

The Barcelona Process: from Naples to The Hague

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The continuous and consistent pattern of Euro-Mediterranean foreign ministerial meetings throughout 2004 clearly demonstrates an increasing level of engagement between the European Union and the Mediterranean partners. The EU has also clearly stipulated that the Neighbourhood Policy it is advocating is meant to strengthen the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP) and not duplicate or replace the EMP. The Barcelona Process has also become a more effective mechanism when it comes to monitoring developments in the Middle East as demonstrated by the in depth analysis communicated at each of the foreign ministerial meetings held throughout 2004.

While the Naples meeting in December 2003 was the sixth official foreign ministerial meeting, the Dublin and The Hague meetings were both informal gatherings and thus allowed the EMP member states to conduct a thorough review of the EMP as had been agreed in the Valencia Action Plan of April 2002. In addition to conducting the important stocktaking, the foreign ministerial conference of Naples, Dublin and The Hague also launched preparations for the tenth anniversary of the EMP which will take place in November 2005. This has included conducting a comprehensive review of the EMP in anticipation of agreeing upon measures in 2005 that will strengthen further the partnership.

In addition to strengthening North-South relations as the EU becomes more active

in the Mediterranean, a high priority has been dedicated throughout 2004 to nurturing South-South relations that have been lacking prior to the launching of the Agadir Initiative between Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt and Jordan. At the three Euro-Mediterranean foreign ministerial meetings held between December 2003 and November 2004 in Naples (December 2003), Dublin (May 2004) and The Hague (November 2004) specific efforts were made to assist Mediterranean countries become more aware of the opportunities that exist in their neighbouring states and also become a more integral part of the European Union market through implementation of the European Neighbourhood Policy. Thus 2004 can be described as a year when the EU continued to consolidate its influence in the Mediterranean through the comprehensive Euro-Mediterranean Partnership.

Throughout 2004 the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership political dialogue focused on efforts to start implementing the Middle East Road Map. The participants also supported the realization of a just, comprehensive and lasting peace settlement in the Middle East based on the relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions and principles mentioned in the letter of invitation to the Madrid Middle East Peace Conference, including the principle land for peace, with all that this implies.

The Euro-Mediterranean foreign ministers also continued to support the already functioning EMP confidence building measures namely the Malta Diplomatic Seminars, co-operation in Civil Protection and Disaster Management and the EuroMeSCo network of foreign policy institutes. They also actively pursued the establishment of better relations with Libya, to date an observer of the EMP.

Throughout 2004 the Euro-Mediterranean partner states renewed their commitment to strengthen Euro-Mediterranean cooperation in preventing and combating terrorism, in particular by ratifying and applying the international instruments they have signed, by acceding to such instruments and by taking any other appropriate measure. Efforts are also to be made to fight together against the expansion and diversification of organized crime and combat the drugs problem in all its aspects.

A renewed call was also made to promote the concept of regional security by acting, inter alia, in favour of nuclear, chemical and biological non-proliferation through adherence to and compliance with a combination of international and regional non-proliferation regimes. This includes arms control and disarmament agreements such as the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), Biological Weapons Convention (BWC), Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBT) and/or regional arrangements such as weapons free zones including their verification regimes.

Euro-Mediterranean signatories also agreed to continue promoting conditions likely to develop good-neighbourly relations among themselves and support processes aimed at stability, security, prosperity and regional and sub-regional cooperation.

In the economic and financial partnership the participants emphasized the importance they attach to sustainable and balanced economic and social development with a view to achieving their objective of creating an area of shared prosperity.

The partners acknowledged the difficul-

ties that the question of debt can create for the economic development of the countries of the Mediterranean region. They agree, in view of the importance of their relations, to continue the dialogue in order to achieve progress in the competent institutions.

The Euro-Mediterranean partners also agreed to accelerate the pace of sustainable socio-economic development and improve the living conditions of their populations, and increase the employment level and reduction in the development gap in the Euro-Mediterranean region. A narrowing of economic disparities is also being sought through the encouragement of regional cooperation and integration.

