

Brussels, 3 December 2003

15380/03 (Presse 353)

**EURO-MEDITERRANEAN CONFERENCE
OF MINISTERS OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
(Naples, 2-3 December 2003)
PRESIDENCY CONCLUSIONS**

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The VIth Conference of Euro-Mediterranean Foreign Ministers held in Naples on December 2nd and 3rd took place in a positive, constructive atmosphere against an international background casting shadows of tension, instability and insecurity in the region. In this framework, the Ministers reaffirmed their shared willingness to strengthening their partnership, thereby renewing their common adherence to the values and the objectives set out in the Barcelona Declaration. While stressing the emphasis on the Euro-Mediterranean dialogue as the key element for their respective relationship, they underlined the need for enhanced efforts at increasing its effectiveness. In this context, the Ministers also expressed awareness for the necessity to deepen the Process so as to provide it with further visibility and transparency in a bid to bringing it closer to the civil societies of the region.
2. The Ministers sent a message of common interests, shared values and solidarity among Euro-Mediterranean Partners; they reaffirmed their joint interest in reinforcing security and stability in the region, in promoting political and economic reform and in ensuring that extremism and terrorism are not allowed to get in the way of progress. They also agreed that furthering the process of dialogue and co-operation in order to improve mutual understanding is essential to the vision of the Barcelona Process, reiterating that the partnership stands as the best way of meeting the challenges and opportunities represented by security and stability, globalisation, economic reform and social development.

Internet: <http://ue.eu.int/>
E-mail: press.office@consilium.eu.int

3. The Ministers agreed that such a vision, which has always been at the heart of the Barcelona Process, is even more relevant in the present circumstances. They also agreed that the process of enlargement of the EU on one side and the current situation in the Middle-East on the other, have given rise to a greater demand for Europe on the Southern and Eastern rim of the Mediterranean. These challenges call for a reinvigorated and renewed partnership, based on a stronger commitment both of the European Union and the Mediterranean countries to common values and objectives.
4. Recalling that the Valencia Action Plan, agreed by Foreign Ministers at their meeting in April 2002, is the most recent comprehensive set of commitments for developing the Partnership and making reference to the review of its outcome at the mid-term Ministerial meeting in Crete, the Ministers took stock of progress made and provided orientations for future work. Furthermore, they supported the idea of engaging in a thorough, open and sincere discussion within the existing bodies of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership on how best carry into effect the *acquis* of the Barcelona Process, aiming also at improving the contribution by the Mediterranean partners to the outline of policies and their relevant implementation.
5. The Ministers reviewed progress in particular in implementing the Partnership on three specific issues:
 - The Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly;
 - The future course of FEMIP;
 - The Euro-Mediterranean Foundation for the Dialogue of Cultures.
6. They agreed that achievements on these three issues will foster greater political co-operation, more focussed support for economic reform and private sector development and moves to promote inter-cultural dialogue and understanding. All three will move the focus of the partnership further into the domain of civil society, thus producing results that are relevant to ordinary man and woman.

Wider Europe-New Neighbourhood Initiative

7. The Ministers took note of the EU Wider Europe/New Neighbourhood Policy and discussed as far as the Southern neighbours are concerned, how this policy could strengthen co-operation by building on the existing Barcelona Process *acquis*. They noted that the policy aims to support reforms as well as regulatory and legislative approximation, particularly as regards the internal market, between the EU and Mediterranean partners, as they are ready to engage in such intensified cooperation. To develop its full potential to promote political and economic reform based on the shared values reflected in the Barcelona Declaration, the initiative will need to include credible incentives. In this regard, they acknowledged that one of the aspects of these new policies is to reinforce the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership in all its chapters as well as the joint ownership of this process with a view to fostering stability, development and democracy in the countries to the South, in the common interest of the E.U. and Mediterranean partners.

