

Other multilateral initiatives in the Mediterranean

1. NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue

Started at the end of 1994, NATO's initiative in the Mediterranean, known as the Mediterranean Dialogue, demonstrates the importance of security issues in the Mediterranean region. The Mediterranean Dialogue is not a military cooperation programme, but rather a political forum that brings together the NATO partner countries alongside Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria and Mauritania. The instauration of a direct dialogue with the southern Mediterranean non-NATO countries will allow the promotion of the Atlantic alliance in these countries, as well as debates on security and a general encouragement of trust and regional stability. Despite the mainly bilateral structure of the Mediterranean Dialogue, the multilateral meetings are held regularly and increasingly more often. However, the Mediterranean initiative has no true political support. The deterioration of the peace process between Palestinians and Israelis, which means that many Arab countries are reluctant to participate in a dialogue in which Israel is involved, has impeded any real progress. However, after the attacks of 11th September, the Mediterranean Dialogue was able to recover the attention of the countries in the region and also from several outside. In May 2002, NATO's partners decided to intensify the dialogue.

<http://www.nato.int/med-dial/home.htm>
<http://www.nato.int/docu/handbook/2001/hb130115.htm>

Chronology July 2002 to July 2003:

- 30th September 2002: International Conference *From Dialogue to Part-*

nership Mediterranean Security and NATO: Future Prospects.

- November 2002: Nineteen plus seven Multilateral Meeting
- 11th and 12th November 2002: *The Future of Europe: Views from Outside*, an international conference organised by the Istituto de Estudios Estratégicos e Internacionais, and co-sponsored by the NATO Information and Press Office.
- 21st and 22nd November 2002: Meeting in Prague of Heads of State and Government.
- 22nd to 24th November 2002: *Europe, the United States and the Mediterranean*, an international conference organised by the ASPEN Institute Italy and France together with the European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMed), and co-sponsored by the NATO Information and Press Office, Barcelona.
- 11th and 12th May 2003: *Euro-Mediterranean Relations and the United States «Dialogue in Time of Crisis»*, organised by the Istituto de Estudios Estratégicos e Internacionais, IEI, Lisbon.
- 30th June 2003: *NATO and Mediterranean Security: Practical Steps Towards Partnership*, a conference organised by the Royal Institute Services Institute for Defence Studies (RUSI).
- 4th and 5th July 2003: *Tasks for Transatlantic Cooperation - Peace, Institutions, and Nation-Building in the Mediterranean and the Middle East*, a conference organised by the Istituto Affari Internazionali, Rome, Italy.

2. OSCE Mediterranean Contact Group

Today, the OSCE maintains special relations with six Mediterranean Part-

ners for Cooperation (MPCs): Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia. This involves regular meetings of the Contact Group and seminars dedicated to Mediterranean issues. These contacts were developed over time, beginning with a chapter entitled 'Questions relating to security and cooperation in the Mediterranean', which was included in the Helsinki Final Act (1975). In 1994 in Budapest, the meeting of Heads of State and Government decided to establish a Contact Group at an expert level to further enhance relations. The deliberations of the Contact Group offer the participating states and the six Mediterranean partners the opportunity to maintain a dialogue for discussion and the exchange ideas in a series of common issues on both shores of the Mediterranean. Moreover, the OSCE Secretariat also organise annual Mediterranean seminars which provide for a major part of the ongoing dialogue between the OSCE and the MPCs, focused on determined issues. The seminars are usually attended by high representatives of the participating states, the MPCs as well as several international organisations, members of Parliament, academics and NGOs.

At the 1999 Istanbul Summit Meeting of Heads of State and Government, the participating states reiterated their commitment to strengthening relations with the Mediterranean partners.

The 2002 Mediterranean Seminar:

- 4th and 5th November, Rhodes, *Media and New Technologies: Implications for Governments, International Organisations and Civil Society.*

The seminar is attended by twenty-two OSCE partner countries, four MPCs (Egypt, Israel, Jordan and Tunisia) and two partners for cooperation (Korea and Thailand). Moreover, several international organisations and non-governmental organisations are represented.

During the seminar special emphasis is placed on the need to make all necessary efforts to promote the interests of the Mediterranean, with the objective of guaranteeing a real and effective dialogue in the region. Three basic tasks to be developed in the region are identified: promotion of dialogue, coordination of strategic and security interests on both shores of the Atlantic, and strengthening of the regional and international instruments to develop cooperation.

Also point out is the importance of communication for the development of diplomacy.

<http://www.osce.org/ec/partners/cooperation/mediterranean/>

http://www.osce.org/documents/sg/2002/11/344_en.pdf

3. The Mediterranean Forum (Foromed)

Created in 1994 on the initiative of Egypt and France as an inter-ministerial instrument, the Mediterranean Forum has objectives that are mainly cultural, such as the development of reciprocal understanding and communication. Conceived on the margin of the Barcelona Process, the Mediterranean Forum currently brings together eleven countries (Algeria, Egypt, France, Spain, Greece, Italy, Malta, Morocco, Portugal, Tunisia and Turkey), and acts as a regional institution of intergovernmental dialogue. The Foromed has an annual presidency, which is based on a rotation system (Greece in 2002, Turkey in 2003 and France in 2004). In addition, at the end of each presidency, a meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs is held. There are also regular meetings at the level of Senior Officials. We should note that the Mediterranean Forum has no permanent structure such as a secretariat, and that coordination functions are thus performed by the relevant Presidency.

