

FOURTH EURO-MEDITERRANEAN CONFERENCE
OF FOREIGN MINISTERS

(Marseilles, 15 and 16 November 2000)

Presidency's formal conclusions

1. The fourth Conference of Euro-Mediterranean Foreign Ministers, held in Marseilles five years after the inaugural Barcelona meeting, bore witness to the desire of all partners to reinvigorate the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership. The Ministers undertook to do their utmost to ensure that the positions agreed in Marseilles enable the Partnership to reach its full potential and attain the strategic objectives adopted in Barcelona in 1995.
2. As agreed at the informal meeting in Lisbon on 25 and 26 May 2000, the Ministers strove to make a faithful and shared assessment of the first five years of the Partnership in order to fix the guidelines necessary for reinvigorating it. While making a nuanced assessment of the implementation of the Partnership, the Ministers insisted on its unique contribution to peace, stability and development in the region. Since its inception the legitimacy and cohesion of the Process had been maintained and constantly reaffirmed, against a sometimes difficult backdrop. All the Ministers reiterated their deep attachment to the institutional framework of the Barcelona Process and the need for the parallel and balanced progression of its three complementary chapters. In that context the Ministers reaffirmed the central role of the Euro-Mediterranean Committee and stressed the need to enhance its strategic function for advancing, evaluating and following up the initiatives undertaken under the Partnership.
3. The Ministers noted with great interest the proposals for revitalising the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership put forward by the Commission in its communication "Reinvigorating the Barcelona Process" and the contributions made by the Mediterranean partners. They welcomed the consultations conducted by the Presidency, in liaison with the Commission and the Council General Secretariat, in the framework of organised visits to each Mediterranean capital in preparation for this Conference. For its part, the European Union confirmed its willingness to strengthen the Mediterranean dimension of its external relations. In that connection it drew attention to the objectives of the common strategy for the Mediterranean adopted by the Feira European Council and the priorities put forward by the Presidency for implementing it in the second half of 2000.

Contribution of the Partnership to stability in the Mediterranean region

4. The Ministers held a lengthy discussion on the situation in the Middle East. They expressed their deep concern at the situation which has obtained for several weeks in the region and the risk it entails for the future of the Middle East Peace Process and regional stability. They expressed their strong feeling at the loss of human lives and suffering of the civilian population, who should be protected.

5. Convinced that further confrontation and the use of armed force lead nowhere, the Ministers reiterated their support for the measures agreed in Sharm el Sheikh and in Gaza between Israel and the Palestinian Authority to put an end to the violence. They called upon them to act with determination for their full and immediate implementation of these measures with a view to returning to the situation obtaining prior to 28 September 2000. In this context, many Ministers stressed the importance of restoring free movement of goods and persons in the Palestinian Territories as soon as possible and of lifting current restrictions.

They also welcomed the announcement of the establishment of the Fact-Finding Committee agreed on in principle at the recent Sharm el Sheikh Summit and expressed the wish that it be able to begin its proceedings without delay so that it could establish the causes of recent events and prevent their recurrence. The Ministers welcomed the participation of Mr Javier Solana, Secretary-General/High Representative of the Council of the European Union, in this work.

6. The Ministers stated their full support for the efforts currently being made by the United States President to relaunch the negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority. Aware of the importance attaching to the restoration of a climate of understanding, mutual trust and respect between the parties, they called upon them to give consideration to initiatives that could be taken to that end.

7. The Ministers reiterated their commitment to a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East, on the basis of the faithful application of United Nations Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338, to the terms of reference of the Madrid Conference – including the principle of land for peace – and of the agreements concluded in Oslo and thereafter. They called upon the parties to revive the Peace Process and restart their discussions at the earliest opportunity on all tracks, emphasising the urgency of also reviving the Syrian and Lebanese tracks.

8. The Ministers called for greater involvement of the European Union vis-à-vis all parties to foster dialogue and restore trust and confidence. The European Union reiterated its willingness to put its efforts at the service of the parties in order to facilitate the conclusion of peace agreements and to help implement them.

