilateral (NATO+7 MD countries) meetings at the ministerial level have been held: the first ever MD Foreign Ministers' meeting is held in December 2004 (Brussels), followed by two MD Defence Ministers' meetings in 2006 (Taormina) and 2007 (Seville), and a Foreign Ministers' meeting in December 2007 (Brussels). These meetings are usually held following NATO ministerial meetings, summits of Heads of State and Government, and other major NATO events. These meetings are the occasion for NATO's Secretary General to brief Mediterranean Dialogue Ambassadors on the Alliance's current agenda. Finally, the political dimension also includes visits by NATO Senior Officials to MD countries in order to meet relevant host authorities and exchange views on the Mediterranean Dialogue, besides getting a better appreciation for each partner's specific objectives and priorities.

Measures of practical cooperation are laid down in the Annual Work Programme, which includes seminars, workshops, and other practical activities in the fields of public diplomacy, civil emergency planning, crisis management, border secu-

ity, defence reforms and consultations on terrorism and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs). There is a military dimension of the Annual Work Programme (85% of the activities) that enables MD countries to observe and/or participate in NATO military exercises, attend courses and other academic activities in NATO School, and visit NATO military bodies. At the Istanbul Summit, proposals are made to strengthen the practical dimension of the Dialogue in some priority areas: military-to-military cooperation (to improve the ability of the Alliance and Dialogue countries to operate together in future NATO-led operations), combating terrorism and new security threats (through more effective intelligence-sharing, participation in Operation Active Endeavour and preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction), border security (providing tailored advice in the field of tackling terrorism and illegal trafficking), civil emergency planning (enhancing the cooperation in disaster-preparedness) and defence reform (promoting democratic control of armed forces and transparency). In addition to the Annual Work Programme, the practical dimension has been improved through the possibility of finalising Individual Cooperation Programmes (ICPs) offering a tailored cooperation to strategic national needs. So far, Israel and Egypt have completed ICPs with NATO, while Jordan and Mauritania have submitted draft ICPs to Allies. Also, NATO's Public Diplomacy activities for MD countries have been progressively reinforced since the 2004 Summit. They consist of tailored visit programmes bringing parliamentarians, policy makers, opinion leaders and journalists from MD countries to NATO headquarters; international conferences and seminars; and press tours of journalists from all MD countries. Other initiatives are introduced to the MD countries, such as the Training Cooperation Initiative to share NATO expertise in training and education with MD partners (ICI countries can also apply). Another field of collaboration concerns scientific and environmental cooperation: more than 800 scientists from MD countries have participated in activities regarding environmental security, management of natural resources, water resources, desertification and

measures to protect against eco-terrorism.

With a view to responding to new challenges, NATO launches the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI) at the Alliance's Summit in the Turkish city. It is addressed to the countries of the broader Middle East region, offering them practical bilateral security cooperation to further contribute to long-term global and regional security. It started with individual members of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, but it is open to all the countries in the region that subscribe to the aims and contents of the initiatives, including the fight against terrorism and non-proliferation of weapons of mass-destruction. By mid-2005, Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar and United Arab Emirates had joined, while Oman and Saudi Arabia had shown interest. Priority areas of the Initiative are providing tailored advice on defence reform, budgeting and planning; promoting military-to-military cooperation; fighting against terrorism; addressing threats imposed by weapons of mass destruction; advising in the field of border security and civil emergency planning. The development and planning of these activities is granted by the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative Group (ICIG) in cooperation with the concerned country. The ICIG consists of political counsellors from the 26 NATO Member countries and defines individual work plans with the interested country ensuring the follow-up for their implementation. Also, ICI countries can finalise an ICP programme with NATO according to the Istanbul document and to the discretion of the interested country. Though ICI and MD have almost the same aims and are governed by the same principles, they are different, the first one meant to promote only practical cooperation on a bilateral basis with the countries of the broader Middle East and the second one being a forum for political consultations and practical cooperation, on a bilateral and multilateral level and involving Mediterranean countries.

