

Tenth Anniversary Summit Underlines Maturity of Euro-Mediterranean Partnership

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All roads led to Barcelona at the end of November 2005. The Euro-Mediterranean community assembled in this historic city for the Partnership's first ever Summit, taking the opportunity of this tenth anniversary milestone to look back at what our valued partnership has achieved and to map out the future direction. Amid the diverse celebrations and cultural events that marked the occasion, discussions between presidents, prime ministers and foreign ministers of the 35 countries aimed at forging a stronger, more secure future for the Partnership. I am very happy with the outcome. I believe we now have the confidence and capability, set out in our jointly agreed work programme, to help us fulfil our common ambitions.

Not an Event, but a Process

The Euro-Mediterranean Summit in Barcelona on 27th/28th November in a way mirrored the Barcelona process itself: the results were better than its reputation. Media attention tended to focus on the attendance and participants list, ignoring the Summit's two notable achievements: first, a 5-year work programme which will allow the further development and deepening of the partnership; and second, a Code of Conduct on Countering Terrorism which underlines our common commitment to fighting terrorism in all its dimensions. That a consensus was attained by all 35 partners – Arabs, Israelis and Europeans – on these two agreements eloquently illustrates the abiding principles of the partnership: common dialogue and joint ownership.

While the general media reaction could best be des-

cribed as tepid, not all media reports and commentaries were negative. Many pointed out that though there was a failure to live up to expectations (almost inevitable in anniversary-driven events), the whole process (Barcelona) should not be viewed in the same light. On the contrary, the fact that such major dislocations as the Iraq war, the Middle East Peace Process and the war on terrorism had not thrown the whole process off course was a sign of the partnership's maturity, value and ability to deliver positive results. The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership is, by definition, a process. It is not an event. In many ways its ethos and evolution can be compared to the construction of the European Union. Robert Schuman, one of the founding fathers of the European family once said: "Europe will not be made all at once or according to a single plan. It will be built through concrete achievements which first create a de facto solidarity". The same applies to the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership. Never a headline grabber, it has developed slowly but surely, sealing and strengthening relations through a series of confidence and capacity building activities.

The merits of interdependence

If the Barcelona process didn't exist we would have to invent it. In such fast-changing times, working together is vital. The past fifteen years have witnessed enormous changes in the international system. We have seen greater instability, ideological radicalisation and terrorism and the emergence of failed states which act as incubators for regional crises. Major cities around the world, in Europe and the Mediterranean, have been hit by appalling terrorist atrocities. Poverty and environmental degradation are global problems that do not respect frontiers. These multiple challenges mean that the distinction between

foreign and internal policy is becoming less relevant by the day. These challenges cannot be dealt with by one country alone.

In this context, the Mediterranean is an absolute priority for Europe. We face big challenges: peace, development, human rights, the environment, sustainable growth, education (particularly for women), and migration.

It is also a question of mutual interest. Europe cannot guarantee its own stability, security and prosperity without helping our neighbours achieve similar levels of security, stability and prosperity. That is the central tenet and driving philosophy of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, bolstered by the European Neighbourhood Policy.

The European Neighbourhood Policy has already had its first successes, with the adoption of Action Plans for deeper political cooperation and economic integration between the EU and five Mediterranean partners (Israel, Jordan, Morocco, Palestine, and Tunisia). Based on the recognition of our common values such as democracy and the rule of law, and concrete steps towards them, the EU will focus its funding and know-how on closing the development gap between the northern and southern shores of the Mediterranean. The tenth anniversary of the Euromed partnership allowed us to come together and take stock of our achievements and the challenges that lie ahead. By returning to Barcelona, the birthplace of the Declaration that launched this unique partnership, we gave not just a symbolic, but also a substantive impetus to the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership. We made key decisions that required careful negotiation, consensus, substantial courage and determination. By agreeing to take up the challenges we all face, we have given the partnership a real boost, and endeavoured to ensure that it really makes a difference to the lives of our citizens.

Bringing the Partnership Home to the People

It is now time, we believe, to bring the partnership closer to the people. The Barcelona process has, to a large extent, been an inter-governmental process. It is now time to focus more specifically on questions of most concern to our citizens. That is why our new 5-year joint work programme targets critical areas: human rights and democracy (including gender equality); sustainable economic growth and reform; the free circulation of people and migrants'

rights; migration and social integration; freedom of expression; and education.

Democracy and good governance are essential for stability and prosperity. This is a fundamental principle of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership. However, in order to be successful, political reform must come from within. It cannot be imposed from outside. If the desire is not there, no amount of external assistance or pressure will build sustainable reform. The European Neighbourhood Policy reflects this approach through the Action Plans which contain reform objectives jointly agreed with each country. The 5-year work programme adopted in Barcelona included a proposal for a new 'governance facility' that from 2007 will give financial support to those who want to move towards greater political reforms.

In our economic relationship, the creation of a free trade area by 2010 is more than just a symbolic gesture. The jobs and wealth it will create are essential to the prosperity and stability of the whole region. We need to encourage south-south integration. Creating a truly regional market will boost investment and growth and reduce the wealth gap between Europe and its neighbours. Five million new jobs a year are needed to provide employment for the Mediterranean region's young population.

One third of the population of our Mediterranean partners is under the age of fifteen. This is a powerful resource for the future. But with 8 million children not attending primary school, we must do more to harness this human capacity. Eradicating illiteracy is crucial, which is why we are setting a target date of 2015 to end this scourge once and for all. We are also seeking equal provision of education for boys and girls; and the enrolment of all primary school age children. We want to ensure equality of access to quality education at all levels for all students by 2015. By that same date all children should be completing at least primary education.

Towards an All-inclusive Partnership

Civil society has a crucial role to play in our efforts towards a more inclusive partnership. It was neglected in the early days of our relations, but the past few years have witnessed the emergence and mobilisation of civil society throughout our partnership. This has been a very significant evolution and shows our determination to make this an all-inclusive partnership. President Barroso stressed this point in his

address to the Barcelona Summit and outlined two new priority sectors: women and the media. In the five-year work programme the respective roles of women and the media in the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership will be explored to ensure their full and active participation in that programme and in the partnership.

We have the institutions and networks to develop and help nurture the participation of civil society in the Partnership. The Euromed NGO platform continues to thrive and made a valuable intervention at the Barcelona Summit. Meanwhile, the Anna Lindh Foundation for the Dialogue between Cultures and Civilisations is ideally situated to encourage and engage the vast array of NGO networks throughout the Euromed region. Much has been already accomplished, but much more remains to be done.

Despite our successes, we have not yet exploited the

full potential of the Partnership and there are areas where we need to progress. However, I am confident that the Barcelona process, reinforced by the European Neighbourhood Policy, provides the necessary frameworks and instruments to deal with those deficits. Our work programme, with its pragmatic and practical approach, offers a genuine opportunity to bring real value to the lives of the people.

Our partnership is a road that unites, not divides. It is a road with a common destination for the Euro-Mediterranean travellers. We have covered a lot of distance in our journey over the past ten years. As Winston Churchill once said, "only by looking back can we see how far we have come". Our journey has still some distance to go and the way ahead may contain new challenges and difficulties. But our ambition is true, our step is steady and our partnership primed to go all the way together.