9. The Ministers of the European Union reiterated their common position based on the Declaration adopted in Berlin on 25 March 1999 and their support for the right of Palestinians to their own State, as well as their declaration adopted in Biarritz on 13 October 2000. They confirmed their attachment to seeing established in the near future, and preferably through negotiation, a sovereign, democratic, viable and peaceful Palestinian State, and urged the Palestinian Authority to continue with determination the gradual establishment of institutions representative of a constitutional State.

Political and security partnership

Situation

10. The Ministers recalled that political dialogue is an important asset of the Barcelona Process and plays a vital role in giving it its whole worth, in parallel with the other chapters. In spite of problems, which explain the poverty of the results attained, it has continued and broadened to include sensitive and important topics such as terrorism and, more recently, migration and human exchanges. The Ministers recorded that, although that dialogue had not made it possible to adopt new partnership measures, the measures already adopted had been maintained. Furthermore, the

entry into force of new association agreements has enabled political dialogue to develop in a bilateral framework.

11. The Ministers considered that preparation of the Euro-Mediterranean Charter for Peace and Stability had provided the opportunity for a useful deepening of the political dialogue. They welcomed the work that had been done by the Senior Officials in producing the draft. The draft is based on an overall approach to stability, taking into account all of its political, economic, financial, cultural, social and human aspects, and takes the form of an evolutionary, non legally binding, framework agreement serving as a political instrument for the gradual implementation of the principles of the Barcelona Declaration with regard to the global issues of peace and stability. The Ministers nevertheless agreed, on a proposal from the Presidency, to defer adoption of the Charter owing to the political context.

Guidelines for the future

12. The Ministers reaffirmed the need, without waiting for the Charter to be adopted, to enhance the political dialogue, at their level too, in order to contribute to clearing up misunderstandings, foster the approximation of analyses and perceptions and make it possible subsequently to agree on measures to strengthen confidence and transparency. They instructed the Senior Officials to continue it and deepen it in the specific areas of terrorism and of migration and human exchanges. They took the view that there should no longer be any taboos where questions of mutual interest were concerned, and expressed a desire to extend the dialogue to other topics, such as regional trends as regards security, disarmament, the process of consolidating the rule of law, and respect for human rights and democratic principles. Furthermore, the Ministers felt that one worthwhile area for the dialogue might lie in the study of measures of particular importance for common security in the Mediterranean region, in sectors such as the environment, maritime safety or the fight against crime and illicit trafficking of all kinds. Those measures should be formulated in coordination with multilateral programmes already in existence or in preparation in the European or Mediterranean framework.

13. In conclusion, the Ministers confirmed the special importance they attached to the draft Euro-Mediterranean Charter, which should, in future, play a very useful role alongside the development of confidence and strengthening of stability in the region, notably with a view to the post-Peace Process. They took note of the report presented by the Presidency on the progress of work and instructed the Senior Officials to proceed with and complete the latter with a view to adoption of the text as soon as the situation permits, on the basis of the present draft, while taking into account the contributions submitted by the partners.

Economic and commercial chapter

Situation

14. The Ministers took note of the progress made by several partners, in particular those which had concluded association agreements with the European Union, in modernising their economies and implementing structural reforms. Particular attention should be paid to the social impact of the economic transition. But there is still much progress to be made in terms of improving public finances, of deepening reforms, in particular budget and tax reforms, of reforming the legal and

regulatory framework and of reducing tariff and non-tariff barriers, with the technical and financial support of the European Union.

15. The Ministers noted that the level of investment, in particular foreign investment (FDT), was still insufficient to sustain the partners' growth and stimulate the supply side, as was emphasised by the conclusions of the Lisbon Conference on Investment in the Mediterranean (29 February and 1 March 2000), a topic which called for discussion at regular intervals and should be institutionalized.

16. Lastly, the south-south regional integration process has only just begun and needs to be enhanced in order to promote the economic reforms and regional integration which are indispensable for attainment of the objectives of the Barcelona Process.

Guidelines for the future

17. The Ministers reaffirmed the full relevance of the objectives adopted in Barcelona in 1995 with a view to establishing an area of shared prosperity in the Mediterranean. Having reaffirmed the objective of creating a free-trade area by 2010, the Ministers stressed the need for the partner countries, with the support of the European Union, to open up further to one another economically in order to foster their successful integration into the world economy. In that regard the Ministers welcomed the desire already expressed by four countries – Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt and Jordan – to establish closer links by creating a free-trade area amongst themselves, and emphasised the need for suitable back-up from the European Union to that end.