Iraq

8. A discussion on the unfolding events in Iraq and the prospects for post conflict arrangements took place. Ministers welcomed the unanimous adoption of UNSC Resolution 1511. They recalled the Union's commitment to play a significant role in the political and economic reconstruction of Iraq, within the framework of the relevant UNSC Resolutions with the following as essential elements for success:
- an adequate security environment;
 - a strong and vital UN role, which could also benefit from an early appointment of a new Special Representative to the UNSG;
 - a realistic schedule for the handing over of political responsibility to the Iraqi people;
 - the setting-up of a transparent multilateral donor fund to channel support from the international community which the EU also regards as an essential element for the success of the reconstruction.

The Ministers welcomed the recent agreement establishing the timeline and a programme for a rapid transfer of sovereignty to a transitional Iraqi Government and urged all parties concerned to agree on the necessary constitutional as well as the electoral arrangements. In this context, they recalled UNSC Resolution 1511 and praised its unanimous approval underlining the need of its full implementation.

9. Ministers urged all countries in the region to contribute actively to the stability of Iraq and to support its political and economic reconstruction process. Following the meeting on 2 November in Damascus among neighbouring countries of Iraq, Ministers welcomed the holding of such meetings, in consultation with the Iraqi Governing Council and Iraqi institutions, to help support the political and economic reconstruction transition process under way in Iraq, and emphasised their usefulness. Ministers also welcomed the UNSG's initiative to hold meetings between Iraq's neighbours and Security Council members. A prosperous, stable and sovereign Iraq, whose territorial integrity is preserved, will be essential for the stability in the region and beyond.
10. In this context, Ministers underlined the need to establish a platform for regular and substantial consultations among those members of the International Community which are engaged in Iraq and all neighbouring countries.

Middle East Peace Process

11. Ministers discussed recent developments concerning the Middle East. They were deeply concerned by the situation in the region and noted that, despite support given by the international community to the quest for a comprehensive, just and lasting solution, insufficient progress has been made by the concerned parties. They should seize the opportunity for peace set out in the Quartet Road Map.
12. Ministers recognised that there is no alternative to a swift and full implementation, in good faith by the two sides, of the Road Map. UNSCR 1515 was seen as an encouraging support by the International Community to the endeavours by the Quartet.
13. Ministers underlined the need for both Parties to work together constructively on solutions to the conflict. They expressed their commitment to the clear objective of two States, Israel and a viable and democratic Palestinian State, living side by side in peace and security, in the framework of a comprehensive peace in the Middle East, as laid out in the Road Map. Ministers recalled the importance of the Arab Peace Initiative adopted by the Beirut Arab League Summits of 28 March 2002. They called on both parties – Israel and the Palestinian Authority – to live up to the commitments they undertook at the Aqaba summit on 4 June 2003.
14. They recalled that a comprehensive peace in the Middle East must also include Syria and Lebanon in the framework of the Madrid Principles.
15. Ministers reiterated that the fight against terrorism in all its forms remains one of the priorities of the entire International Community and that it is the duty of all countries, in particular of those in the region, to actively co-operate in the fight against terrorism and to abstain from all support, direct or indirect, to terrorist organisations.
16. It was emphasised by Ministers that the new Palestinian Government under Prime Minister Qorei must concretely demonstrate its determination in the fight against extremist violence. Decisive steps to consolidate all Palestinian security services must be taken by the new Palestinian Government, which deserves to be supported by all. Efforts to implement a lasting cease-fire were welcomed.
17. Ministers also urged the Government of Israel, in exercising its right to protect its citizens, to exert maximum effort to avoid civilian casualties and take all necessary action to ease the humanitarian and economic plight of the Palestinian people and facilitate the relief work of international donors. Israel should refrain from any action that violates international law.
18. Ministers were of the view that decisive steps must be taken to reverse the sharply deteriorating humanitarian situation in the West Bank and Gaza. It is making life increasingly intolerable for ordinary Palestinians and fuelling extremism.

