



Slovensko predsedstvo EU 2008
Slovenian Presidency of the EU 2008
La Présidence slovène de l'UE 2008

ADDRESS BY EUROMED CHAIR, AMBASSADOR VERONIKA STABEJ

XXIV MALTA SEMINAR

11 APRIL 2008

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dear colleagues,

It is my great honour and pleasure to address you today and present to you the EuroMed programme of activities of the Slovenian Presidency. I shall also try to enumerate some of the work already done since the beginning of the year, since we are already in the second half of the Presidency, which presents new challenges that were not entirely envisaged in the preparations of the planned activities. But – life is always full of surprises and we can say that our Euro-Mediterranean region as well.

The Slovenian EU Council Presidency will round off the first Trio Presidency (Germany, Portugal and Slovenia) and the implementation of the first 18-month programme. Working together with the two partners was a unique and positive experience for Slovenia. Slovenian Presidency will endeavour to continue the extensive work programme of 2007, to ensure a smooth transition to France as the next EU presiding country and coordination with the next Trio (France, the Czech Republic and Sweden). Slovenia is the first new EU Member State that has been entrusted with the EU Council Presidency; therefore, this responsible task is a great honour for us. Slovenia is also the most Central European Mediterranean country and the most Mediterranean Central European country.

Ladies and Gentlemen

The Slovenian Presidency is striving to attain and implement the objectives of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership; it endeavours to fulfil the commitments assumed under the Barcelona Five-Year Work Programme and the Code of Conduct on Countering Terrorism; and finally, to make its utmost to ensure full implementation of the programme adopted at the



Slovensko predsedstvo EU 2008
Slovenian Presidency of the EU 2008
La Présidence slovène de l'UE 2008

9th Euro-Mediterranean Meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs in Lisbon last November. The programme was adopted unanimously, which is an important achievement.

Let me emphasize again the centrality and the importance of the Barcelona Process which remains a basic and unique framework for enhanced dialogue and cooperation in different areas. The Barcelona Process represents the common interest of Euro-Mediterranean partners in developing regional cooperation and enhancing mutual understanding. This is a live, active and open process, which is proved by the fact that new partners have expressed their interest in becoming members; two new members, Albania and Mauritania have recently joined the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership.

Any activity, any process could be improved and enriched through new challenges and initiatives. The Barcelona Process, too, may be enriched by initiatives striving for the strengthening of political, economic and cultural ties between the Euro-Med countries, inter alia at the sub-regional level.

One of the most talked about initiatives is for sure the originally French initiative that was at the beginning called Mediterranean Union. The initiative has evolved very much since its beginning and most importantly, has been incorporated and positioned in the framework of the existing Euro-Mediterranean partnership. Of course, with the aim of enriching it and making it more effective. The European Council has approved this principle on March 13 2008 and invited the Commission to present proposals to the Council, in view of the propped Summit on the 13 July. The European Council proposed the title Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean, which is still the working title. But in any case, at least in my opinion, the title should not only be the Union for the Mediterranean. So I would urge you to consider this tomorrow, because the title of the session under which you will debate this issue, has kept only this version.



Slovensko predsedstvo EU 2008
Slovenian Presidency of the EU 2008
La Présidence slovène de l'UE 2008

In any case this initiative underlines the importance of the Mediterranean region, with regards to the numerous challenges, although several aspects need to be worked out as regards the ideas put forward. The Slovenian Presidency is working closely with European Commission and with France as the future Presidency and the host country of the proposed summit to make the discussions and preparations as efficient and transparent as possible.

Common challenges facing the Euro-Mediterranean region that have been emphasized in particular in the Lisbon conclusions are in harmony and synergy with key Slovenian Presidency priorities and complement them. These include: economic and social development, energy-climate package, civil protection, countering terrorism and extremism, European Neighbourhood Policy and intercultural dialogue. We will strive to make an open, transparent and comprehensive work programme, actively involving all Euro-Mediterranean partners in the spirit of dialogue and constructive cooperation. The programme adopted for 2008 is very ambitious and extensive. Many initiatives and projects that have already been underway will continue and new initiatives will be launched as well.

Distinguished participants,

A detailed programme of the activities planned for the first half of 2008 is at your disposal. Allow me to present to you some key activities in certain areas according to the subject matter.

- The year 2008 has been declared the Euro-Mediterranean Year of Dialogue Between Cultures and the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue. The main opening ceremony was held in Ljubljana at the beginning of January and was attended by many prominent guests.



