

The Mediterranean Dimension of the Universal Forum of the Cultures

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The Universal Forum of Cultures – Barcelona 2004 exuded Mediterranean with its views of the sea, the daily sea breezes, the heat on some of the days, the Spring showers, the tourists and the festive atmosphere in the Summer, the noise and the musicians, the sunset and sunrise light, and many more things.

A side from making an appraisal of its organisation, the very idea of the Forum can be considered one very much adapted to Mediterranean life: that of bringing citizens together, in a shared environment of enjoyment and reflection through culture, considered in a broad sense and as a way of life. The aim of Barcelona 2004 was to analyse the possibilities of combating the tensions generated by globalisation while embarking on reflection, dialogue and celebration. In this respect, the Barcelona Forum had a certain amount of cacophony with the differences in which the citizens were expressing their visions of the world, their diagnosis and their proposals for action through different formats.

The Barcelona Forum featured urban development, citizenry and dialogue, in differing proportions and intensities over 141 days. The privileged position of Barcelona as a meeting point for cultures and peoples, the city's Mediterranean and open character and its proven determination to help, reflect and protest against the world's problems, contributed to attract to Barcelona a wide range of artistic, academic and social communicators.

The Forum project set out to also undertake urban redevelopment thought for finding solutions to the problems that particularly occur in the cities of the Mediterranean coast as a consequence of their history and development. The integration of urban infrastructures in the citizen's lives, the recuperation of the Barcelona coastline and its beaches, the revival of the biotope, the construction of the city basing it on the existing model and structures, are all innovative operations that go beyond their urbanistic or social valuation.

The Mediterranean is a historically privileged region of contact between cultures, religions, languages and peoples. Contacts that often have not been free of conflict. The advance of economic and media globalisation has implied an increase in the circulation of ideas, images, people and information that have produced a Mediterranean region full of complexities, contradictions, tensions, opportunities and creativity.

The Barcelona Forum 2004 was a clear reaction to these complexities, tensions, contradictions, opportunities and creativity. The music, the exhibitions, the scenic arts, but, above all, the dialogues, had the Mediterranean and its challenges and conflicts as a source of inspiration and reflection.

The Universal Forum of the Cultures' three core themes: sustainable development, cultural diversity and the promotion of the conditions for peace, have shown, in all of the Forum's output (music, theatre, dialogues, exhibitions, workshops), a Mediterranean dimension, since this region, despite being so small and so diverse, is a microcosm that brings together many of the essential themes that affect the development of humanity at the beginning of the 21st century. The

Mediterranean has to revise its geopolitical position in the globalised world and with the increasing relations between the two sides of the Pacific. In this space, we can see the effects of climatic change and of the over exploitation of resources, North-South relations and the effects of globalisation, terrorism and war, contact between the three principal monotheistic religions, the birth of many polytheistic religions, commerce, great linguistic diversity, three continents and many centuries of history.

A great number of debates, thoughts and exhibitions focused on the conditions for peace, specially taking into consideration a part of the world (Palestine, Libya, Syria, the Balkans and Lebanon) considered as a source of terrorism and conflicts. The denunciations against unilateral and monolithic approaches were made in parallel with a reflection about the role of Europe in ensuring stability in the area, through international aid as much as the position of upholding the values that have provided wellbeing to the continent. But, above all, the Forum brought together differing proposals for conflict resolution: defense of a culture of peace, promotion of disarmament and measures to be implemented during the process of reconciliation following a conflict. In the dialogues, the protagonists of the conflicts that fill our newspapers, or have already been forgotten, reflected on various aspects. Some of the themes dealt with the realities of social coexistence during or after a conflict (how resistance and the push for peace is organised in the middle of a conflict; how to reconstruct the social fabric and coexistence after a conflict; the recuperation of the memory after what they have lived through, the dignification of the victims, the reinsertion of the perpetrators into

UNIVERSAL FORUM OF THE CULTURES: DIALOGUES

Europe's role in the world, 11th May

In this dialogue, organised by the CIDOB Foundation, participants reflected on the role that should be played by Europe in the defence of a system of international relations based on multilateralism. In this respect, the Barcelona Declaration was approved. The Declaration defends a cohesive and coherent foreign policy in which security and peace should be fundamental objectives in the actions of the European Union.