19. Ministers welcomed the upcoming donor's meeting (Ad Hoc Liaison Committee) that will take place on 10 December 2003 in Rome, as a good opportunity to discuss necessary measures and efforts by the parties and the International Community to improve the economic and humanitarian situation of the Palestinian people.
20. Strong concerns were expressed regarding the route marked out by Israel for the fence in the Occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem. The envisaged departure of the route from the "green line" prejudices future negotiations and makes the two-State solution physically impossible to implement. Continued expansion of Israeli settlements and related construction is counter-productive.
21. Ministers highlighted the importance of promoting tolerance in all countries of the Partnership, and stressed in particular the need to stand up against both anti-Semitism and Islamophobia, as well as xenophobia.
22. Ministers also reiterated that the Middle East Peace Process and the Barcelona Process are complementary, and expressed their readiness to use fully the potential of the Barcelona Process to make a positive contribution to the stabilisation of the Mediterranean region. Ministers recalled the importance of a reinvigorated cooperation within the wider region and with Mediterranean partners.
23. Initiatives from civil society on both sides were welcomed as contributions to the effort to promote rapprochement, confidence building and the search for a lasting peace.

Association Agreement

24. The Valencia Action Plan, agreed unanimously by the participants at the Valencia meeting, contains a series of activities to reinforce all areas of the Partnership. Good progress has been made on many of them. Association Agreements are now in force with Tunisia, Morocco, Israel, and Jordan and on an interim basis with the Palestinian Authority and Lebanon.
25. The Association process remains at the core of the Partnership. The Ministers confirmed commitment to encourage speeding up the ratification process of Agreements not yet in force and to ensure where necessary the early implementation of relevant provisions through interim agreements or other appropriate arrangements. The Ministers welcomed progress made in many areas on the implementation of the Agreements in force notably the regular holding of Association Councils and Committees as well as the setting up of sub-Committees such as under the Agreements with Morocco, Jordan, Tunisia. They reaffirmed the importance of completing the grid of Euro-Mediterranean Association Agreements by concluding the negotiation with Syria.

II. POLITICAL AND SECURITY PARTNERSHIP

Political and security dialogue

26. Ministers reiterated that a concerted effort should be made to give greater substance to political and security co-operation. This requires an overall strategy to the stability/security issue in the region, while paying more attention – with an even-handed and balanced approach - to new security challenges particularly great in the Mediterranean basin. In order to deal more effectively with these challenges, the Ministers considered the option of preparing their discussions also through open ended ad hoc informal groups reporting to the Partners through existing Euromed institutional channels.
27. The Ministers, while reaffirming the complementarity between the Middle East Peace Process and the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, in accordance with the Barcelona Declaration, recognised that, any direct linkage between the two should continue to be avoided. It is undoubtedly true that when there have, from time to time, been positive developments in the former, they have contributed in large measure to creating a more positive atmosphere for progress in the latter. The converse is equally the case, and applies particularly to political and security co-operation. The Ministers therefore recognised their interest in implementing the Road Map and returning to negotiations.

Human Rights and Democracy

28. Cooperation in promoting human rights and democracy is crucial to the success of the Partnership. The Ministers welcomed the approach set out in the recent EU initiative, based on dialogue with the Partners aiming to reach a consensus on extending cooperation in this area progressively and on an individual basis, in particular by developing joint action plans which would set out the means to implement effectively through national regulation and legislation the commitments which the partners have agreed to. Such cooperation would be eligible for enhanced EU financial support and the EU will take it into consideration when allocating MEDA funds. The Ministers also emphasized the support provided for direct actions in the field of human rights and for capacity-building of civil society players in a regional or sub-regional framework.

Partnership building measures

29. The Ministers acknowledged that existing political and security dialogue among Senior Officials should be pursued and should aim to agree on further partnership building measures in the field of security; they mandated the Senior Officials to study further and to identify partnership building measures to be implemented among partners such as maritime safety, civil protection and environment. If necessary such measures could be on the basis of participation by a limited number of partners, open to others to join later.