18. The Ministers felt that the efforts being made, firstly, to improve the legal, administrative and institutional framework, secondly, to develop financial intermediation mechanisms, thereby allowing the mobilisation and efficient allocation of savings and, lastly, to abolish restrictions on foreign investment, should all have a beneficial effect on the flow of investment towards the southern shore of the Mediterranean.

19. Taking account of the impact of the burden of debt on public investment and growth, the Ministers, encouraged by progress recently made in this area, expressed themselves in favour of a continuation of the dialogue in order to find solutions in the competent fora.

20. In order to promote improved coordination and give more specific encouragement to the implementation of reforms in the partner countries and make the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership a still more efficient and credible preferential instrument for upgrading economies, the Ministers agreed to enhance the dialogue on the economic and trade chapter of the Partnership. That should be achieved through regular meetings of Senior Officials from the ministries responsible for such matters, within the existing institutional framework. That enhanced dialogue would relate in particular to the macro-economic environment, structural reforms and economic liberalisation of the partners, while making it possible for them to follow the European Union's economic situation and trade policy. It would also facilitate exchanges of experiences between the partners. It could, in time, prepare for meetings of the competent Ministers of the 27.

21. The Ministers also agreed on the need for greater coherence in the work of the various existing fora in the economic and social fields (employers, trade unions, universities, etc.), and the need to take greater account of their views.

22. The Ministers placed emphasis on:

- the importance of the principle of free movement of goods and services in the Euro-Mediterranean area in all circumstances;
- the need to accelerate the negotiations under way with Algeria, Syria and Lebanon for the conclusion of association agreements; the European Union stated its wish to complete the negotiations in 2001;
- the urgency of signing the association agreement with Egypt and the importance of ratifying the agreement with Jordan, which should enter into force in the first half of 2001;
- the need to take new measures for greater liberalisation of agricultural trade, subject to gradual and reciprocal approach, in accordance with the principles set out in the Barcelona Declaration and the WTO rules;
- the advantage for the countries which had signed association agreements with the European Union to conclude free-trade agreements amongst themselves within five years, and to develop the European Union's cooperation on initiatives that contribute to the attainment of that objective, including the introduction of diagonal cumulation between countries which have identical rules of origin and which are committed to conclude a free-trade agreement between themselves;
- effective implementation of the existing regional programmes in the 6 priority areas confirmed in Stuttgart (industry, water, environment, transport, energy and information society) while ensuring their complementarity and the transfer of the results to national programmes;
- the value of establishing an indicative timetable for the adoption of harmonisation measures in certain priority sectors, enabling partner countries to benefit fully from the Euro-Mediterranean market;
- the advantage of initiating, in the context of industrial cooperation, new regional training and institutional support projects and of developing projects relating to innovation, technologies, including information technology, and quality;
- the strategic importance of water management and supply to regional cooperation, which demands the early launch of a call for proposals to implement the action plan approved at the Turin Conference;
- the particular attention that should also be paid to research sectors to develop synergies between MEDA and the Research and Development Framework Programme;
- the benefits, with a view to sustainable development, of considering the sectors of tourism, regional planning and territorial administration in particular.

Social, cultural and human chapter

Situation

23. The Ministers underlined the importance of the regional programmes under way in the fields of culture, audio-visual and youth. However, they regretted that not all the possibilities of this chapter had been fully exploited, especially as regards social aspects, civil society and the human dimension of the Partnership.

Guidelines for the future

24. Consensus was reached on the need to take greater account of the social effects of economic transition in national programmes by placing the emphasis on training, employment, professional requalification and the reform of education systems. The Ministers also recommended establishing a regional programme covering training policies, promoting the role of women in economic development, the reform of social systems and cooperation on health matters, as agreed at the Conference of Health Ministers in Montpellier in December 1999.