Global Broadcasting Communication, Cultural Diversity and Regulation, 28th – 29th May

Programme focused on sharing the experiences and action models being developed by a wide range of regulatory organs in their spheres of action. It also highlighted the crucial importance of audio-visual media, not just in the economic aspect, but also in educational, social and cultural areas.

Water for life and security, 31st May – 1st June

The dialogue culminated with the approval of the document "Fundamental principles for a Global Convention on the Right to Water," a kind of universal declaration of rights and obligations to be taken to the UN to achieve support and compliance by all Member States.

37th Congress of the Mediterranean Science Commission (CIESM). Listening to the sea, 10th June

This congress stressed the need to raise awareness both in people and among the regulatory organs to maintain the balance between

human development and the marine ecosystem in the Mediterranean.

Conflicts: Prevention, Resolution, Reconciliation, 16th – 20th June

This seminar stressed that the establishment at international level of a culture of prevention, as well as the increase and improvement of foreign knowledge, constitute a first step towards resolving conflicts at their roots. Participants also agreed that civil society organisations and society itself are relevant for the creation of a culture of peace at grassroots level.

Towards a World Without Violence, 23rd – 27th June

The dialogue advocated for the need for a change in mentality to de-legitimise violence as a means of conflict resolution. For the acquisition of these new values, it is necessary to redefine the concept of human security, currently based on the arms race, and also to redefine development investment and assistance.

East-West Dialogue, 1st – 3rd July

The debate stressed the need to increase the dialogue between these two civilisations and the search— within the framework of ruling globalisation— for a new model of economic development with more social and environmental conscience for the Asian continent. According to experts, Asia is destined to be the leader of the world economy as from 2025.

Parliament of the World's Religions, 7th – 13th July

Religious leaders and believers from seventy-five countries and more than one hundred reli-

gious denominations met to have dialogue. This dialogue was aimed at demonstrating a common will: despite differences in beliefs, they share a fundamental principle that unites them and for which they should fight: universal peace and mutual respect.

Tourism, Cultural Diversity, and Sustainable Development, 14th – 17th July

Tourism is one of the main mechanisms of intercultural knowledge and dialogue. The challenge of this dialogue focuses on making tourism a vehicle for conservation of cultural and natural diversity, and a means to consolidating the culture of peace.

World Congress on Human Movements and Immigration, 2nd – 5th September

This congress, organised by the European Institute of the Mediterranean, dealt with the situation of the migratory phenomenon and the importance of human mobility as a tool for development and the construction of progressive societies. Emphasis was placed on the importance of considering diversity as an element of integration, and not of conflict. In order for this to happen, multilateral management of migration is essential.

More information:

www.barcelona2004.org/eng/contenidos/dialogos/

society...), the role of justice (what is the relation between reconciliation, truth and justice; which are the mechanisms that one can put into effect), and the role of the international community in the conflicts and in achieving a sustainable peace, especially in the Arab-Israeli conflict. Progressive disarmament, development and promotion of democracy were proposed as solutions once and again. The right to an informed public opinion and to economic growth are some of the positive aspects of globalisation. The right to know is the right to live. The world-wide spread in communications has not led to an improvement in the spread of information, as the media have progressively become concentrated in

a few hands, thus promoting a monolithic thinking.

Rather than just relying on state regulation, where there is always the temptation to intervene in editorial contents and arguments, the citizens need to stand up and demand their rights. The information society will only be democratic and participatory, if it is developed in an articulated society, where opinions and needs can be channelled towards the media and the regulators, in an environment which guarantees the quality of the broadcasts and the interventions of cultural minorities. Regulation of the communications sector is the instrument that guarantees not only economic efficiency, but also pluralism and cultural diversity.

When so much is spoken about God and the devil in political strategies and discussions are full of moral terminology, it is high time to recuperate democracy. During this recuperation one has to consider consolidating civil society and not imposing institutions, leaving them to be built by society itself.