In order to better outline the framework of NATO initiatives in the Mediterranean, it is worth mentioning the role and action of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly Mediterranean and Middle East Special Group (GSM). It provides a forum

for parliamentarians from NATO and the MENA region to discuss political and security issues. As a formal mechanism to address regional challenges, the GSM was launched in 1996, but North Atlantic Assembly started a dialogue with MENA countries in the early nineties. This dialogue consisted of visits, seminars, and ultimately the granting, in 1994, of the status of parliamentary observer to the parliaments of Israel and Morocco. The GSM organises two seminars a year and a visit to one of the Mediterranean Dialogue countries in order to improve mutual understanding. In addition, GSM produces informative reports dealing with the most pressing security and political issues of the region. Originally six countries started up with GSM, namely Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia, but it then also included Malta, Cyprus, Algeria and the Palestinian Authority. During the NATO Parliamentary Assembly (PA) session of 2004, members, acknowledging that the observer status no longer provided conditions for cooperation that matched the ambitions of the Dialogue, decide to create the status of "Mediterranean Associate Member." This status further integrates the Mediterranean partners into Assembly activities, allowing them to participate in most NATO PA meetings and introduce amendments to the Assembly's reports. Reflecting the strategic importance of the Gulf Region and the launching of the ICI, the NATO PA also started to establish links with parliamentary institutions and advisory councils in the Gulf region. Several MD countries have made significant contributions to the NATO peace-keeping operations in the Balkans. Peacekeepers from Egypt, Jordan and Morocco have served in Bosnia and Herzegovina; Jordan, Morocco and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) have contributed to the force in Kosovo.

Chronology January 2008-December 2008

- 28 January, Doha (Qatar): NATO Public Diplomacy Division and the Qatar Centre for Military Studies co-organise a conference on "NATO's Role for Stability and Peace." Participants include high-level academics, government officials, opinion leaders and journalists

from Gulf countries. They take stock on Qatar-NATO cooperation, which has intensified in participation and fields of cooperation.

- 24 January, Dubai (United Arab Emirates): NATO Secretary General pays his first official visit to UAE. Cooperation with UAE is intensifying in terms of number of activities and fields covered (particularly in training and education).
- 5 March, Beer Sheva (Israel): NATO Public Diplomacy Division and Ben-Gurion University co-organise a seminar on “NATO in the 21st Century and the Mediterranean Dialogue.” The event represents an opportunity to provide a better understanding of NATO and MD to high-level academics, scholars and officials. The seminar focuses on NATO transformation, environmental change and security.
- 10-12 March, Brussels (Belgium): Bahrain’s Chief of Public Security visits NATO headquarters to hold talks with senior officials from the Alliance on issues of common concerns in the area of civil emergency planning and crisis management.
- 3 April, Bucharest (Romania): at the North Atlantic Council meeting, Heads of State and Government note the progress achieved in the framework of the MD and ICI: political consultations have gained in substance and frequency, the NATO Training Cooperation Initiative has been implemented as well as the first ever Mediterranean Trust Fund to assist Jordan and a feasibility study to assist Mauritania has been launched.
- 14-16 May (Egypt): Visit to Egypt by the members of the GSM. The main items on the agenda are: the situation in the Middle East, intercultural dialogue and Egypt-NATO relations. The visit also provides a good opportunity for members of the group to get a sense of the latest political and economic developments in Egypt.
- 25 May, Cairo (Egypt): NATO Deputy Secretary General delivers a keynote address at the conference “NATO-Egypt: A Dialogue” with the opening speech of the Egyptian Minister of Foreign Affairs. The conference brings together leaders, academics, parliamentarians, journalists and officials.
- 2 June, Brussels (Belgium): important step forward in the NATO-Morocco cooperation. The representatives of NATO

and of the Kingdom of Morocco proceeded to exchange letters for the contribution of Morocco to Operation Active Endeavour. This participation is foreseen for all MD countries according to the enhanced MD launched at the Istanbul Summit in 2004.

