

Third Euro-Mediterranean Conference of Foreign Ministers

Stuttgart, 15-16 April 1999

Chairman's formal conclusions

1. The third Euro-Mediterranean Conference of Foreign Ministers in Stuttgart has demonstrated that, three and half years after the inaugural conference in Barcelona, the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership has developed and strengthened considerably and has given clear proof of its viability in sometimes delicate and difficult circumstances.

2. The main aim of this conference has been achieved. It has given additional impetus to the Partnership while clearly confirming the goals set out in the Barcelona Declaration, i.e. to turn the Mediterranean basin into an area of dialogue, exchange and cooperation through the strengthening of democracy, respect for human and basic social rights, the rule of law, good governance, and sustainable and balanced economic and social development, the fight against poverty and the promotion of greater understanding between cultures. Ministers recalled the priority accorded in the Partnership to the protection and promotion of human rights. Ministers agreed to further concentrate activities in priority areas, to increase the involvement of actors outside central government and to make the Partnership more action-oriented and visible.

3. Ministers emphasised the fundamental importance of intra-regional and sub-regional cooperation and integration in all three chapters. They endorsed the guidelines of the Valencia conference for both the priorities and methods of future regional cooperation. They called for an improvement in regional cooperation activities, especially for a systematic evaluation and concrete follow-up. They confirmed the principle that regional cooperation programmes are open to all partners, while consisting in many cases of several inter-linked projects, each involving a group of partners. Ministers asked the Commission to contribute a reflection paper on the methodology for regional cooperation.

4. The discussions have shown that the Partnership is solid and lasting. All members remain fully committed to all its objectives and principles and have reaffirmed their resolve to take forward the Partnership into the new millennium.

Contribution of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership to constructive developments in the Mediterranean Region

5. Ministers had a full discussion of the relationship between the Euro-Med Partnership and other initiatives and activities undertaken in the interest of peace, stability and development in the region, in particular the Middle East Peace Process. They confirmed that the Barcelona Process was not intended to replace these initiatives and activities, but to contribute to their success. The Barcelona Declaration made clear that these processes should be regarded as complementary.

6. Ministers reiterated their firm commitment to the realization of a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East based on faithful implementation of UNSC resolutions 242 and 338 and the terms of reference of the Madrid Peace Conference on the Middle East, including the principle of land for peace, the Oslo Accords and the more recent Wye River Memorandum. They called for the resumption of peace talks on all negotiating tracks accordingly. They called for the immediate implementation of Security Council Resolution No. 425.

7. Ministers expressed growing concern about the stalemate in which the peace process currently finds itself and strongly emphasized that the negotiations had to be resumed within the context and timeframe of commitments freely entered into.

8. Many ministers welcome the recent declaration of the Berlin European Council. Ministers encouraged the European Union to continue increasing its role in support of the Middle East Peace Process.

Political and Security Partnership

9. Ministers agreed that stability in the Mediterranean Region requires a comprehensive and balanced approach in order to address common security concerns, strengthen cooperation and adopt measures conducive to stability. By enhancing comprehensive stability the Barcelona Process will furthermore contribute to the solution of tensions and crises in the area.

10. A key factor to this end will be the elaboration of a "Euro-Mediterranean Charter for Peace and Stability" to which Ministers commit themselves. They expressed satisfaction with the work of the Group of Senior Officials and the progress achieved since the Palermo meeting.

11. Ministers welcomed the "Guidelines for Elaborating a Euro-Mediterranean Charter" submitted to them and annexed for convenience to these conclusions as an informal working document. According to the Guidelines, the Charter will serve as an instrument for the implementation of the principles of the Barcelona Declaration where issues of peace and stability are concerned. For this purpose the

Charter will provide for an enhanced political dialogue as well as the evolutionary and progressive development of partnership-building measures, good-neighbourly relations, regional cooperation and preventive diplomacy. The primary function of the enhanced political dialogue will be to prevent tensions and crises and to maintain peace and stability by means of cooperative security. The Charter will be endowed with the appropriate decision-making mechanisms reinforcing the existing institutional framework. Ministers and Senior Officials will meet at regular intervals or whenever special situations or events warrant. All decisions will be taken by consensus.

