

## **PRESIDENCY CONCLUSIONS**

### **Vth EURO-MEDITERRANEAN CONFERENCE OF FOREIGN MINISTERS (Valencia, 22-23 April 2002)**

1. The 5th Conference of Euro-Mediterranean Foreign Ministers held in Valencia on April 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>d</sup> took place against the background of the highest levels of tension in the region in recent times. Under these difficult circumstances, the Ministers stressed the need for an increased dialogue and the relevance of the principles and objectives agreed in the Barcelona Declaration in 1995 to make the Mediterranean a region of peace and stability, development and common prosperity, cooperation and understanding between cultures and civilisations.
2. The Ministers agreed that the tragic situation in the Middle East demands to be addressed both in an urgent manner and with a longer term perspective. In this sense they stressed the value and the need for the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership as an essential framework of dialogue and cooperation, a true meeting point of different cultures and civilisations. To make this diversity a factor of enrichment is one of the Partnership's most decisive challenges.
3. The Ministers agreed that, after the reinvigorating of the Barcelona Process in Marseilles, Valencia must mark the starting of a new phase six years after its launching. The challenges of the EU enlargement, the events of September 11 and the serious developments in the Middle East and other structural changes in the international scene make the Barcelona Process more necessary than ever. The moment is now right to demand a renewed mutual commitment which will contribute to regional stability and peace and give a greater depth to the Euro-Mediterranean partnership. A tangible reinforcement of the sense of ownership of the Process by all partners was underlined and concrete initiatives to this end were agreed.
4. In order to have a working programme, in which the many different initiatives and commitments are clearly specified, the Ministers adopted an Action Plan that, taking into account the globality of the Process, covers the three chapters and institutional provisions. This document has been elaborated after extensive consultations with all partners which included visits conducted by the Presidency, jointly with the Commission and the Council General Secretariat to Mediterranean capitals. The Valencia Action Plan includes a number of initiatives in a short and medium term perspective to give a political impetus to the Process and to

make it advance substantially in the pursuit of the objectives of the Barcelona Declaration. It reflects the principles of co-ownership visibility, efficiency and credibility of the Barcelona Process and will be provided with adequate follow-up and implementation mechanisms.

5. Among the initiatives adopted in the Valencia Action Plan, some relevant features can be emphasised:

- In the political and security chapter and in the institutional provisions, the Ministers agreed to reinforce political dialogue, including on defence matters; agreed upon a common approach on dialogue and cooperation in the fight against international terrorism; a deepening of the dialogue on Human Rights and drew up the main lines of future work on Partnership Building measures.
- The Ministers reiterated their firm political commitment to democracy, human rights and rule of law in the region and agreed to further develop the parliamentary dimension of the Partnership. They welcomed the holding of the meeting of the Speakers of the Euro-Mediterranean Parliaments in Athens last February, recognised the value of the existing Euro-Med Parliamentary fora and agreed to recommend the creation of a Euro-Med Parliamentary Assembly as proposed by the European Parliament.
- In the economic and financial area, Ministers agreed on the need to increase investment in order to promote growth and employment around the Mediterranean. They welcomed the decision to create a reinforced Facility within the EIB to mobilize resources in particular for private sector investment. In this respect, the Presidency took note of the strong support voiced by Mediterranean partners for the creation of a Euro-Mediterranean Bank.
- Building on the conclusions of the meetings of Trade and Industry Ministers, the Conference asked that a close follow-up be given in the framework of the Action Plan , especially on the harmonization of rules of origin and in the areas of investment promotion, regional integration, liberalization of services, regulatory reform and access to new technologies. The Ministers also welcomed the Greek proposal to hold a Euro-Mediterranean Conference on Energy.
- The Ministers welcomed the progress made in the Agadir process and reiterated their strong support for similar sub-regional initiatives. The EU renewed its offer to provide technical assistance to these initiatives. Furthermore, Ministers reaffirmed that sustainable development should be included among the guiding principles of the Barcelona Process and welcomed in this respect, the forthcoming Conference of Environment Ministers in Athens next July.
- On the social, cultural and human dimension of the Partnership, the Ministers expressed their conviction that the construction of the

Euro-Mediterranean Partnership needs the participation and the engagement of the Governments as well as of the societies and all the relevant actors, emphasising in this sense the need to take full advantage of the possibilities offered by the Third Chapter of the Barcelona Declaration in all its different areas.

- After intensive work, a Framework document was endorsed with a view to implement a regional cooperation programme in the field of Justice, in combating drugs, organised crime and terrorism as well as cooperation in the treatment of issues relating to the social integration of migrants, migration and movements of persons.
- Against the background of the current international situation, the Ministers stressed the importance of promoting dialogue and cooperation between cultures and civilisations.

To this end, Ministers agreed to the principle of creating of a Euro-Mediterranean Foundation to promote further dialogue between cultures and civilisations and to increase the visibility of the Barcelona Process through intellectual; cultural and civil society exchanges

- Ministers welcomed the adoption of the Action Programme for the Dialogue between cultures and civilisations, which includes important initiatives in the fields of youth, education and media
- Ministers also welcomed the extension of the Tempus Programme for inter-University co-operation to the Mediterranean partners and will permit Universities to become active Partnership actors and to contribute to the widening of educational offers adapted to the demands of labour markets.