- 6 June, Belgium (Brussels): visit to NATO headquarters by high-level members of the Mauritanian Parliament. During the briefings, NATO officials cover different topics: military cooperation under MD, ICI and the fight against terrorism.
- 16-17 June, Algiers (Algeria): NATO Public Diplomacy Division and the Parliament of Algeria co-organise a seminar on “Security through Dialogue: The Role of Parliamentary Institutions in Strengthening the Mediterranean Dialogue.” Senator Cabras, Vice-Chairman of the GSM, gives a speech on the origins and evolution of the group in the framework of the Dialogue.
- 4-5 July, Rome (Italy): over 80 delegates meet for the first annual GSM seminar, which is aimed at evaluating the state of Euro-Mediterranean relations against the backdrop of new and existing regional policy initiatives and persisting challenges.
- 8-9 October, Abu Dhabi (United Arab Emirates): second seminar of the GSM group and the first NATO Parliamentary Assembly seminar in a Gulf country. It tackles political reform in the Middle East, global energy security and the state of the play of NATO GCC cooperation.
- 19-20 October, Doha (Qatar): Workshop on “Exchange of Experience on Security Aspects of Energy Infrastructure” co-organised by NATO and Qatar. It is the first NATO event in ICI framework to focus on energy security in the region. The workshop provides a valuable opportunity to explain NATO’s role in energy security, the political and economic situation of the region and its impact on energy supply. Participants agree that energy security necessitates international cooperation addressed in a comprehensive manner.
- 27 October, Rome (Italy): 3rd NATO Regional Cooperation Course at the Defence College with the participation of MD countries.
- 24-26 November, Tel Aviv (Israel): international seminar on security dialo-

gue and cooperation in the Middle East co-organised by NATO Public Diplomacy Division and Tel Aviv Institute for National Security Studies. Participants include academics, policy makers, and diplomats, besides civil society representatives from many MD countries.

- 1-3 December, Brussels (Belgium): three-day press tour at NATO headquarters for journalists from the MD and ICI countries and invited from Oman and Saudi Arabia. The journalists covered the meetings of the Foreign Ministers of NATO and MD countries.
- 2 December, Brussels (Belgium): third meeting of the NATO Foreign Ministers with their counterparts of the MD. Participants agree to deepen their relationship through political dialogue and practical cooperation, including the NATO Training Cooperation Initiative and trust fund mechanisms. Ministers also stress the need for a much more comprehensive international approach to the piracy issue.
- 10 December, Brussels (Belgium): visit of high-level opinion leaders from ICI to NATO Headquarters. Among the topics discussed: NATO’s transformation and outreach to the Mediterranean and broader Middle East region, NATO’s relation with Russia, military cooperation under ICI and the role of the Civil Emergency Plan.
- 11-12 December, Brussels (Belgium): visit to NATO headquarters of policy-makers from Morocco. The talks included the Alliance’s transformation, NATO’s operations and cooperation in science and environment.

For further information:

Mediterranean Dialogue:

www.nato.int/med-dial/home.htm

Istanbul Cooperation Initiative:

www.nato.int/ici/home.htm

2. Mediterranean Partners for Cooperation in the OSCE

The relationship between the OSCE and the Mediterranean Partners for Cooperation (currently Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia) goes back to the Helsinki Final Act, which established a number of key commitments on political-military, economic, and environmental and human rights issues. Considering that some OSCE participating

states border the Mediterranean and that there are strong historical, cultural, economic and political ties between the Mediterranean region and the OSCE area, it is clear that there is an inter-linkage between security in Europe and the Mediterranean region. Since the beginning, OSCE Member States have declared their intention to develop good-neighbourly relations with Mediterranean partners and mutually beneficial cooperation in the various fields of economic activity. After Helsinki, a number of OSCE meetings were held on Mediterranean issues to which Mediterranean States were invited to participate. It is in 1994 when OSCE states decide to invite the Mediterranean countries to a series of OSCE activities to forge a closer relationship. These include: Ministerial Council meetings, OSCE conferences, OSCE-troika meetings and seminars, and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly. Furthermore, within the framework of the Permanent Council, a Contact Group for the Mediterranean Partners for Cooperation is established: it is an informal group that meets periodically "to facilitate the interchange of information and the generation of ideas." The OSCE has been able to share its experience with Mediterranean Partners on a number of topics: confidence-building; fostering norms of behaviour; providing a security model to face new challenges; and commitments in the human, economic and environmental dimensions, on media and new technologies, migration and integration policies. In the course of 2008, under the Finnish Chairmanship of the OSCE, some important events have taken place: the Palestinian National Authority has presented an application to become a Mediterranean partner and informal consultations with delegations of the OSCE participating states have started; the Partners for Cooperation have been invited to all the OSCE's main events, and have regularly attended meetings of the Permanent Council and the Forum for Security Cooperation; the participating states and the Mediterranean partners have exchanged views and concerns in the framework of the Contact Group; and finally, in the framework of the Parliamentary Assembly (PA) of the OSCE (whose aim is to facilitate inter-parliamentary dialogue), a Forum on the