12. Ministers felt that the "Guidelines" were a major step forward and decided that they will provide the basis for the future work of Senior Officials. Additional suggestions to enrich the text further may be submitted within the next three months. Ministers tasked the Group of Senior Officials to work out a comprehensive schedule and to convene additional ad hoc meetings in order to complete the elaboration of the Charter with the assistance of experts where necessary by the next Ministerial conference. In the interim period a progress report will be prepared for the consideration of Ministers. The Charter will be approved formally by Ministers as soon as political circumstances allow.

13. Ministers reviewed and noted the progress so far achieved in developing partnership-building measures, including the project of establishing a Euro-Med system of disaster prevention, mitigation and management. They welcomed the continuing initiatives relating to the exchange of information on the signature/ratification of international instruments in the fields of disarmament and arms control, terrorism, human rights, and international humanitarian law; they noted the successful holding of Euro-Mediterranean information and training seminars for diplomats aiming at the shaping of a culture of dialogue and cooperation through informal exchange and open discussions between practitioners involved in the implementation of the Partnership.

14. Ministers acknowledged the difficulties which prevail and agreed to sustain and develop these measures as well as identify and explore new areas of cooperation; in that respect they noted the holding of the informal EuroMeSCo-Senior Officials seminar on "Euro-Mediterranean Security Dialogue" in Bonn on 20 March 1999 which aimed at enhancing dialogue and an exchange of ideas between academics and government officials from both sides of the Mediterranean.

15. Ministers agreed to reinforce the political dialogue in areas of cooperation relating to the Political and Security Partnership such as terrorism; in that regard they noted with satisfaction the positive outcome of the informal Ad Hoc Meeting on Terrorism on 23 November 1998. They recognised the serious threat that terrorism poses to the objectives of the Partnership. Ministers expressed their determination to counter this threat by strengthening cooperation. To this end they instructed Senior Officials to convene another ad hoc Euro-Med joint meeting with terrorism experts during the second half of this year.

Ministers called upon the Senior Officials to continue the political dialogue on other issues mentioned in the first chapter of the Barcelona Declaration such as organized crime and illicit drug trafficking with a view to identifying appropriate measures for joint action.

European Union Financial Cooperation with Mediterranean Partners

16. Ministers confirmed that financial cooperation continues to be a key component of the Partnership. All participants noted with satisfaction that, by the end of 1999, Community financial assistance is expected to be in line with the EUR 4.685 billion of commitments referred to in the Barcelona Declaration for the period 1995-1999, and that for the same period, the European Investment Bank's lending could reach EUR 4.8 billion, illustrating the importance of the EIB's role in the infrastructural development of the region as well as its contribution to the growth of the private sector.

17. Ministers acknowledged the importance of these contributions as a catalyst for reforms in partner countries. In this context, Ministers urged maximum coherence between European Union assistance programmes, EIB lending and the activities of international financial institutions.

18. The European Union confirmed that its assistance for the period 2000-2006 will again reflect the high priority that it attaches to relations with its Mediterranean Partners in the context of its overall external commitments. Ministers agreed on the need to strengthen the social, environmental and economic analysis underpinning programming, especially in the case of the National Indicative Programmes. They requested the Commission to submit proposals to simplify and make more efficient methods and procedures of the cooperation as soon as possible.

Economic and Financial Partnership

19. Ministers reaffirmed the pivotal importance of the establishment of a "Euro-Mediterranean free trade area" by the year 2010, of the process of economic transition, and of investment and in particular foreign direct investment, for achieving an area of shared prosperity - an objective that remains at the heart of the Partnership. In response to a request made by the Malta conference, a survey on Free Trade and Economic Transition in the Mediterranean submitted by the Commission was discussed and its findings welcomed.