The establishment of a free-trade area is being implemented through the new Euro-Mediterranean Association Agreements between the European Union and the Mediterranean partners. The signing of an association agreement with Syria in 2004 brings to completion this round of negotiations and augurs well for the establishment of a Euro-Med free trade area by 2010.

The EU has also continued to express a willingness to enhance support provided to the countries of Morocco, Tunisia, Jordan and Egypt in order to start implementing the free trade measures that have been agreed upon in the Agadir Agreement. Regional economic integration was also further supported including industrial and enterprise co-operation, the creation of a Euro-Mediterranean energy platform and a trans-Euro-Mediterranean Transport Network.

The Euro-Mediterranean partner countries also reviewed performance of the MEDA financial mechanism which has continued to show signs of improvement when it comes to management and distribution of funds. The European Investment Bank also continued to increase its role in the Mediterranean through the external investment it provides, with total FEMIP lending to the region rising above 13 billion Euros in 2004. Foreign Ministers repeated that the possibility of incorporating an EIB majority owned subsidiary dedicated to the Mediterranean will be fully assessed in December 2006 as had been agreed at the Naples Euro-Mediterranean conference.

The Euro-Mediterranean countries also agreed to endeavour to mitigate the neg-

ative social consequences that may result from such economic and financial adjustment, by promoting programmes for the benefit of the poorest populations. The promotion of mechanisms to foster transfers of technology from north to south is also to be part of the economic and financial partnership agenda.

When it came to economic cooperation the Euro-Mediterranean states agreed to co-operate in numerous areas some of which follow: they acknowledge that economic development must be supported both by internal savings, the basis of investment, and by direct foreign investment. The Euro-Mediterranean states stressed the importance of creating an environment conducive to investment, in particular by the progressive elimination of obstacles to such investment which could lead to the transfer of technology and increase production and exports.

Other commitments included recognition of the key role of women in development and an undertaking to promote their active participation in economic and social life and in the creation of employment. EMP states also stressed the importance of the conservation and rational management of fish stocks and of the improvement of cooperation on research into stocks, including aquaculture, and undertake to facilitate scientific training and research and to envisage creating joint instruments.

The economic and financial partnership discussions also acknowledged the pivotal role of the energy sector and calls for a strengthening of cooperation in the field of energy policies. It also recognized that water supply together with suitable management and development of resources are priority issues for all Mediterranean partners and that cooperation should be developed in these areas.

The Euro-Mediterranean participants also agreed to cooperate in several other areas such as that of developing and improving infrastructures, including through the establishment of an efficient transport system, the development information technologies and the modernization of telecommunications. They also undertook to respect the principles of international maritime law, in particular freedom to provide services in international transport and free access to international cargoes.

The sectors of Justice, Security and Migration remained high on the agenda of all foreign ministerial meetings throughout 2004. A breakthrough in the sector dedicated to the social, cultural and human affairs chapter of the EMP that focuses on identifying mechanisms that will assist in developing human resources, promoting understanding between cultures and exchanges between civil societies, took place with the launching of the Anna Lindh Foundation for the Dialogue between Cultures in Alexandria, Egypt.

The nurturing of a dialogue between cultures and civilisations was thus also a high priority in this sector of the partnership. The importance of improving mutual understanding by promoting cultural exchanges and knowledge of languages was highlighted. A work programme that would focus on cultural and creative heritage, cultural and artistic events, co-productions (theatre and cinema), translations and other means of cultural dissemination, and training was requested.

The thirty-five Euro-Mediterranean states also continued to support Euro-Mediterranean Civil Forum activities that aim to reinforce the activities that non-governmental organisations are already carrying out by strengthening civil society networks across the Euro-Mediterranean area. Support for cultural diversity was also strengthened through further elaboration of the Euromed Audiovisual and Euromed Heritage programmes.