Mediterranean has taken place with the goal of developing stronger ties with the OSCE PA and the Mediterranean Partners for Cooperation

2008 Mediterranean Conference

27-28 October, Amman (Jordan): after 14 consecutive OSCE seminars, this event is upgraded to a Mediterranean conference in order to underline the aim of adding more weight to the discussions. The Jordan Government invites the Palestinian National Authority as a guest of the host country. The annual OSCE Mediterranean conference gathers representatives of the participating states and the Mediterranean partners, besides international organizations and civil society, to discuss a relevant issue for security in the Mediterranean and in the OSCE broader region. The 2008 conference, under the title "The OSCE Approach to Regional Security – a Model for the Mediterranean," takes into account the further cooperation in countering terrorism, linkages between environment and security, assessing economic activities' impact on the environment and the OSCE's human rights and tolerance commitments and their relevance to the Mediterranean region. Concerning this last session, it is worth pointing out the recommendations of the civil society representatives presented during the conference and claiming for the implementation of the OSCE commitments in respect of tolerance and non-discrimination. These recommendations were prepared during the civil society side event that took place before the conference.

Civil Society Side Event

26 October, Amman (Jordan): OSCE participating states decide to hold a meeting on the eve of the 2007 Mediterranean seminar on the role of civil society in combating intolerance and discrimination. Following this practice, the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) organizes the side event "Cooperation with the Mediterranean Civil Society and NGOs in Promoting Tolerance and Non-Discrimination" in order to enable civil society representatives to prepare recommendations to be presented at the

2008 conference. The side event is also a chance to exchange information on best practices to facilitate coalition-building across diverse cultural and religious communities throughout the OSCE region. Three parallel working groups deal with: empowerment of women as actors in peace building and democratization, migration as an opportunity to improve tolerance and understanding and intercultural dialogue as a conflict prevention tool.

OSCE Parliamentary Assembly –Forum on the Mediterranean

18-21 September, Toronto (Canada): in the course of the OSCE PA fall meetings, the Forum on the Mediterranean is organised. It focuses on multilateral initiatives to promote integration and cooperation in the Mediterranean region, including the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) and the OSCE Mediterranean Dimension. It is the best attended Forum since Rome 2003. Other relevant issues are: the importance of economic cooperation and free trade to promote stability; the potential of the OSCE model for the Mediterranean as an inclusive security organization; and the value of promoting the OSCE Mediterranean Dimension at the parliamentary level, as observed by the Special Representative on Mediterranean Affairs, Alice L. Hastings.

For further information:

Mediterranean Conference:
www.osce.org/documents/ec/2008/12/35638_en.pdf

Civil Society Side Event:
<http://tandis.odihhr.pl/index.php?p=cs,events,amman1008,prep>

3. Mediterranean Forum (Foromed)

Initiatives and proposals for the establishment of Euro-Mediterranean cooperation have always faced obstacles imposed by the development of the conflicts in the Middle East. The Mediterranean Forum, born in 1994 in Alexandria following a French-Egyptian initiative, gathers 11 "like-minded" countries of the Mediterranean Basin, namely: Algeria, Egypt, France, Greece, Italy, Malta, Morocco, Portugal, Spain, Tunisia

and Turkey. It is composed of three working groups (political, economical and socio-cultural) according to the three baskets of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership. It does not have a permanent structural basis, and the rotating Chairmanship also carries out the Secretariat functions. Considering its flexible and informal character, the limited number of participants and the absence of countries directly involved in the Middle East conflicts, the Mediterranean Forum can be conceived as a testing ground of ideas and a promoter of initiatives within the framework of the Barcelona Process and the Union for the Mediterranean from now on. It has worked as a ground for informal consultations and exchanges of views in preparation for the ministerial meeting of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership. This year's main meeting precedes by almost a month the Paris Summit for the Mediterranean of 8 July. The 15th ministerial session of the Mediterranean Forum takes place in Algiers on 5-6 June, gathering the members of the Forum in addition to a Libyan and a Slovenian delegation invited by the Algerian Chairmanship. The ministers assess the current situation in the Mediterranean in the perspective of the launching of the Union for the Mediterranean, expressing their support for revitalizing the Barcelona Process and considering it highly important to focus on concrete projects in order to promote the realization of an area of peace and shared prosperity in the region. As noted before, the non-participation of Israel, Lebanon or Syria in the Forum reduces the risk of stalemates that have been affecting the Barcelona Process. Nevertheless, the forum represents the occasion to recall the situation in the Palestinian Territory and in Lebanon. The ministers agree on the importance of intensifying efforts in order to improve the state of play on the political negotiations between Israel and Palestine. Ministers also welcome the agreement achieved in Doha among the political leaders of Lebanon, which should help to form a national unity government and pave the way for the Parliament to elect a new President.

