

The Barcelona Process from Valencia to Crete

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The second half of 2002 and the first half of 2003, which on the European side were shepherded by the Danish and the Greek EU Presidencies respectively, would not prove to be an easy time for achieving progress in the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership. The Partnership was overshadowed by two particularly sinister political events in the region: the deteriorating situation in the Middle East and the international controversies surrounding the US led military intervention in Iraq. In addition to the already complex political climate in the area were several suicide attacks in Algeria, Lebanon and Morocco, related to both domestic and international terrorist groups.

The political developments in the region, and the EU's distraction with Iraq, obviously relegated Euro-Mediterranean issues to the back burner during most of this period. However, by May 2003, in a more relaxed international climate, the Fifteen met with their southern Mediterranean partners in Heraklion, Crete. Indeed, the Crete Conference set a precedent, in that it was the first time a Euro-Mediterranean Mid-Term Ministerial Conference was held, after a formula that was introduced by the Spanish EU Presidency at the Valencia Ministerial Conference in 2002. Yet the Mid-Term Conference was not only to be welcomed as the first of its kind, but also for having been able to bring together all the southern Mediterranean partners for the first

time in recent years. The presence of Syria and Lebanon, facilitated by the prospect of progress on the Middle East Road Map, set a hopeful note for the conference in Heraklion.

The fundamental purpose of the Mid-Term Conference was to assess the progress made in the Barcelona Process, chiefly in terms of the implementation of the Valencia Action Plan, and to discuss the future development of the Partnership, in view of the 2004 EU enlargement and Wider Europe.

The Valencia Action Plan embraces a series of measures to make different areas of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership more tangible. In terms of the bilateral Euro-Mediterranean Association Agreements, the Crete Mid-Term Conference welcomed the signing of the accords with Algeria and Egypt at the Valencia Conference, and the June 2002 accord with the Lebanon. However, the Ministers also called for the speeding-up of the national ratification processes of these accords in EU member states, as so far these have been very slow moving. Furthermore, the Ministers also encouraged the acceleration of the process of concluding the interim agreements and other measures to advance implementation of relevant commitments under the Association Agreements. As for Syria, which is now the only Mediterranean partner that has not signed a Euro-Mediterranean Association Agreement with the EU, the Ministers appealed for the rapid termination of the negotiations underway. Finally, the Crete Conference evaluated the setting up of sectorial sub-committees under the EU-Moroccan accord in the early months of 2003 as highly positive. These advances between Brussels

and Rabat were seen as a model to be pursued in the region in order to strengthen the relations between the EU and individual partner countries.

In terms of the political and security basket in the Valencia Action Plan, the issue of terrorism was given special attention at the Mid-Term Conference, and measures to strengthen Euro-Mediterranean dialogue and cooperation on this and other security related issues were advanced. The Ministers also greeted warmly the proposal to transform the Euromed Parliamentary Forum into a Euromed Parliamentary Assembly, in the hope that this will strengthen the parliamentary dimension of the Barcelona Process. It is hoped that the resulting political dialogue will provide further opportunity to promote democratisation in the South. The Crete Presidency Conclusions reflect the general agreement that the new Parliamentary Assembly should be included within the framework of the Barcelona Process. However, in practice, this incorporation cannot take place until the European Parliament and Euro-Mediterranean national parliaments have reached agreement on its creation.

On the political front, outside the scope of the meeting in Heraklion, in the first half of 2003 the EU also began to look for ways to include Iraq and Iran in EU regional cooperation, and suggestions have been made to incorporate Iraq into the Barcelona Process. In reference to these advances, the President of the EU Commission, Romani Prodi, in a speech at the opening of the twenty-second *Giornate dell'Osservanza* held in Bologna on 17th May 2003, expressed the need for the Union to develop a new regional strategy that will

MAIN MEETINGS OF THE 5+5 DIALOGUE (June 2002 - June 2003)