Slovensko predsedstvo EU 2008
Slovenian Presidency of the EU 2008
La Présidence slovène de l'UE 2008

- The Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Meeting on culture and intercultural dialogue will be held in Greece in May; it is expected that new guidelines for successful and enhanced cooperation will be presented and adopted on that occasion. This important event will be organised in close cooperation with the Anna Lindh Foundation and through active engagement of all Euro-Mediterranean partner countries at different levels.
- A specific lasting contribution Slovenia is offering within the scope of dialogue between cultures in the Mediterranean is **the project to establish a Euro-Mediterranean University based in Piran**. One of the main reasons to establish such an international institution was the wish and need to draw inspiration from an exceptional cultural, spiritual and humanistic heritage of the Euro-Mediterranean region. I am very happy to announce that the solemn inauguration of the University will take place on 9 June of this year. With this event, we would like to mark Slovenia's substantial contribution to the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and the strengthening of dialogue between cultures in the region and wider. We also expect the University to become a gathering place for young people from the entire Mediterranean region. Slovenian Presidency priorities will include the promotion and development of multilingualism and intercultural exchange among youth as a means of increasing their employability, mobility and social inclusion.

The initiative to establish a Euro-Mediterranean University was presented for the first time at the annual session of the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly in Tunis in March 2007, where it received a strong support. The initiative was included in the joint declaration of the Ministerial Conference on Higher Education held in Cairo in June 2007 and in the conclusions of the Meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs held in Lisbon in November 2007 and was thus given full support. It was also included in the declarations of other EuroMed ministerial meetings.



Slovensko predsedstvo EU 2008
Slovenian Presidency of the EU 2008
La Présidence slovène de l'UE 2008

The Slovenian Presidency regards intercultural dialogue as a strategic category of co-existence in diversity. Overcoming stereotypes and prejudice is essential in a number of areas: migration, fight against organized crime and countering terrorism.

- A Mediterranean Region which is safe, politically stable and economically developed is in the interest of all of us. During Slovenia's EU Council Presidency, the Middle East process will remain an urgent priority of the EU and we will continue to work for a just, lasting peace in the Middle East.
- The Slovenian Presidency will pursue the implementation of the commitments of the Code of Conduct on Countering Terrorism of 2005. The issues such as respect of human rights, international standards, and mechanisms of international cooperation in criminal matters pertaining to counter-terrorism are of high importance and we intend to address them.
- There is no stability without economic progress. At the end of February, the **Second EuroMed Ministerial Conference on Information Society** took place in Egypt. According to a declaration agreed the ministers encouraged the approximation of the regulatory frameworks of the Mediterranean partners and the EU and highlighted the accomplishments of bilateral and regional projects aiming at regulatory reform of the electronic communications sector and at improved networking between the information technology and research communities.
- The Slovenian Presidency also considers a success the **first EuroMed Ministerial Meeting on Tourism** that was held in Morocco on 2-3 April and has adopted agreed conclusions. Tourism is a clearly a horizontal activity which has an enormous potential for the promotion of economic progress and prosperity. A unique diversity of the



Slovensko predsedstvo EU 2008
Slovenian Presidency of the EU 2008
La Présidence slovène de l'UE 2008

Mediterranean remains the key competitive advantage and a long-term development potential of sustainable tourism.

- The **energy-climate package** is one of the most important Slovenian Presidency priorities. We will continue to work intensively on additional initiatives, taken in response to climate change in the Mediterranean and in this respect on the closely related issue of energy. Sustainable policies could encourage progress in energy and technology, and increase stability in the region. We will closely monitor reports on how climate change influences international security. Slovenia is very active in regional activities on waters which aim at ensuring sustainable development of the region, protection of natural resources and preservation of water quality. Only recently our country concluded its presidency of the Barcelona Convention.
- The Slovenian Presidency will ensure that measures continue to be taken in **the fight against terrorism** in all of its forms and manifestations, that its financing is prevented and that commitments of the Code of Conduct on Countering Terrorism of 2005 are met. These were confirmed later on in the Lisbon conclusions. When shaping and implementing the programme and agenda, the Presidency will strive for open and transparent dialogue with all Euro-Mediterranean partners.
- We will also continue dialogue and debate about best practices and exchange experience in the field of **elections** at senior officials meetings.
- The Slovenian Presidency would like to emphasise the significance of **strengthening the role of women in society**, i.e. in social, economic, political, civil and cultural spheres. A meeting will be organised in June that will focus on the role, position and influence of women in politics.



Slovensko predsedstvo EU 2008
Slovenian Presidency of the EU 2008
La Présidence slovène de l'UE 2008

- It should be pointed out that the Presidency attaches particular importance to the consolidation of the **Anna Lindh Euro-Mediterranean Foundation for the Dialogue between Cultures**. The Presidency is committed to fully adhering to the guidelines on future activities. I am particularly pleased that under Slovenian Presidency we have managed to elect the President, Executive Director and the Advisory Council of the Foundation that has now all the prerogatives for even more efficient work.
- With a view to deepening mutual trust, the **EuroMeSCo** network of institutes has significantly contributed to the achievement of the objectives of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership. The programme of activities aimed at encouraging the development of the region and relations between partners in the future period is extensive as well.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dear colleagues,

The Slovenian Presidency is convinced that the effective Euro-Mediterranean Partnership will further contribute to the understanding between all peoples of the Euro-Mediterranean region; we intend to make our contribution to the best of our abilities. I would like to conclude by expressing my wish for an open dialogue and an enlightening exchange of views.

Thank you for your attention.