The next ministerial session will take place in Naples in the course of 2009 under the auspices of the Italian Chairmanship of the Mediterranean Forum.

4. Adriatic-Ionian Initiative (AII)

The Adriatic-Ionian Initiative was presented by the Italian Government during the Finnish EU Summit held in Tampere in October 1999. It saw the light in the framework of the "Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe" regarding all south-eastern European countries aspiring to join the EU in the future. The AII was officially established at the Summit on Development and Security on the Adriatic and Ionian Seas held in Ancona in May 2000. The Foreign Ministers of the participating countries (Italy, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Greece and Slovenia) signed the "Ancona Declaration" in order to strengthen regional cooperation, thus helping to promote political and economical stability in order to create a solid base for European integration. Later, the AII was extended to Serbia and Montenegro, which remained in the Initiative as separate countries after the referendum in Montenegro.

The decision-making body of the initiative is the Council of Foreign Ministers (Adriatic-Ionian Council). Its agenda is prepared by periodical meetings of the Senior Officials. They represent the executive body of the initiative and they meet at least three times a year at the level of national coordinators.

The Chairmanship rotates every May/June according to an alphabetical criterion. During 2008 two countries chair the AII: Croatia for the first half of the year and Greece in the second half. A Permanent Secretariat (AII-PS) is inaugurated in Ancona in June 2008 and its main task is to strengthen the cooperation among the states, grant coordination, provide any possible support to participating states and assist participants and local authorities in implementing projects. The AII is connected with several organizations in the south-east European region and through the AII-PS, new periodical meetings are foreseen to take place with the Forum of A&I Chamber of Commerce, UniAndrion, and the Forum of the Cities and Towns of A&I. After eight years since the establishment of the Initiative, the political framework when it was conceived has deeply changed: Slovenia entered the EU in 2004, while the other countries are involved in the Stabili-

sation and Association Process, which is the framework for EU negotiations with Western Balkan countries as a prelude to their eventual accession. Nevertheless, the need for cooperation and concerted solutions on common problems affecting the Adriatic region still persists. The last Council of the AII in Zagreb (27 May 2008) underlines the determination to improve cooperation among local and regional authorities. The current fields of action of the AII are divided into four round tables: small and medium sized enterprises; transport and maritime cooperation; tourism, culture and inter-university cooperation; and environment and protection against fire (the four round tables gathered in Split on 2-4 April 2008 under the Croatian Chairmanship of the AII). Currently, with the Croatian Chairmanship, a new rotating cycle begins: the assessment of the past seven years is positive considering the constant engagement in enhancing good-neighbourly relationships, the exchange of experiences on mutual problems such as illegal immigration and other forms of organized crime; environmental protection gained importance and the cross-border cooperation in the field of SMEs improved. During the Senior Officials' meeting in Ancona (20 June 2008), a proposal to invite regional institutions established in the AII region is approved. The Greek Chairmanship also proposes to convene a general coordination meeting in Greece of all the Organisations and Chambers with activities in the region. As per future round tables, the Chairman expresses the idea of presenting regional tourism as a general idea to be promoted in each round table. The other two priorities underlined by the Chairmanship are the improvement of existing ferry and air links in the AII region.

For further information:

www.seadriatic.net/aai/index.php?option=com_content&view=frontpage&Itemid=3

5. 5th and 6th Informal Meetings of Foreign Ministers of European Mediterranean States

The Foreign Ministers of the Mediterranean EU Member States, the so-called "Olive Group," gather twice in the course

of 2008 to hold informal meetings. The aim of these meeting is to discuss in depth issues of particular interest for the countries forming the southern border of the European Union also in view of the Czech Presidency programme. Cyprus, France, Greece, Italy, Malta, Slovenia, Spain, Portugal, Bulgaria and Romania have taken part in these meetings since 2007. Generally, the discussions on working documents the host country prepares to steer the discussions.