Fight against terrorism

30. The Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to fight terrorism in all its forms and manifestations wherever and by whomsoever committed. They stressed their engagement in the full implementation *inter alia* of UNSCR 1373. They also mandated Senior Officials to further the dialogue on terrorism, including ad hoc meetings, with a view to increasing co-operation in this field. According to that vision, the Ministers reiterated that co-operation on terrorism will be pursued under existing and future regional and bilateral programmes for training and technical assistance to improve the capability to fight terrorism as well as other forms of organised crime without prejudice to respect for human rights and democracy.

ESDP

31. The Ministers welcomed the launching of dialogue and co-operation on ESDP (European Security and Defence Policy), confirming that the dialogue with the EU Political and Security Committee, and at expert level, can usefully add to the range of instruments available under the Barcelona Process. They also stressed that this dialogue should help to familiarise the Mediterranean partners with ESDP aims and instruments, with a view to their eventual, possible cooperation in ESDP activities on a regional, sub-regional or country basis. They recalled that some of the Mediterranean partners already work with the EU in peacekeeping activities (Balkans, Africa) under the UN *aegis*. The Ministers expressed their belief that further complementary measures, such as civilian crisis management training; co-operation among civil protection authorities, particularly continuing cooperation on a project on disaster management, drawing on the experience of the on-going pilot project, subject to satisfactory evaluation of its results, would constitute a significant addition to partnership building.

Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly

32. The Ministers welcomed the creation of a Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly and agreed to include this new body, in a consultative capacity, in the framework of the Barcelona Process. They expressed their conviction that this step will provide the Process with further visibility and transparency, thereby bringing the Partnership itself closer to the interests and expectations of public opinions in the region. In this context, the Ministers stressed that the Assembly will add to the depth of the Barcelona Process, ensuring complementarity with the existing institutions of the Partnership. The text of the Recommendation from the Euro-mediterranean Parliamentary Forum to the Ministerial Conference is attached.

III. ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL PARTNERSHIP

Framework for the economic and financial dialogue

33. The Ministers recognised that Mediterranean countries will need to address severe challenges over the coming years: strong pressure in the labour market; the need for deeper structural reforms in order to increase per capital growth; still insufficient integration in world trade and investment flows, not compensated by small national markets and still limited regional integration; the impact of tariff dismantling. They reaffirmed that the Euro-Mediterranean partnership should aim at supporting and accompanying an acceleration of reforms necessary to overcome those challenges. As a framework to discuss objectives and actions, the Ministers considered establishing on a long-term basis the Regional Economic Dialogue. To that end, they agreed that meetings of Economics/Finance Ministers should be convened in principle every two years and prepared through high level Officials' meeting of the Regional Economic Dialogue. The Ministers confirmed that, without prejudice to the operation of existing instruments, the dialogue could deal *inter alia* with the following issues: monitoring the economic situation in the region; monitoring the structural reforms in Partner countries and the implementation of Association Agreements and assessing the economic impact of the Association process by using precise and measurable indicators including poverty issues and policies.
34. The Ministers acknowledged that the level of EU support to the implementation of economic reforms, notably those which are closely connected to the approximation process in the context of the Wider Europe/New Neighbourhood Initiative proposed by the EU and to the Free-Trade Area, should be related on a mutually agreed basis in a spirit of co-ownership, to the intensity of the efforts of the Partners assessed under the framework agreed evaluation instruments. Articulation of MEDA and EIB credits should be further reinforced, as well as co-ordination within the EU and with other donors.

Free trade area

35. The Ministers underlined that by 1 May 2004, when the ten new Member States join the EU, all the Euro-Mediterranean Association Agreements already signed should have been ratified, the negotiations with Syria should be completed and the Agadir Agreement should have been signed and ratified. They reiterated that the Protocol on rules of origin to all agreements should be replaced by the pan-Euro-Mediterranean Protocol, underlying that, in accordance with the provisions of the Association Agreements, further steps should be taken to complete the free-trade area, pursuing a comprehensive approach which takes into account the range of reciprocal interests.