25. Regarding culture in the broad sense, the Ministers advocated building up existing programmes, through the establishment of the second phase of Euromed-Heritage, the start as soon as possible in 2001 of preparations for Euromed-Audiovisual II, on the basis of the proceedings of the conferences in Thessaloniki (1997) and Rabat (September 2000), and the launching of Euromed-Human Sciences. In addition, they expressed their desire to see conditions making it possible to develop the dialogue among cultures and civilisations or other new initiatives.

26. The importance of the human dimension of the Partnership was stressed. In this respect the Ministers confirmed the conclusions reached by the first ad hoc meeting of Senior Officials (October 2000) on migration and human exchanges and emphasised the advantage of intensifying dialogue on this question by favouring a comprehensive and balanced approach and by strengthening the policies of co-development and integration of third-country nationals residing legally in the territory of the Member States.

27. The Ministers also recommended the joint preparation in 2001 of a regional programme in the field of Justice and Home Affairs. The Ministers also welcomed the recommendations of the seminar on operational customs cooperation in the Mediterranean (3 and 4 April 2000) and, the first initiative taken to organise a pilot scheme of joint checks at sea in 2001.

28. The Ministers reaffirmed the need to take into account the aspirations of civil society – an essential dimension of the Partnership. They took note in this respect of the recommendations made by representatives from trades unions, local authorities and NGOs meeting within the Civil Forum and those from Euro-Mediterranean business circles. The importance of decentralised cooperation and its contribution to the success of the Partnership were stressed. The Ministers encouraged players from civil society to take a full part in existing and future regional programmes. In that connection, it was suggested that consideration be given to establishing a regional programme of scientific exchanges. They also wanted increased support for civil society, particularly through the MEDA–Democracy programme. Lastly, the role played by the network of Economic and Social Councils was recalled.

Financial cooperation

Situation

29. The Ministers held in-depth discussions on the measures accompanying the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, particularly the MEDA programme. They regretted the complexity of procedures in the European Union as well as in partner countries and the slowness of disbursement of payments. They noted the volume of appropriations committed over the period 1995 to 1999 (EUR 3,4 billion for MEDA). They commended the action by the EIB over the same period (EUR 4,6 billion) and its provision of very long-term funding to the Mediterranean countries.

Guidelines for the future

30. The Ministers recalled that efficient and credible financial cooperation, "targeted" towards the major challenges of the Partnership, was essential. The European Union felt that MEDA remained a measure accompanying and encouraging the association process and that it was necessary to strengthen the link between this programme and the implementation of reforms initiated under the association agreements, from all aspects. The Ministers also considered it necessary to take greater account of the special characteristics of each partner and to strengthen strategic cooperation at the programming stage.

31. The Ministers noted with satisfaction the indicative figure adopted by the Council of the European Union for the MEDA II allocation, namely EUR 5 350 billion for the period

2000 to 2006, which bears witness to the continuing commitment of the European Union to the Mediterranean. They also welcomed the improvements made to the MEDA Regulation with a view to simplifying it, to accelerating procedures and to ensuring an enhanced role for partners in implementing projects, particularly through deconcentrating and decentralising their management.

32. The Ministers noted that the EIB would establish the main strands of its action (infrastructure, sustainable development, the private sector and reconstruction in the Eastern Mediterranean) within the framework of indicative multiannual sectoral programming for the entire Mediterranean area. They accepted the EIB's offer, over and above its mandate from the European Union (EUR 6,4 billion for the period 2000 to 2007), to contribute a further EUR 1 billion from its own resources and at its own risk over the same period, in accordance with Article 18 of its Statute. That additional amount would contribute to the implementation of projects of regional interest and to projects of common interest between the European Union and the Mediterranean partner countries, in particular in the communications and energy sectors.

33. In order to provide fresh impetus to regional cooperation, the Ministers recommended strengthening the subregional aspect of the Process by encouraging the voluntary introduction of south-south development and economic integration initiatives.

34. In order to increase the visibility of cooperation, an information and communication programme designed to increase public awareness in the 27 partners and a Euro-Mediterranean "label" will be established.

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35. In the framework of the Euro-Mediterranean dialogue, a Ministerial meeting will be held under the Belgian Presidency during the second half of 2001. The Fifth Euro-Mediterranean Conference

of Foreign Ministers (Barcelona V) will take place during the first half of 2002 during the Spanish Presidency.