- 17-18 January, Paphos (Cyprus): Foreign Ministers of the Mediterranean EU Member States conclude their 5th informal meeting. They hold and open exchange of ideas in an informal atmosphere on various issues concerning the Mediterranean region and the EU in general. In the concluding remarks they reaffirm their support to all efforts aimed at strengthening the cooperation between European and Mediterranean countries and reiterate the importance of the Mediterranean region for the prosperity, security and stability of the EU. In this perspective they affirm their support to the creation of a Union for the Mediterranean. Ministers pledge their support to the Arab League Initiative to overcome the political impasse the country is living in. On Kosovo they express the need to maintain a unified EU position. They also recall the need for a comprehensive approach to migration underlying the need for cooperation and solidarity between all Member States on the issue of illegal immigration.

- 15-16 December, Taormina (Italy): in order to enhance the coordination and visibility of the group, ministers agree to improve their working methods while still preserving the informal character of the group. During the debate on the future perspectives for the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), they reiterate their support for the eastern Partnership and stress the importance of developing cooperation with the Black Sea Synergy. They recognize the crucial role of the UfM and consider that essential steps will be the quick establishment of well-functioning institutions and implementation of priority projects. They reiterate their support for the Western Balkans' European perspective and the promotion of reforms and democratization in the region. In the field of im-

migration they consider that the Mediterranean represents a fundamental test case of EU willingness to implement a true immigration policy. Finally the discussion focuses on energy security. They debate the modalities according to which the EU could speak with a single voice vis-à-vis its suppliers and on the interests of the EU Mediterranean states in the development of the EU energy network. They underline the importance of the southern corridors within the EU energy priorities.

Portugal has offered to host the next informal meeting of the Olive Group during the first half of 2009.

For further information:

www.mfa.gov.cy/mfa/mfa2006.nsf/All/B.A35403E200B5B5FC22573D40044C579?OpenDocument

6. The 5+5 Dialogue

The cooperation process among Western Mediterranean countries, known as the 5+5 Dialogue, was launched in 1990 at a ministerial meeting in Rome. The Dialogue involves five North Mediterranean countries (Portugal, Spain, France, Italy and Malta) and five South Mediterranean ones (Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya and Mauritania), that is, the five countries comprising the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU). It should be kept in mind that the 5+5 Dialogue is the only forum in which Libya participates with full partnership status, having only observer status in the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP) and the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM). Moreover, the fact that the Dialogue is geographically limited to the Western Mediterranean area means that issues such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict or the European rivalry to prioritise neighbours either to the south or the east of Europe does not affect its development. It is a forum for debating ideas and proposals for cooperation of a concrete, informal nature. According to its founding declaration, the goal of the 5+5 Dialogue is to foster efficient consultation among foreign affairs ministers of the countries concerned on the political, economic and socio-cultural levels. During the 1991-2001 period, there were no meetings at any level due to the Franco-Libyan crisis (relating to the Lockerbie case) and

the Western Sahara conflict. Only in 2003 did the first and only Conference of Heads of State and Government take place, namely in Tunisia. Over the course of time, however, the 5+5 Dialogue has used its informal, flexible nature to promote operative, concrete cooperation in a number of domains: apart from foreign minister conferences, there have also been meetings of ministers of the interior, defence, labour, tourism and transport, as well as meetings concerning inter-parliamentary relations. The 5+5 Dialogue constitutes a discussion forum that efficiently contributes to fostering integration among Maghreb States, in addition to cooperation between the North-South shores of the Western Mediterranean.