20. Ministers confirmed their commitment to complete the network of Association Agreements between the EU and its Partners, which are characterised by certain common features and which aim at mutual

benefits on the basis of reciprocity. Ministers agreed that the review provisions in these Agreements should aim at further exchanges of agricultural concessions on a reciprocal basis.

21. Ministers stressed that free trade agreements among Mediterranean Partners are essential for the creation of the Euro-Mediterranean free trade area. Progress achieved by Partners in this respect was welcomed and Partners were strongly encouraged to follow this road and reinforce South-South cooperation in general. In particular, ministers encouraged work on increasing compatibility in customs cooperation, free movement of goods, public procurement, harmonisation and certification of standards, intellectual property rights, taxation, data protection, competition rules, accounting and auditing. Ministers endorsed the invitation of the Valencia conference to draw on experience gained in the establishment of the EU's internal market. They welcomed the work already started in this area and urged that it be taken forward speedily.

22. Ministers stressed the central role that cumulation of origin has to play in enhancing effective economic integration in the region. They called for all necessary measures to be taken to ensure that a system with identical rules of origin opens the way to full cumulation throughout the Euro-Mediterranean area as soon as possible.

23. Ministers welcomed progress in economic transition and stressed that this process required further efforts, particularly with regard to the regulatory and administrative environment, entrepreneurial culture and reforms of taxation systems.

24. Ministers acknowledged that economic transition must pay due recognition to the fact that Partners face major social challenges. They reaffirmed the need to make determined efforts to improve the standard of living of less-favoured groups through well-targetted interventions to avoid increasing unemployment and to improve the social situation. Participants agreed that a broad consensus, including civil society, on the need for reform programmes had to be built up.

25. There was also agreement on the fundamental importance of increasing private investment, including foreign direct investment, and in this respect, on the need for further joint efforts to create a positive climate for investment in order to increase the attractiveness of the region to investors. Ministers welcomed the offer by Portugal to host an investment conference in the first half of 2000 and underlined that this conference, drawing on previous experience, should make recommendations on how best to mobilise external resources from the private sector and financial institutions.

26. In order to strengthen infrastructures in the region which contribute to economic and market integration, the need for the formulation of proper legal, regulatory and financial sectoral frameworks was underlined. Transports, maritime transport, energy and

telecommunications already provide a solid basis for regional cooperation. Ministers stressed that participants should pursue policies and intensified concerted action to foster greater involvement by the private sector as well as by international and regional financial institutions. MEDA and the EIB will continue to play their supporting role.

27. Ministers confirmed that the six priority sectors for cooperation - environment, water policy, industry, energy, transport and the information society - will be maintained and urged that activities be concentrated on these priority sectors. Cooperation in research and development in these sectors should also be encouraged. In all sectors of cooperation special attention should be given to the environmental aspects. Participants stressed the crucial importance of water policy for the Mediterranean region and welcomed the holding of a second Euro-Mediterranean ministerial conference on local water management in Turin in the second half of 1999 which should lead to recommendations for further operational activities at the regional level. Ministers made clear that new priority areas of cooperation could be established in the light of further discussions on a new methodology for regional cooperation activities. In this respect the results of the industry ministers' meeting held on 4 October 1998 in Klagenfurt were welcomed.

28. The conference took note of a number of important recent activities to implement regional cooperation: the EUMEDIS initiative for the information society, a series of projects in the environment and energy fields. Ongoing activities include economic cooperation networks, initiatives to support contacts among SMEs and statistical cooperation under MEDSTAT.