High priority continued to be attached to the issues of education, youth and women. Euro-Mediterranean foreign ministers highlighted the successful implementation of the TEMPUS programme for co-operation on higher education. Increasing awareness of the activities carried out by the Youth Platform which brings together more than 15,000 young people to work on common cultural values was also reiterated. The Euro-Mediterranean partners also committed themselves to sustaining efforts to increase the education level of women and promote their equal political, social, cultural and economic opportunities in respective societies.

The year 2004 also witnessed the successful inauguration of the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly in Athens. This mechanism is a landmark

MAIN MEETINGS OF THE EURO-MEDITERRANEAN PROCESS

CONFERENCES OF EURO-MEDITERRANEAN FOREIGN MINISTERS

VI Conference of Euro-Mediterranean Foreign Ministers. Naples (02/03-12-03)

The final ministerial meeting before the enlargement of the EU. Ministers analysed the political and economic prospects for the region offered by the *Wider Europe* policy. Issues discussed by the ministers that should be highlighted were the proposal for the creation of the Euro-Mediterranean Foundation for the Dialogue of Cultures and the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly. The situations of Iraq and the Middle East were also analysed, defending the role of the United Nations and the Road Map respectively.

http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/euromed/conf/naples/index.htm

Mid-Term meeting of Euro-Mediterranean Ministers of Foreign Affairs. Dublin (5/6-05-04)

The meeting reaffirms the strong political commitment to the Barcelona Process and its activities, as well as its contribution to the political and economic progress of the region. It was decided to speed up the process of implementation of the agreements made in the Valencia Action Plan and the conclusions of the Euro-Mediterranean Conference in Naples. The ministers approved the final decisions on the Euro-Mediterranean Foundation for the Dialogue of Cultures and agreed to consult for the development of the European Union strategy for the Mediterranean and Middle East.

http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/euromed/conf/dublin/concl.pdf

Mid-Term meeting of Euro-Mediterranean Ministers of Foreign Affairs. The Hague (29/30-11-04)

The meeting depicts the different initiatives which are being developed in the Mediterranean, above all the proposal of the United States, and confirms the importance of the Barcelona Process and its anchorage to the New Neighbourhood Policy of the EU. The advances made during the year were summarised paying particular attention to the new initiatives such as, in the security area, discussion of the subject of the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction or advances in the analysis of terrorism. The preparation of both assessment documents on the ten years of the Barcelona Process in the political and security environment (EuroMeSCo) and in the economic area

(Femise) was requested, and the activities which can be carried out to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the Barcelona Process were discussed.

http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/euromed/conf/hague/conclusions.pdf

SECTORIAL CONFERENCES

Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on Agriculture. Venice (27-11-03)

The first meeting of agriculture ministers within the Barcelona Process. As the Euro-Mediterranean Free Trade Area comes into effect in 2010, the ministers envisaged the need to deal with and cooperate on different issues such as rural development, promotion of the quality of agricultural products and organic farming. At the conference the possibility of setting up a specific regional programme within the framework of the MEDA programme was also discussed.

http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/euromed/publication/euromed_report69_en.pdf

Euro-Mediterranean Trade Ministerial Conference. Istanbul (21-07-04)

The meeting took particular note of the progress made in the areas of the simplification of customs procedures, the rules of origin, services and the approximation of legislation on these issues.

http://trade-info.cec.eu.int/doclib/docs/2004/july/tradoc_118199.pdf

Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on textiles and clothing. Tunis (28-09-04)

Given the elimination of quotas planned for January 2005, this meeting examined the means to strengthen the competitiveness of the Euro-Mediterranean area and its capability to attract investment; sustainable development, competition, the fight against counterfeiting and issues on regional integration were also discussed.