36. The Ministers welcomed the study on the impact of liberalisation of agricultural trade. In line with its conclusions, the Commission has been invited to propose in the first half of 2004 a precise road map for building on existing arrangements to achieve a higher level of progressive reciprocal liberalisation of trade in agricultural products. Negotiations should also be pursued aiming at the liberalisation of trade in processed agricultural products.
37. The Ministers underlined that MEDA technical assistance and training co-operation programmes should be put in place with Mediterranean partners in order to promote convergence of regulations and standards with those in the EU internal market.
38. The Ministers noted that the forthcoming Trade Ministers' Meeting in 2004 will review the progress achieved concerning trade liberalisation in services along the lines of the approach agreed at the last Trade Ministerial Euro-Mediterranean Conference in Palermo. The establishment of a Framework Protocol common to all Mediterranean countries will serve as a basis to ensure coherence. They also agreed that bilateral negotiations should then be engaged and cover substantially all sectors. Although some nuances in the pace and coverage are not excluded, they confirmed the ultimate objective is to reach homogeneous liberalisation across the Euro-Mediterranean region.
39. The Ministers recalled that a progress report regarding the implementation of the Action Plan in the field of the establishment of free trade on industrial products should be presented by the Working Group on Regional Integration to the forthcoming Trade Ministers' Meeting in 2004. Specific MEDA technical assistance programmes and projects in the Mediterranean region should be used to support this Action Plan and eventually the conclusion of conformity assessment agreements.
40. The Ministers welcomed the outcome of the latest Euro-mediterranean Industrial Cooperation Working Group meeting, held in Rome on October 2nd and 3rd, 2003, with special regard to the Action Plan on Enterprise Policy. While recalling the conclusions of the IV Euro-mediterranean Conference of Industry Ministers, held in Malaga on April 9th-10th 2002, they confirmed that the next meeting of the Euro-Mediterranean Conference of the Industry Ministers will possibly be held in 2004.

Regional and Sub-regional integration

41. The Ministers expressed strong support for all present and future initiatives aiming at integration at a sub-regional level such as the AMU or Agadir, on issues such as trade, infrastructure networks, and migration policies. They supported the implementation of policies of sub-regional integration in both the Western and Eastern Mediterranean, beginning with the three central Maghreb countries (Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia). The latter could constitute a "pilot experiment" in that respect aimed at being extended, to other partner countries. Ministers indicated their readiness to support initiatives of partner countries and agreed to consistently use the MEDA regional envelope to stimulate sub-regional integration. The Ministers noted that the Agadir Agreement provides for an extension to other Mediterranean partners. They welcomed the conclusion of a Free Trade Agreement between Turkey and Morocco and agreed on the need for the signing of similar agreements between Turkey and other Mediterranean Partners.