Primary Meetings Held in 2008

- 20-21 January, Rabat (Morocco): 6th Foreign Affairs Ministerial meeting of the 5+5 Dialogue in the Western Mediterranean, with the theme of "Subregional Integration and Increased Cooperation as Instruments of Stability and Prosperity." Attending the meeting as observers were EU Commissioner Ferrero-Waldner, the Secretary of the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU) and the representative of the Council of the European Union. The Commissioner placed an emphasis on the Dialogue's facet as a think tank for improved cooperation ideas within the 5+5 framework, which could serve as inspiration for other EU-Mediterranean cooperation partners. The Ministers reaffirmed the political and informal nature of the 5+5 Dialogue and discussed various topics: the need for real regional integration with a pragmatic, progressive approach; the importance of improved cooperation over a broader territory (fostering partnership among the regions of the 5+5 Dialogue Member States); the recommendation of organising a Conference of Interior Ministers of the Western Mediterranean (CIMO) focussing on migratory issues, improving 5+5 work methods (establishing co-presidency by a northern and a southern country); an exchange of views on the Middle East peace process (emphasising concern for the embargo on Gaza and the instability of the political situation in Lebanon); and finally, regarding security issues, impro-

ved coordination in order to implement the Euro-Mediterranean code of conduct for the struggle against terrorism. The 7th Meeting of Foreign Affairs Ministers will be held in Spain using the new work method and under the co-presidency of the host country and Morocco (outgoing presidency).

www.maec.gov.ma

- 15-16 May, Ajaccio (France): the 2nd Conference of 5+5 Tourism Ministers. The conference aims to propose specific solutions lending renewed impetus to the tourism offer in the Mediterranean Basin and consolidate the vocation of tourism as a factor for forging ties and fostering comprehension among peoples, as well as fostering economic development. With regard to the sustainable development of tourism, concrete cooperation initiatives will focus on the progressive development of joint tourism products, the compilation of cultural facts with a view to the launching of a Mediterranean tourism website, and the development of nautical tourism.

www.tourisme.gouv.fr/fr/z1/ministere_delegue/evenements/cinqpluscinq.jsp

- 21-22 May, Nouakchott (Mauritania): 13th Conference of Interior Ministers of the Western Mediterranean (CIMO), two years after the previous edition. In addition to the ten 5+5 Dialogue countries, Mali, Senegal and Niger were invited as observers. The Ministers were determined to contribute coordinated, supportive responses to such joint challenges as civil protection and the struggle against terrorism, organised crime, drug trafficking and irregular migration. The Ministers decided to draw up a joint strategy for handling changes in terrorist strategy by stepping up cooperation among government administrations, exchanging information, refusing to provide safe haven for authors and abettors of terrorist acts and coordinating communications efforts to struggle against the propagation of terrorism and cyber-criminality as an instrument. The CIMO member states reaffirmed their will to improve cooperation in the sphere of the struggle against money laundering and drug trafficking by coordinating action by the respective government administrations and examining the possibility of networking. With regard to the struggle against illegal migration, the

Ministers committed to facilitate, insofar as possible, the free circulation of people. In the sphere of civil protection, they committed to promoting exchange of experiences and to establishing a system of mutual assistance for rapid intervention and organisation of emergency aid. The participants also agreed to foster decentralised cooperation among local authorities in the partner countries in all spheres of interest. The next CIMO conference will be organised by Italy.

- 26-27 May, Évora (Portugal): the 5th Conference on Migration in the Western Mediterranean represents a subsequent stage towards the consolidation of the informal space for dialogue represented by the 5+5 forum in the sphere of migration. Indeed, it is a fundamental platform for reflection, exchange and improved coordination on this topic, which could contribute to increasing consensus on migratory issues in other cooperation forums. To this end, the Ministers emphasised the importance of establishing greater compatibility and coherence with the other forums. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD) participated in the conference as observers. The participants reasserted the need for a global, integrated approach to migration, insofar as both cooperation among the countries of origin, transit and destination, and integration of migrants within host societies. Among other topics of debate were: facilitating legal mobility; improving information systems based on labour market needs; aid for migrants wishing to return to their countries of origin, fostering low-cost forms of fund remittance, combating human trafficking and the importance of clarifying the concept of circular migration to maximise the advantages of this mechanism. The Ministers also recommended developing a new website on migration in the 5+5 countries in order to strengthen contact networks, and carrying out two experts' seminars on circular migration and integration in the host society according to the (North-South) co-presidency system already adopted for other spheres of action of the 5+5 Dialogue. The next ministerial conference on migration will be held in Tripoli.

