

MAPPING OUT THE NEXT DECISIVE STEPS IN EURO-MED RELATIONS

The 10th Anniversary Euro-Mediterranean Summit and the Five-Year Work Programme (2006-2010)

By Dr. Stephen C. Calleya

A decade after the launching of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, the twenty-five EU states and their ten Mediterranean partner counterparts agreed to start implementing a short-term policy action plan that will build upon the Valencia Action Plan of 2002 and further seek to realise the partnership goals enshrined in the Barcelona Declaration of 1995.

At the tenth anniversary the Euro-Mediterranean countries announced the launching of a five-year work plan that will spur political, economic and socio-cultural relations across the euro-Mediterranean area.



Dr. Stephen C. Calleya is Director of the Mediterranean Academy of Diplomatic Studies, University of Malta. Dr. Calleya is author of *Evaluating Euro-Mediterranean Relations*, Routledge, 2005.

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The five-year work programme is a very focused plan of action that seeks to raise awareness of the EMP at a grass roots level by addressing civil societal issues such as education, gender equality and human rights. The EMP five-year work plan, together with implementation of the Association agreements and the European Neighbourhood Policy Action Plans, will be supported through technical and financial assistance provided through the current MEDA programme and the future European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI), bilateral contributions from member states, FEMIP, and other relevant financial mechanisms.

The Euro-Med five year work programme focuses on a number of priority areas including the political and security partnership. The main goal in this sector is to foster a region of peace, security, prosperity and opportunity. Policy actions that aim at achieving a just and comprehensive settlement to the Arab-Israeli conflict are to be sought. The Euro-Med states are also committed to continuing implementation of partnership building measures, joint regional projects, sustainable development and strengthened rule of law, democracy and respect for human rights will be sought.

The Euro-Med partner countries have also committed to concentrate their political and economic resources to promoting sustainable socio-economic development and reform. Particular attention will be dedicated towards creating more job opportunities for the increasing numbers of young people

across the Mediterranean, reducing regional poverty rates and closing the prosperity gap and raising GDP growth rates throughout the southern shores of the Mediterranean.

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In an effort to cope with the increasing competitive climate of globalisation the Euro-Mediterranean states have also agreed to develop national capabilities in the field of scientific and technological research and innovation to establish a knowledge based society through increased co-operation with and access to relevant European programmes and institutions.

The EU also reiterated its support to assist in the acceleration of the conclusion of free trade agreements between Mediterranean states and to continue supporting implementation of the Agadir Agreement that seeks to create a free trade area between Morocco, Tunisia, Jordan and Egypt in the shortest time frame possible. By the end of 2006 the EU will also assess the performance of FEMIP and consider the incorporation of an EIB majority owned subsidiary dedicated to the Mediterranean partner countries.

The thirty-five Euro-Mediterranean states also identified the 2006-2010 time-frame as a crucial moment to improve education and

socio-cultural exchanges across the Euro-Mediterranean area. Recognising the important role of education for political, social, and economic development, Euro-Med states have agreed to improve equitable access to

quality education in line with the Millennium Development Goals and the Education for All objectives.

The long list of specific targets being sought in this area highlight the high priority being dedicated to this sector by all Euro-Med partners. These include halving the number of illiterate female and male adults and children by 2010; ensuring equality of access to quality education at all levels for girl and boy students by 2015; ensuring that by 2015 all children complete at least primary education; launching a substantial scholarship scheme for university students from Euro-Mediterranean Partner countries and increase mobility grants for Higher Education staff.

The Euro-Mediterranean partners also agreed to adopt a more integrated approach when it comes to addressing the issue of migration, social integration, justice and security. Policy recommendations in this dimension of the partnership include: the promotion of legal migration oppor-

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4 tunities; a reduction of the level of illegal migration trafficking by reinforcing judicial co-operation and cross border collaboration. In the coming years the Euro-Mediterranean states also agreed to hold a ministerial meeting to discuss all issues pertinent to migration and to develop mechanisms for practical co-operation and sharing experience on managing migration flows humanely.

The Euro-Mediterranean Partners have thus agreed to focus their attention during the next five years to ensuring that the EMP has enough of a direct positive impact on the Euro-Mediterranean citizens. Raising awareness of the EMP can be overcome by directing more of future Euro-Mediterranean programmes to the civil societal level, especially educational programmes as

already identified by the European Commission in its work programme for the next five years.

Closer cross-cultural co-operation can only be achieved if a more concerted effort is made to seek a convergence on the basic values that are part and parcel of the civilisations surrounding the Mediterranean area. The establishment of a functioning Euro-Mediterranean Foundation that seeks to promote a dialogue between cultures and civilization around the Mediterranean offers this possibility

In many ways the Barcelona Process is a farsighted and novel initiative. Some scholars believe that the EMP is so ahead of its time that it is unrealistic to achieve the objectives stipulated in the Barcelona Declaration. A major problem with the EMP is that it takes little account of the need for prior resolution of existing disputes in the Mediterranean area that include the Arab-Israeli, Cyprus

and Western Sahara conflicts. It is highly unlikely that protagonists in each of these disputes can enter into co-operative security arrangements without first resolving their antagonisms.

Only the creation of a co-operative Mediterranean region in which the perceptual and prosperity gap is addressed, reduced and gradually eliminated, will ensure that the Mediterranean does not become a zone of indifference and an eventual economic wasteland. Integrating the Mediterranean into the twenty-first century international system through mechanisms such as the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and the EU Neighbourhood Policy and a sustainable Middle East Peace Process is the immediate challenge that the international community must confront. Otherwise transnational sources of instability emanating from the Mediterranean will continue to manifest themselves at a regional and international level. ■

Euromed Tenth Anniversary Summit

Javier Solana, Secretary General of the Council of the EU and High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy, José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, Spanish Prime Minister, Tony Blair, UK Prime Minister and President in office of the Council of the EU and José Manuel Barroso, President of the EC (from left to right)