Ministerial Meetings:

- Delos, Greece, 20th and 21st May 2002

During the ninth Ordinary Session of the Mediterranean Forum of Foreign Ministers, the parties reiterated their absolute condemnation of terrorism. With reference to the attacks of 11th September, any «amalgam» between terrorism and Islam was strongly rejected. Regarding this connection, the important role of the Mediterranean Forum as a relevant and recognised instrument for promoting a dialogue of equals between cultures and civilisations was emphasised by all. Special reference was also made to bilateral and multilateral cooperation on conflict prevention, with special emphasis given to crisis management

The conflict in Palestine was also discussed during the session, and the Ministers emphasised the importance of the international community for the struggle to achieve peace in the region, based on international legality. In addition, the Mediterranean Forum reiterated its aim to continue its contribution to the development and consolidation of the Barcelona Process.

- Antalya, Turkey, 9th and 10th October 2003

The meeting was marked by the crisis in the Middle East, and the situation in Iraq and its involvement in the Euro-Mediterranean region. With reference to this, the Ministers expressed their support for the Road Map and condemned the air attack of Israel in the Syrian territory. With regard to Iraq, the Ministers agreed that the United Nations should play a central role in the stabilisation and reconstruction of the country.

Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, information on the Mediterranean Forum:

<http://www.mfa.gov.tr/grupa/ar/mediterraneanforum.htm>

4. 5+5 Dialogue

Proposed by François Mitterrand at the beginning of the 1980s, the idea of the 5+5 Dialogue was resumed some years later by the Italian President Bettino Craxi and the Spanish President Felipe González. This initiative involves

ten countries of the Western Mediterranean Basin (Algeria, France, Italy, Libya, Malta, Mauritania, Morocco, Portugal, Spain and Tunisia). The 5+5 Dialogue seeks the establishment of a framework that will be favourable to dialogue and cooperation between the partner countries in issues such as security and stability in the Mediterranean, economic and regional integration and immigration. The first meeting was held in Rome in October 1990, but the process came to a standstill as a result of the Gulf War, the Lockerbie affair, the tensions between Maghreb countries and the divergences between the European countries over leadership of the initiative. It was not until January 2001 that the 5+5 Dialogue was strengthened with the holding of a meeting of Foreign Affairs Ministers. Later, further Foreign Affairs meetings were held in Tripoli (May 2002) and Sainte-Maxime (April 2003). Moreover, the Five plus Five Dialogue has materialised through the holding of sectorial meetings and parliamentary assemblies (Tripoli, February 2003). Five plus Five Chronology.

www.5plus5.tn

Main Declarations of the period 2002 to 2003:

- Tripoli Declaration, 29th and 30th May 2002

The fourth Meeting of Foreign Affairs Ministers stresses the strategic importance of this dialogue as an instrument for the maintenance of peace, stability and development in the region. The Ministers reaffirmed the need for the development of a regional economic complementarity, with the purpose of attracting foreign investment. They also expressed the wish that financial service mechanisms of the European Investment Bank be developed into a Euro-Mediterranean Bank. At a socio-political level, emphasis was laid on the necessity to give priority to cooperation in the field of migration and human movements.

- Tunis Declaration, 15th and 16th October 2002

The first Ministerial Conference on Migration in the Western Mediterranean. The Declaration emphasised the need for achieving a multilateral response to issues related with migration.

- Sainte-Maxime Declaration, 9th and 10th April 2003

The declaration underlined the importance of the cooperation process for the countries of the Western Mediterranean as a distinguished political forum between the countries of the Arab Maghreb and Southern Europe. From this economic point of view, the Ministers stressed the necessity to achieve a stronger economic integration as part of the Arab Maghreb Union. Emphasis was also placed on the necessity to give priority to cooperation regarding questions of migration and human exchange.

5. Euro-Arab Dialogue

A discussion forum between the European Union and the Arab League that was launched, on the initiative of France, in the 1973 Copenhagen European Summit. For the European members, the initiative represented a discussion forum of mainly economic

issues. In contrast for the Arabs it was considered a framework for political debate. The two organisations created three bodies of dialogue, the Ministerial Troika, the General Commission and the Working Groups.

The institutional dialogue between European and Arab countries was formally started in 1975. However, the activities of the Dialogue were suspended in 1979 at the request of the Arab League after the signing of the Camp David Agreements. The Dialogue was relaunched in 1989, on the initiative of France, which at that moment presided over the European Community, with the calling of a Euro-Arab Ministerial Conference in Paris. This conference was followed by a meeting in Dublin of the Dialogue General Commission in June 1990. Later, the Gulf War and the inter-Arab divisions that followed it again blocked the Euro-Arab Dialogue, which was again suspended in 1992.

Despite these obstacles, we should remember that the Arab League close-

ly monitors the Barcelona Process, and in this sense the Secretary-General of the Organisation is normally invited to the ministerial conferences of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership. Moreover, the delegations of the European countries carry out visits to the headquarters of the Arab League in Cairo. In this context, during the Iraq crisis, the Greek Minister of Foreign Affairs and the European Commissioner of Foreign Affairs participated in the ministerial meeting of the Arab League in March 2003. Later, several members of the Arab League took part in the European Council in an analysis of the situation in Iraq.

The Secretariat of the Arab League and the European Commission have made efforts to reactivate the collective dialogue between the two parties. They have moreover agreed the creation of a cooperation programme between both organisations.

Source: Arab League website:
www.arableagueonline.org