www.emploi.gov.ma/docs/15302008114424AM.doc

- 16-17 November, Gammarth (Tunisia): 5th Conference of Transport Ministers of the Western Mediterranean, organised by the current Tunisian presidency of the GTMO (Group of Transport Ministers of the Western Mediterranean). The ten member states of the GTMO participated, along with the Commissioner in charge of Transports from the European Commission (EC), the Secretary General of the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU) and the European Investment Bank (EIB)'s representative in Tunis, the latter three parties as observers. The Ministers signed a number of conclusions, some of the most significant being: the pertinence of a contribution by the GTMO 5+5 to future projects of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM); the decision of adopting the multimodal network of GTMO 5+5 countries and adding the missing links to the network's strategic lines of action (namely, those corresponding to the motorway of Maghreb unity, which would link Libya and Mauritania via Algeria and Tunisia, and the interoperability of the trans-Maghreb railway line linking Tunis, Algiers and Casablanca); an invitation to the EC to study the possibility of establishing a programme to develop a trans-Mediterranean transport network; contribution to the emergence of maritime links based on a network of port infrastructures according to an intermodal approach; and the need to simplify international transport legislation. And finally, it was established that the GTMO Presidency would go to Italy in 2009.

www.cetmo.org/f_gtmo.htm

7. Euro-Arab Dialogue

The Euro-Arab Dialogue (EAD) dates back to the early seventies and was conceived as a discussion forum between the member countries of the European Community and the League of Arab States. The main subjects at stake were, on one hand, the Arab states' interest in European support in the Arab-Israeli conflict; on the other hand, the main European concern was to have oil supplies granted. Over the course of time the Dialogue suffered many setbacks that slowed down the initiative, but it has always been resumed. Furthermore, the main objectives of the coop-

eration focused on different issues: economy, trade, technology and culture. 2008 has been a very profitable year since many events have taken place, starting with the EU-Arab League Foreign Affairs Ministerial Meeting in Malta on 11-12 February. This first ever high-level meeting gathers ministers and representatives from the 42 EU and Arab League countries with EU Commissioner for External Relations Ferrero-Waldner and Arab League Secretary General Amr Moussa, respectively, heading the delegations. The first part of the meeting is focused on the situation in the region with particular emphasis on the Middle East crisis. In the Malta Communiqué issued at the end of the two-day meeting, Ministers reaffirm their commitment to peace, respect of democratic principles, human rights and fundamental freedoms that remain central in a dialogue led by the principle of mutual respect. Ministers reaffirm their commitment to achieve a just, comprehensive and lasting solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict; at the same time they express their concern about the situation in Gaza, reiterate their denunciation of all attempts to undermine security, stability and national unity in

Lebanon and stress the importance of respecting the unity, integrity and sovereignty of Iraq. Finally, they affirm their concern about the consequences of climate change and their firm condemnation of terrorism. The second EU-Arab League ministerial meeting will be held during 2009 in Egypt. Nearly at the end of the year three other important events take place, thus giving a new thrust to the Euro-Arab relations. In the course of the Marseilles Conference, observer status is granted to the Arab League in the Union for the Mediterranean. As a way to boost the channel of communication between the EU and the Arab world and to carry out regular high-ranking dialogues, a liaison office for Euro-Arab Dialogue is set up in Malta, jointly sponsored by the European Commission and the League of Arab States (LAS). Finally, a conference is held in Vienna on 17-19 December, gathering ministers as well as political, social and academic delegates from the 27 EU countries and the 22 LAS countries. The conference "Europe and the Arab World –Connecting Partners in Dialogue" is based on the ministerial meeting in February in Malta and is intended to strengthen relations and the partnership between the Euro-

pean Union and the League of Arab States. Three workshops are organized in the framework of the conference: on strengthening women in society, public life and dialogue; on the development of civil society, pluralism and diversity management; and on promoting inter-cultural dialogue and youth participation in politics and society. In her speech at the conference, Commissioner Ferrero-Waldner stresses the greatest common challenge to achieving mutual prosperity and peace in the region, which is securing a peaceful solution to the Middle East conflict. The only peace possible is one with an independent Palestinian state underpinned by broader peace between Israel and the whole Arab world. With Amr Moussa, they mention five initiatives for joint work: the establishment of a Crisis Response Centre and Early Warning System, a seminar on electoral assistance, Commission assistance in setting up an Arabic-language database and glossary and a joint cultural event in collaboration with the Anna Lindh Foundation to be celebrated in Alexandria.

For further information:

www.doi.gov.mt/en/press_releases/2008/02/pr0259.asp