<http://europa.eu.int/comm/enterprise/textile/euromed.htm>

Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on Industry. Caserta (4-10-04)

The ministers pointed out the need to situate companies in the centre of cooperation, through dialogue on enterprise policy and the creation of associations which promote the improvement of cooperation in this sector. The main approaches for cooperation in 2005-2006 are: following the implementation of the Charter for Enterprise; regional dialogue on enterprise policy; pan-Euro-Mediterranean dialogue on tex-

tiles; and industry and cooperation projects for the private sector.

http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/euromed/publication/2004/euromed_report_82_en.pdf

Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly

Inaugural Session. Athens (22/23-03-04)
Inauguration carried out after the decision to create the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly, taken at the Euro-Mediterranean Conference of Naples (December 2003). The appointment of Mr Ahmed Fahti Sorour as its president was approved and the willingness to continue debating the issues previously dealt with by the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Forum was reaffirmed. The first session of the Assembly will take place in Cairo in March 2005.

www.senat.fr/europe/declaration_athenes_mars_2004.pdf

OTHER MEETINGS OF INTEREST

Signing of the Agadir Agreement. Rabat (25-02-2004)

The foreign affairs ministers of Morocco, Tunisia, Jordan and Egypt signed the agreement for the creation of a Free Trade Area, given the efforts made in favour of an Arab Free Trade Area and the prospects generated by the creation of the Euro-Mediterranean Free Trade Area in 2010. Any Arab country agreed on by the partners can accede to this agreement with the aim of creating dynamic exchanges, improving the industrial fabric and competitiveness and promoting the creation of work, amongst other objectives.

www.maec.gov.ma/fr/default.asp (version in Arabic)

EU Strategic Partnership with the Mediterranean and Middle East (17/18-06-04)

At the request of the European Council a document with concrete proposals on a strategy towards the Middle East region was prepared. Several key priorities have emerged which include the promotion of joint interests, the recognition of the need for reforms which are not imposed but instead generated from within the affected countries and the importance of partnership.

<http://ue.eu.int/uedocs/cmsUpload/Partnership%20Mediterranean%20and%20Middle%20East.pdf>

that will promote interparliamentary exchanges as a vehicle to foster pluralistic democracy.

The Barcelona Declaration also recognised the important role that the media plays when it comes to fostering a better cultural understanding. The European Union pledged to actively promote such interaction, in particular through the ongoing MED-Media programme. A consensus emerged on the need to enhance visibility of the EMP, especially through the Euro-Mediterranean Dialogue programme on information and communication.

The EMP states also emphasised the fact that youth exchanges should be the means to prepare future generations for a closer cooperation between the Euro-Mediterranean partners. The Euro-Mediterranean youth exchange programme is therefore to be further strengthened on the experience already acquired in Europe and taking account of the Mediterranean partners' needs. The EMP partners also agreed to cooperate on raising awareness, information and prevention in the health care sector.

Given the importance of the issue of migration for Euro-Mediterranean rela-

tions, the EMP states agreed to encourage meetings that would focus on making proposals to manage migration flows and pressures. These meetings will take account of experience acquired, inter alia, under the MED-Migration programme, particularly as regards improving the living conditions of migrants legally established in the Union.

Fighting terrorism was also highlighted as a top priority for all the parties. To that end, officials agreed to meet periodically with the aim of strengthening cooperation among police, judicial and other authorities. In this context, consideration will be given, in particular, to stepping up exchanges of information and improving extradition procedures.

As the Barcelona Process approaches its tenth anniversary in 2005, the participating Euro-Mediterranean countries should take stock of progress registered in each of the different co-operative sectors they are seeking to advance. The groundwork for the eventual introduction of a Charter for Peace and Stability, preparations for the smooth functioning of a Euro-Med free trade area and the establishment of an interactive Euro-Mediterranean Foundation that brings

civil society together at regular intervals should be the priority areas that policy makers focus on. A review of the Valencia Action Plan of April 2002 that identifies those areas of co-operation where implementation of confidence-building measures can proceed in the short-term should also take place.

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