6. The Ministers discussed the latest developments in the Middle East. They expressed their grave concern at the present situation, which involves serious risks for regional security and is leading to a grave humanitarian crisis. Violence, destruction, suffering, human rights violations and bloodshed have continued to increase in the region, reaching an unprecedented level last weeks. They expressed their condemnation of terrorism and violence and deplored the loss of human lives and extended their deepest sympathy to the families of those killed and wounded.
7. Ministers stressed that there is not a military solution to the conflict and reaffirmed that UNSCR 1402 must be fully implemented immediately, as called for in UNSCR 1403, with a view to start negotiations and reach, within a well defined timeline, a political solution based on UNSCR 242, 338 and 1397 and on the principles of the Madrid Conference, Oslo and subsequent agreements, and taking into account other initiatives, like the Arab initiative referred to in paragraph 9, which would allow two States, Israel and Palestine, to live in peace and security and play their full part in the region.

The negotiations should lead to the creation of a democratic, viable and independent State of Palestine, bringing to an end the occupation of 1967, and the right of Israel to live within secure and recognized boundaries, guaranteed by the commitment of the international community.

The end of the conflict requires agreed solutions to all aspects of permanent status issues.

Comprehensive peace must also include Syria and Lebanon on the basis of the same principles.

8. Ministers urged immediate implementation of UNSCR 1405 so that humanitarian and medical organizations and agencies are allowed unrestricted access to the Palestinian populations, which are facing a dire humanitarian situation. They welcomed the initiative of the Secretary General to develop accurate information through a fact finding team regarding events in the refugee camp in Jenin.
9. The Ministers warmly welcomed Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah's peace initiative, as endorsed in Beirut by the Summit of the Arab League, as a significant framework towards a comprehensive peace.

Other initiatives, like the Abu Ala- Peres, were also mentioned by Minister Peres.

10. The Ministers warmly welcomed the Joint Statement by the Quartet made in Madrid the 10<sup>th</sup> of April. They stressed the need for a sustained and concerted international action in the search of peace and look forward for further steps by the quartet. Different views on the possibility of an international conference were expressed.
11. The Ministers noted the general conviction that a third party monitoring mechanism would help both parties in their efforts and urged them to consider proposals to accept observers. The need for international peace keeping forces was underlined by several delegations.
12. The Ministers called on the international community to preserve, strengthen and assist the Palestinian Authority, including through efforts to rebuild its infrastructure, security and governance capacity. They called also on the donor community and the international financial institutions to renew their commitment and urgently mobilise resources to provide urgent humanitarian assistance to the Palestinian people, and to assist in economic and institutional reconstruction, in the context of the promotion of regional development and economic integration.

The normalization of trade flows, transfers and economic conditions in the Palestinian territories are an essential dimension of the recovery of the Palestinian economy.

13. In conclusion of the debate, the Presidency called on the authorities of Israel to halt its military operations, to immediately withdraw its military forces from Palestinian cities, in particular Bethlehem and Ramallah, including the headquarters of President Arafat, whose personal security and freedom of movement must be respected and guaranteed. A peaceful solution must be also found for the situation in the Nativity Church. It called for the full respect of International Humanitarian Law.

It called upon the Palestinian Authority and President Arafat, as the recognised elected leader of the Palestinian people, to act decisively and take all possible steps within its capacity to fight terrorism, in particular suicide bombs, and to stop incitement to violence. To be successful, fight against terrorism must include the dismantling of terrorist infrastructure and financing.

14. On the occasion of the Valencia Ministerial Conference, and in the presence of President Buteflika of the Algerian Republic and President Aznar of the Government of Spain , the ceremony of signing the Euro-Mediterranean Association Agreement with Algeria took place. They welcomed the signature to come in the next weeks with Lebanon and the entry into force of the Association Agreement with Jordan on May 1st. The conclusion of eleven of the twelve Association Agreements thus opens a new stage in Euro-Mediterranean relations and most partners are now embarked on a process which will lead to the progressive establishment of a free trade area in the region.
15. The EU Presidency welcomed the Libyan delegation to the Valencia Conference. Taking into account Libya's role in the Mediterranean region and in the African continent, the EU Presidency hopes Libya will fully contribute to the relaunching of the Euro-Mediterranean cooperation. It also welcomed the presence of other Special guests of the Presidency: Arab League, UMA and Mauritania.
16. The Conference regretted the absence of Syria and Lebanon but showed respect for their decision. The Presidency expects that both countries will continue their cooperation within the framework of the Barcelona Process.
17. The Ministers took note of the final report of the Civil Forum which took place April 12 and 13 in Valencia and of the efforts undertaken to assure continuity in the works of the civil forums. They encouraged actors in civil society to reinforce their contribution towards the fulfilment of the objectives of the Partnership.
18. The Ministers concluded that the Valencia Conference provided the opportunity for a full, frank and constructive discussion of what has been achieved since Barcelona, what problems have been encountered and what solutions found. The Barcelona Process is now sufficiently well

established and resilient for the participants to be able to engage in an open dialogue on all issues of mutual concern. The Presidency took note of the wishes of partners to improve the visibility of the Process by increasing public awareness of its activities.

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The Ministers welcomed the proposal put forward by Greece to host a Ministerial Meeting during the first half of 2003. The VI th Euro-Mediterranean Conference of Foreign Ministers ( Barcelona VI) will take place in the second half of 2003 during the Italian Presidency.