FEMIP and Investment

42. Ministers noted with satisfaction the positive evaluation of the first year of activity of the facility. They welcomed the conclusions reached on 25th November by ECOFIN Council, following the consultations with the Mediterranean Partner countries beneficiaries of FEMIP operations, to develop this instrument further and to reinforce FEMIP within the EIB. In this framework, they acknowledged that a reinforced FEMIP will strengthen the instrument with a number of features in support of private sector, in particular with a) a special envelope for extended risk-sharing operations, b) the improvement of the dialogue on the structural reforms, c) the establishment of a trust fund allowing other donors to complement on a voluntary basis the contributions from the Community budget. The Ministers also noted that the incorporation of an EIB majority-owned subsidiary dedicated to the Mediterranean partner countries will be fully assessed in December 2006, on the basis of an evaluation of the reinforced Facility's performance, and taking into account the outcome of consultations within the Barcelona Process. With strong satisfaction they finally noted that the Council agreed to transfer a surplus margin in the external mandate to the Mediterranean countries".
43. The Ministers agreed that the industries and business created by domestic and foreign private investment should become the main engine for growth and job creation in the region; the region must be made more attractive to investors by the maintenance of a stable macro-economic framework, substantial regulatory and institutional reforms and approximation with international best practices. Successful economic policies will require bolder reforms in Mediterranean partners. They envisaged the adoption and implementation of a Euro-Mediterranean Charter for Entrepreneurship to serve as a reference document for streamlining policies to support SME creation and development, and improving the business environment. They maintained that these issues must continue to be covered in depth in the structures put in place under the implementation of the Association Agreements, and can be further promoted in the context of Wider Europe. Research and Technological Development.
44. The Ministers underlined that Research and Technological Development (RTD) is an important tool for the economic stability and growth of all countries around the Mediterranean. They agreed that the opening of the European Research Area to all Mediterranean Partners will strengthen regional integration in the short term and will contribute to sustainable growth, high added value job creation, and to the promoting of competitive economies in the region. The objective of the ERA, opened to the entire Mediterranean region, is to improve the region's development as a knowledge-based society of the world, according to the Lisbon objectives. The co-operation of the EU and its Member States with the Mediterranean Partners in that field has developed since the establishment of the Partnership, and plays a catalytic role for the achievement of the Free Trade Area. Synergies are therefore necessary between different EU instruments, like MEDA and the Framework Programme for RTD, to support research and innovation building in the Mediterranean Partners. In this framework, they took also note of the outcome of the Euro-Med Forum to implement scientific, technological and industrial cooperation in the Mediterranean region, held in Capri on October 4th to 6th 2003.

Infrastructure Interconnection

45. The Ministers welcomed the results of the Euro-Mediterranean Conference of Energy Ministers on 21 May 2003. They confirmed that the objective is to consolidate existing links, facilitate new investments and develop common strategies and co-ordinated policies.
46. The Ministers welcomed developments in this area, in particular the energy priorities 2003-2006 agreed in Athens, and encouraged the initiatives taken on this occasion concerning the Maghreb electricity market, the tripartite Working Group between Israel, the Palestinian Authority and the European Commission on energy interconnections, and the need to provide the Euro-Mediterranean Energy Forum with an ad hoc logistical support.
47. The Ministers welcomed the conclusions of the Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference "Towards a New Euro-Med Partnership on Investment Promotion, Infrastructure Financing and Energy Supply Security", held on 1/2 December 2003 in Rome and in particular the establishment of an ad hoc logistical support to the Energy Forum (Mediterranean Rome Energy Platform – "MEDREP").
48. The Ministers encouraged the progress achieved so far in transport co-operation, in particular the on-going work under the Euro-Mediterranean Transport Project, which should lead to the definition of a regional transport infrastructure network and the identification of a list of priority projects. They also supported the early launch of new regional projects in the field of maritime safety and navigation by satellite (GALILEO), and welcomed the start of discussions on air transport issues in the framework of the Euro-Mediterranean Transport Forum.
49. The Ministers welcomed progress made in establishing a Euro-Mediterranean communications infrastructure for research and education (EUMEDCONNECT). Ministers emphasized the need to give significant consideration to infrastructure interconnection projects in the framework of the new neighbourhood instrument.

Water

50. The Ministers confirmed the importance of the rational and economic use of water in the region and encourage the further deepening of regional and sub-regional co-operation on this issue including through the Mediterranean component of the EU water initiative. The Ministers underlined the importance of water recalling the comprehensive set of commitments set out in the Action Plan in the Conference on Water held in Torino in November 1999. The Ministers agreed on the need to accelerate the fulfilment of the above mentioned commitments. In the run-up to 2007-2013 financial perspectives, they also ensured that appropriate financing for this sector be made available.