Following the Valencia Meeting, the Barcelona Process is faced with important issues that address its capacities as a global project: the need to promote specific areas of cooperation, the presence of multiple interests that do not always coincide, a key point in the European integration, and its debated associative dimension. After ten years of little activity, the 5+5 Dialogue reappears in the midst of the emergence of these challenges, and the strategy of cooperation in the Mediterranean is resumed with great vitality. Since the 2001 Lisbon Summit there has been a succession of meetings of a forum which is characterised by the informal nature of its approach and in the important regional aspects involved in its activities,

from the Maghreb and from Southern Europe (Algeria, Morocco, Libya, Mauritania and Tunisia on the southern Mediterranean shores, and Spain, Portugal, Italy, France and Malta on the northern side).

Tripoli (09/11-07-02). Conference of Home Affairs Ministers.

Cooperation in matters of security and illegal immigration.

Tunis (16/17-10-02). First Ministerial Conference on Migration in Western Mediterranean.

Adoption of the Tunis Declaration stressing the need to achieve a multilateral response to questions related with migration.

Tripoli (24/25-02-03). Meeting of Parliamentary Assemblies.

The meeting pursued the following objectives: the problems of democracy, cooperation in matters of terrorism and the fight against illegal immigration.

Rabat (11-03-03). Preparatory meeting of high officers.

Within the framework of the preparation for the Saint-Maxime Meeting of Foreign Affairs Ministers held in April of the same year.

Sainte-Maxime (9/10-04-03). Foreign Affairs Ministers Conference.

The vast importance of the Iraqi conflict. The ministers pointed out the role of the United Nations, and the conflict in the Middle East was also discussed.

embrace Iraq, Iran and Syria. Prodi alleged that this, together with the successful implementation of the Middle East Road Map, is the only way to lay the foundations for lasting stability and security in the Mediterranean.

In terms of the economic and financial basket, the Crete Conference took stock of the economic achievements since the launching of the Valencia Action Plan. The Ministers recognised that while there have been a number of positive advances in the overall macro-economic situation of the countries of the region in the past year, such as stabilisation of inflation, fiscal deficits and balance of payments, the overall economic growth performance is still lagging. Growth rates have thus proved to be insufficient to accommodate a rapidly expanding labour force and to raise living standards. The results produced since Valencia are therefore mixed. Nevertheless the Mid-Term Ministerial Conference evaluated as encouraging the progress that has been made on the implementation of the pan-Euro-Mediterranean accumulation of origin system, as well as on tariff dismantling, both in view of the line marked by the Euro-Mediterranean Trade Ministers in Toledo in 2002.

The Mid-Term Conference also welcomed the setting up of the Facility for Euro-Mediterranean Investment and Partnership (FEMIP), launched in Barcelona in October 2002. The Ministers noted the results of the meeting of the

Policy Dialogue and Coordination Committee (PDCC) that took place in Istanbul on 3rd April 2003 and welcomed the planned opening of a regional FEMIP office in Egypt and elsewhere in the region during 2003. The functioning of the FEMIP will be evaluated during the latter part of 2003, to determine the future course of action on the Facility and the incorporation of an EIB majority-owned subsidiary dedicated to the Mediterranean partners. The EIB has committed the necessary staff and financial resources to transform commitments into action, most of them operational as of the end of 2002, including a particular focus on private sector development. The EIB's activities stood at around 1.5 billion Euros in 2002 and should reach an annual total of some two billion Euros by 2006.

Also in the economic context, the Crete Mid-Term Conference welcomed the Conclusions of the Ministerial Conference on the Environment that took place in Athens in July 2002. The adoption of the Athens Declaration has meant that the issue of sustainable development has edged towards a more central role on the Partnership's agenda. A Sustainability Impact Assessment will be conducted in 2003, thus fulfilling one of the objectives of the Valencia Action Plan.