Partnership in the Social, Cultural and Human Affairs

29. Ministers reaffirmed the importance of the cultural, social and human dimension to the Partnership's success and to the attainment of its overall goals. It was noted that activities in the third chapter of the Barcelona Process mainly cover good governance and human rights, education, youth, health, women's participation, migration and human exchanges, culture, dialogue between cultures and civilisations, dialogue between civil societies, fighting international crime, particularly drugs and terrorism, and the fight against racism and xenophobia. Ministers referred to the results of the Valencia conference and urged that the various activities in this chapter be further concentrated on priority areas, notably through the updated Regional Indicative Programme.

30. Ministers agreed that in order to broaden the basis of the Euro-

Mediterranean Partnership, the involvement of a wide circle of actors outside central government must be encouraged. They welcomed the European Parliament's contribution to the development of a parliamentary dimension of the Barcelona Process and particularly welcomed the first meeting of the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Forum in Brussels in October 1998, as well as the meeting of the Presidents of the Parliaments held in Palma de Mallorca on 7-8 March 1999, as important manifestations of the interest of elected representatives in the Partnership. They stressed that regional and local authorities should be more closely associated, as should the economic and social partners, the business community and the non-governmental organisations. Ministers welcomed the holding of several Civil Fora in Stuttgart in parallel with the conference and noted that these Fora had made recommendations for future activities concerning human rights, the environment and the setting up of a Euro-Med Forum of trades unions. They called for a strengthening of the dialogue between governments and civil society.

31. Ministers strongly called for a new impetus to be given to decentralised cooperation. The particular importance of this cooperation which also contributes to highlighting the value of the Partnership to the widest possible public, was emphasised and Ministers, while recognizing the need for careful and prudent implementation, urged the Commission to relaunch these programmes as speedily as possible.

32. Ministers welcomed the fact that a second ministerial meeting on culture had taken place in Rhodes in September 1998. They also welcomed the good progress made in the implementation of cooperation under the Euro-Med Heritage programme and the fact the Euro-Med Audio-visual programme had been launched in 1998, with concrete projects ready for selection and implementation in the course of this year. They also took note that the Euro-Med Human Sciences programme was about to be launched. They expressed satisfaction at the launch of the Euro-Med Youth programme to encourage exchanges in that field.

33. Ministers welcomed the meeting on migration and human exchanges held in The Hague on 1-2 March 1999 which provided an opportunity for a frank discussion on this important and delicate issue. It was agreed that work should be pursued in this area which could lead to the holding of a high-level meeting.

34. Ministers also noted that dialogue has been opened in the field of health and social welfare including infectious diseases, childhood development and primary health care. They welcomed the holding of a ministerial meeting on health in Montpellier in the second half of 1999 and expressed the wish that this meeting would lead to the launching of operational regional cooperation.

35. Ministers agreed to pay tribute to the legacy of the late King Hussein. To commemorate his contribution to peace in the region, they

approved the idea of cultural events in the year 2000, aimed at enhancing harmony and mutual respect among the peoples of the Euro-Mediterranean area. They welcomed the interest shown by the Expo 2000 to be held in Hannover to host some of such events.

Other issues

36. Ministers reaffirmed the role of the Euro-Mediterranean Committee for the Barcelona Process as the central forum for providing impetus, monitoring and follow-up and evaluation of actions and initiatives in the Barcelona Process as a whole. They welcomed the measures taken to improve the functioning of the Committee and encouraged the Committee to pursue its efforts especially with a view to focussing its work on policy issues and to ensuring that activities are concentrated on priority sectors. They recommended that meetings be held more frequently in order to take into account the steady intensification of work in the Partnership.

37. Ministers agreed that Libya, which participated as guest of the Presidency, will become a full member of the Barcelona Process as soon as the UN Security Council sanctions have been lifted and Libya has accepted the whole Barcelona acquis.

38. Ministers welcomed the Franco-Portuguese proposal to hold the fourth Euro-Mediterranean Conference of Foreign Ministers during the French EU Presidency, preceded by a think-tank meeting of Foreign Ministers plus one collaborator, during the Portuguese Presidency.