Environment

51. The Ministers stressed the need for environmental protection and sustainable development policies to be implemented. This should be pursued along the lines of the Declaration of the Euro-Mediterranean meeting of Environment Ministers in Athens in July 2002 and the Plan of Implementation of the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development. The environment should be integrated into all sectors of the Partnership. The Ministers supported the ongoing assessment of the impact of the implementation of Association Agreements in terms of sustainable development.

Institutional co-operation

52. The Ministers agreed that administrative twinning should be developed as a way to exchange good practice and to streamline the process of approximation in the regulatory and administrative fields. They also noted the progress made by the Centre for Innovation in Public Administration in the Euro-Mediterranean region in discharging its activity designed to improve governance systems.

Agriculture

53. The Ministers welcomed the recommendations of the first Euro-Mediterranean Conference on Agriculture which has been held on 27 November 2003 in Venice and focussed on identifying ways for a strengthened cooperation on structural agricultural issues of common interest, such as quality upgrading, protection of natural resources, food safety and security, denomination of origin, rural labour and the struggle against poverty.

Regional Cooperation

54. Ministers, while taking note of the conclusions of the Conference of Euro-Mediterranean regions held in Palermo, on **27-28** November 2003, underlined the outstanding importance of cooperation amongst regions of the Euro-Mediterranean partners as being instrumental in providing the Barcelona Process with further breadth and substance as well as in bringing the partnership closer to the civil societies of the region. They also took note of the conclusions of the Conference held in Livorno on October 31st 2000 upon initiative of the EU Committee of the Regions. In the same spirit Ministers also welcomed the holding of the Forum of the Euro-Mediterranean Mayors held in Venice on 30 November 2003. Ministers expressed their satisfaction at the launching of the pilot projects in the framework of MED'ACT for co-operation between Euro-Mediterranean cities in the view of exploring, at the appropriate time, the establishment of a regional programme aiming at co-operation between Euro-Mediterranean local authorities in the framework of MEDA.

IV. SOCIAL, CULTURAL AND HUMAN PARTNERSHIP

Dialogue between Cultures

55. The Ministers agreed to enhance the achievements of the Partnership by strengthening the present instruments and regional programmes and, at the same time, ensured the launching of new instruments, principal among which is the Euromed Foundation, which should start to function rapidly and thus become the most visible aspect of activities in this field.
56. The Ministers welcomed the successful implementation of ongoing programmes: Euromed Heritage entering its phase III in 2003, Euromed Audio-visual preparing its phase II, Euromed Youth preparing its Phase III, and, finally, the launching of the Euromed Youth Platform supporting dialogue between youth representatives and governments on policies for young people. They agreed to facilitate the functioning of these programmes. While reaffirming the crucial role of media in promoting better governance, mutual understanding and social cohesion, the Ministers agreed on the need for enhanced endeavour in the audio-visual field and welcomed the ongoing initiatives on media co-operation in the Euro-Mediterranean region, including those promoted by the Permanent Conference of Mediterranean Audio-visual Operators.

Euro-Mediterranean Foundation

57. While endorsing the relevant modalities agreed upon by the Senior Officials, as contained in Doc. de Séance No 57/03 Rev. 2, the Ministers decided the setting up of the Euromed Foundation, to promote the dialogue of cultures and civilisations. The Foundation should become a catalyst for all initiatives aiming at increasing dialogue and common understanding on the basis of the guiding principles for the dialogue between cultures and civilisations agreed upon at the Mid-Term Conference in Crete. Its organisation, at least in the initial stage as a network of networks with a light administrative structure, will allow a regular dialogue, notably between cultural circles outside official diplomatic and cultural forums. Partners confirmed their support for the launching of the Foundation in ensuring on a voluntary basis that it is granted financial resources consistent with the objective of its successful start-up. The Ministers took note of proposals from some Partners regarding the headquarters of the Foundation and instructed the Euromed Committee to pursue work with a view to a decision being taken as soon as possible.
58. The Ministers took note of the report of President Prodi's High Level Group ("Groupe des Sages") presented in October in Alexandria which should help define the main principles for the dialogue of peoples and cultures in the region that should guide the functioning of the Foundation.