Finally, the Crete Mid-Term Ministerial Conference dedicated considerable attention to the future development of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership,

particularly in the light of the 2004 enlargement of the Union, as the ten candidate countries from central, eastern and Mediterranean Europe were present in Heraklion. The Union wanted to take the occasion offered at the Mid-Term Conference to communicate to its Mediterranean partners that in the view of both current and future member states the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership will be reinforced by the Eastern enlargement. The impact of the coming EU round of enlargement is perhaps most keenly felt in the Mediterranean in terms of trade, foreign investment, labour migration and financial assistance. To this end, several speakers at the Crete Conference discussed the overall macroeconomic and trade-related impact of the EU Enlargement on the Mediterranean economies. To mitigate some of its southern Mediterranean partners' fears, the EU has begun to develop a long-term strategy (Wider Europe) that encompasses the whole of its external perimeter from Murmansk to the Mediterranean as the Union enlarges. The Wider Europe contemplates a deepening in the economic relation between the Union and neighbouring third countries in that it offers the opportunity for neighbouring countries to integrate themselves into the Internal Market, prospects for the free movement of goods, services, capital and persons, as well as their participation in selected EU networks (transport,

energy, telecommunications) and EU programmes such as research and technological development.

The denominated basket of cultural, social and human dialogue of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership has made advances based on the decisions made in the last two Euro-Mediterranean conferences given the urgency clearly perceived by the EU and its partners to channel initiatives for an efficient cultural dialogue between the two shores of the Mediterranean.

Undoubtedly, the initiative that is in a position to have a greater impact among the measures adopted for the relaunch of the Euro-Mediterranean Process is the creation of the Euro-Mediterranean Foundation for the Dialogue of Cultures and Civilisations, defined during the ministerial summit of Valencia, held in April 2002, as a new structure for the promotion of dialogue between cultures and civilisations, and for the improvement of the visibility of the Barcelona Process through exchanges in the intellectual and cultural fields and cooperation of civil society. The Crete Conference established the defining principles of the Foundation, and the Ministerial Conference of Naples approved its creation. Among its main objectives is the identification and promotion of areas of cultural convergence, the continuation of dialogue between cultural circles that usually find them-

selves excluded from the habitual exchanges on a diplomatic and cultural level, and to generate action in the role of promoter of exchanges. The articulation of this new instrument is pending further development, although the results of the conference do reflect the desire of civil society to be an important actor in these exchanges.

With reference to the involvement of civil society in the Partnership through the projects of the third basket, the Crete Conference also echoed the efforts made by this sector in order to add an on-going structure and to synchronise the work developed by the NGOs, the Euro-Mediterranean networks, and in general all the actors, which mainly through the annual holding of the Euromed Civil Forum, will contribute to developing the Partnership beyond strictly intergovernmental relations.

The centrality of the issue of migration in the development of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership was evident in the last ministerial conferences in which the partners sought a balanced approach to the migratory processes, based on its link with security but also on its capacity as a factor of socio-economic growth in the region. The Valencia Euro-Mediterranean Conference launched the initiative for the creation of a regional programme on justice and the fight against organised crime, whose objective is on one hand

to combat the forms of organised crime that affect migration, and on the other the promotion of justice in the integration of immigrants and the elimination of the practice of xenophobia and racism. The Crete Conference reaffirmed the interest in this initiative and foresaw the approval of cooperation and exchange formulae between the southern and northern societies in terms of legal systems, judges, and the joint analysis of the migratory flows, among other aspects.

However, beyond the very specific cooperation in sectors which may bring about short-term solutions to shared questions, the Crete Conference also emphasised the existence of basic issues and sectors that must be incorporated into the dialogue and cooperation of the partners. Among the other initiatives that will soon be developed, we should also point out the special attention given to the sectors of the media as instruments for dialogue, mutual understanding and education, as a field of cooperation both through the extension of already-existing European programmes and based on the creation of new common projects.

Education and vocational training and the role of women in economic development are two of the issues that concern the partners, and which should be the object of the establishment of a cooperation programme in the medium-term.