Throughout the history of humanity, God's name has been used to justify wars, dictatorships, torture or any action that violates human rights. The Mediterranean has been the scene of many of these conflicts. At the Parliament of the World's Religions it was strongly stated that the different religions have to work to put an end to this. The world's religions have to undertake a process of deep self-crit-

ticism, because it is a great contradiction to speak of love and peace and at the same time to justify the use of violence in order to resolve intercultural conflicts of religious background. The world's religions have emphasised their differences throughout history and have always left aside the universal principle that unites them all, that is, the ethics of respecting each other. Society today is contaminated by intolerance and fragmentation. Religions can help to promote a new international order. "The convictions that are shared by the Christian, Jewish, and Buddhist, as well as by the Chinese religions, ought to be emphasised, because they can greatly contribute in creating a new model of international relations," stated the Catholic theologian Hans Küng, when making a plea for all religions to enter into a political-social debate, even if it means acting against the wishes of their political leaders. "There will not be an improvement in the international order without a common global ethics," he asserted.

Sustainable development and the fight against poverty marked the proposals put forward for the Mediterranean. Water, energy geopolitics, biodiversity, sustainable management of tourism and the need to reflect about human movements were established as the principle challenges in the development sphere.

Shared water resources, the access to them and the management of international trans-border water supplies, can be a key to achieving peace or becoming sources of conflict, especially in Europe and the Mediterranean (the rivers Rhine, Danube, Jordan, etc.), and in Africa (the Nile, Congo and others).

The Mediterranean Sea is also experiencing a process of globalisation. The biodiversity, the landscape and the coast

are changing rapidly due to human activity and climatic change. The Mediterranean is the main tourist destination of the world and is a victim of its own success. The degradation of its coastline is unprecedented and many of its species are on the point of extinction. Research into the cleansing of sewage, the promotion of more sustainable types of tourism that do not put so much pressure on natural resources and the development of cultural exchanges ought to help to establish an equilibrium, first, between human evolution on both shores of the sea and, second, between this evolution and the marine and terrestrial ecosystems. Today's society invests much energy in order to achieve access to the basic rights for all citizens, without discrimination of race, colour or beliefs. However, the increasingly deteriorating environment and the growth in social, economic and cultural discrimination, endangers the wellbeing of future generations.

The management of human movements is an essential part of the mentioned future wellbeing and the relations between the populations of the developed and developing world. The territorial complexity of the migratory processes, the relations between partnership, security and development, shared identities, the processes of integration and living together in the cities and in its public areas, the protection of immigrants basic rights, the contribution to development, the coordination with other commercial policies or social integration, the dialogue between all the stakeholders have been the subjects dealt with in the regional analysis of migrations in the EuroMediterranean region.

By reflecting about the problems, challenges and opportunities of the Mediter-

anean in all its dimensions, the need for a new paradigm of coexistence, understanding and integration is evident; one which is based on a series of parameters that have been repeated in thousands of different ways and points of view. The alleged Clash of Civilisations has been transformed into a clash of interests and ignorance. More dialogue and knowledge is needed in order to move away from stereotyping and monolithic thinking. The contemporary intellectual structures are not capable of recognising alternative ways of thinking that allow the articulation of agreed solutions in accordance with the reality of a diverse and constantly evolving society. It is necessary to develop an alternative vision that embraces diversity in its widest sense in order to be able to address today's needs. Apart from knowledge, further understanding of interdependency and human vulnerability, as much as intellectual curiosity and the promotion of education to break down barriers are the ways forward to a fairer world. In a sea as small as ours, the present great division is unsustainable.

The Mediterranean is an area where various different peoples arrived and imposed their respective Roman peace, Arabic peace, Britannic peace and American peace": "It is now time to speak of a Mediterranean peace, reached by us" (Guido de Marco).

The Universal Forum of Cultures set out to be a place for a coming together of minds, creativity and a little common sense in which frontiers disappear.

More information about the ideas, participants, programmes, legacy and conclusions of Barcelona 2004 at:

www.barcelona2004.org

www.fundacioforum.org