Justice, fight against organised crime

59. The Ministers took note of the progress made in the implementation of the regional programme covering the justice, police and migration sectors which for the first time in the framework of the partnership allowed experts and practitioners from the Euro-Mediterranean countries to work together in judicial co-operation, in the fight against terrorism, drugs and organised crime and in a joint approach to migration. The Ministers gave full support for this first experience of concrete teamwork, on training of judges, training of police forces and the development of a common tool of observation and analysis of the migratory flows in the Mediterranean and look forward to the further development of this co-operation.

Migration and movement of people

60. The Ministers reaffirmed the importance of migration and express the view that, if carefully managed, migration can be a positive factor for the socio-economic growth of the whole region. They ensured that the dialogue and co-operation on migration which has started with some Mediterranean Partners is extended to all and covers the root causes of migration, the possibilities to promote legal migration and to combat illegal migration through readmission agreements covering illegal immigration, to be agreed upon with Partners most directly involved. In this respect, they confirmed the need to adopt a global approach balancing security concerns and the management of migratory flows, on the one hand, with the facilitation of legal movement of persons and social integration of migrants, on the other. The Ministers also took note of the Commission's intention to initiate a study into the relationship between legal and illegal migration.

Education

61. The Ministers agreed to increase efforts in education as a basic tool for intercultural dialogue and mutual understanding. They considered creating a Euro-Mediterranean area of higher education based on the experience of the EULAC Common Space for higher education and on the TEMPUS-MEDA programme. They acknowledged that at regional level, EU programmes newly opened to the Mediterranean partners are an important step in this direction. The extension of Tempus to the Mediterranean Partners will reinforce co-operation in higher education and post-secondary vocational training, and allow the authorities to proposed specific structural actions. They noted that Netd@ys and eSchola programmes for improving the use of new technologies in primary and secondary education contribute to the improvement of the sector. Recalling the relevant provision set out in the Valencia Action Plan, the Ministers reiterated the importance of a regional vocational training programme, aiming at promoting employment opportunities in the field of new technologies, in particular for the youth.

Social Policy

62. The Ministers acknowledged the common interest in social stability and welfare on both sides of the Mediterranean. They agreed to further develop the dialogue and co-operation on social policies aimed at reducing poverty and inequalities and creating/strengthening the system of social support (re-training, social security, unemployment benefit, pensions).

Role of women

63. The Ministers also supported the efforts of the forthcoming regional programmes on training and on the role of women in political, economic and social life, aiming at promoting opportunities by fostering capacity building and awareness, in a move designed to enhance her *status* within civil society.

Civil Society

64. The Ministers also welcomed the increasing role of civil society in the Barcelona process. In addition to civil society participation in Barcelona economic, social and cultural programmes, the Ministers noted the achievements of the Naples Civil Forum held prior to Barcelona VI. The Ministers noted the efforts undertaken of civil society organisations and networks since the Civil Forum in Valencia to ensure continuity and coherence of activities of the Civil Forum meetings, and thus increase the effectiveness of their influence on the Partnership. They welcomed initiatives to further enhance this process with a view to promoting an inclusive approach aiming at a comprehensive representation of civil society from all Partners.
65. The Ministers took note of the conclusions of the Summit of Economic and Social Council and similar Institutions held in Malta on 6-7 November 2003. They encouraged the actors in civil society to pursue dialogue and networking to reinforce their contribution towards the fulfilment of the objectives of the Euromed Partnership.
66. The Ministers welcomed the proposal put forward by Ireland to host a mid-term Ministerial Meeting during the first half of 2004. The VIIth Euro–Mediterranean Conference of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs will take place in the first half of 2005 under the Presidency of Luxembourg.