

Bringing the
Euro-Mediterranean Partnership
Closer to the People

**35 Proposals to Engage Civil Society
in the Barcelona Process**

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Foreword

Civil society participation in all its forms is increasingly recognized as a key element to reinvigorate the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership between the European Union and the 10 Southern and Eastern Mediterranean Partner Countries in order for it to progress towards achieving its ambitious goal: building a shared area of security, democracy and prosperity in the Mediterranean. In turn, in order to engage civil society and bring about a true ownership of the Partnership by the peoples of the region, it is necessary to address the challenge of bringing it closer to the concrete daily needs, interests and worries of the citizens.

In this context, the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung in Morocco decided to make a contribution to the 10th Anniversary of the establishment of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership by mobilising a group of outstanding actors and experts of civil society to reflect on the major issues involved and come forward with a set of policy proposals to this end. The driving idea behind our project was that the main challenge for the so-called Barcelona Process in the coming years will be the issue of social inclusiveness, comprising both the inclusion of the social dimension as a key component of the Partnership, on one hand, and the idea of reaching all social groups in the Partner Countries without exception, on the other. This has largely determined the choice of issues around which this document is articulated: social and economic rights and social consultation, the advancement of human rights and the promotion of women's participation in economic, social, and political life, mutual understanding and cultural exchanges across the Mediterranean, the participation of civil society through NGOs, and ways to promote the participation of civil society of religious inspiration in the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership. In all cases, we asked

the authors to make a brief assessment of the achievements and the needs in each field in the framework of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, followed by a series of concrete policy proposals and a preliminary non-technical discussion of each of them. The process, which has extended over the last nine months, culminates with the publication you have in your hands: «Bringing the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership Closer to the People. 35 Proposals to Engage Civil Society in the Barcelona Process.»

We hope that this publication and the 35 proposals it contains (corresponding in number to the 35 partner countries of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership) will trigger a thorough debate amongst all actors involved – EU institutions, European and MPC Governments and civil society itself- and ultimately prompt action to fully engage European and Mediterranean people in the far-reaching collective endeavour launched in Barcelona 10 years ago.

Hans Blumenthal

*Resident Representative
Friedrich Ebert Stiftung in Morocco*

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Introduction

Engaging Civil Society in the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership : From Rhetoric to Practice

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Policy brief editor

Analysis of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership has reached a high degree of sophistication regarding the motivations of the actors and countries involved, the working of the Euro-Mediterranean institutional mechanisms and its major shortcomings. Evaluation seminars have proliferated, there is a growing community of “Euro-Mediterranean researchers” and publications are more and more specific on questions like political and economic reform, conflict management, economic developments, interaction with other initiatives in the area...and, yes, the involvement of civil society. However, so far there is no corresponding plethora of concrete proposals for action in each of these fields.

As a matter of fact, the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership has been a largely inter-governmental endeavour in the ten years that have elapsed since its inception in 1995, and its main achievements lie in the field of institutionalisation (however, so far hardly any real Euro-Mediterranean institutions have been created, except for the Anna Lindh Foundation for the Dialogue between Cultures and the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly, both in the last year). But the Partnership has lacked visibility both in the North and in the South of the Mediterranean and is largely unknown to the public. However, this lack of ownership by the peoples of the partner States cannot be tackled by means of political marketing or communication campaigns such as those launched by the European Commission in the partner countries

on the occasion of the 10th Anniversary of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership. The reality is that it has suffered from poor or no results in achieving its stated goals in terms of promoting democracy and human rights, regional security and resolution of conflicts, sustainable development, improving living conditions, reducing the North-South economic gap across the Mediterranean, and mutual understanding and exchanges. In this sense, it still has to pass the test of relevance for the daily lives of ordinary people, and it is no wonder that so far they have largely ignored it. The best strategy for enhancing the visibility of the whole process would be to strengthen the credibility of the Barcelona Process by increasing the coherence between declarations and action and facilitating a public debate on the major issues involved. And here civil society has a key role to play.

As for civil society itself, it has to face the challenge of putting forward a feasible and coherent agenda for action in the coming years. There is an increasing consensus amongst politicians and public officers – and more and more references in the Euro-Mediterranean political discourse – on how essential it is to involve civil society in the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership(1), but so far there has been only very modest (and quite recent, like the formal recognition of the Euro-Mediterranean Non-Governmental Platform by the Euro-Mediterranean Conference of Ministers of Foreign Affairs held in Luxembourg on May 31, 2005) real steps in this direction. The way the new European Neighbourhood Policy has been designed and approved, without any consultation or participation of civil societies whatsoever, is a very strong caveat in this respect.

(1) See, just as an example, the speech of European Commissioner Ferrero-Waldner to the Political Committee of the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly on January 15, 2005: "The 10th Anniversary Conference in November should be a forward-looking Conference; we have to agree on a realistic but ambitious agenda for the future of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership. In my view, the focus of this agenda should be twofold: First, a strong commitment to regional stability and democracy through regional integration and cooperation (...). Second, we should bring the partnership closer to our citizens' concerns. The Barcelona Process has, to a large extent, been an inter-governmental process. It is high time that we ask ourselves what the Euro-Med Partnership can do to meet the concerns of the people and how we can more successfully address issues such as education, employment, gender equality, democracy, free circulation of people, and migrants' rights. These are questions that affect the day-to-day life of our citizens, and our Partnership should address them". (http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/news/ferrero/2005/ip05_42.htm).

Approach, Issues and Process

So the main driver behind the whole project culminating in this publication was in no way to undertake an academic exercise but to focus on concrete proposals for action and to reflect the views and vision of the social actors themselves, not merely those of analysts, researchers, or academics. We wanted to go beyond analysis and formulate a number of concrete policy proposals and a very preliminary justification and analysis of each of them to build a coherent agenda for action in this field: hence the option for a policy brief format. This is the added value of this publication.

With this in mind, we chose a number of major issues to articulate our work:

- promotion of human rights and the participation of women in social, economic and political life,
- promotion of economic and social rights as an enabling strategy and social consultation in the framework of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership as an indication of commitment to civil society,
- cultural exchanges and ways to promote mutual understanding in order to overcome the cultural divide across the Mediterranean,
- mechanisms to boost direct involvement of civil society in the decision-making and implementation processes of the Partnership through NGOs,
- ways and conditions to open up the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership to an important part of civil society both in Europe and in the Mediterranean Partner Countries: the civil society of religious inspiration.

Of course, we could have expanded our analysis to other equally important issues, such as environment and sustainable development or migration (but we thought that environmental NGOs and research and policy institutions are particularly strong in these fields and have already made good proposals), youth or other social groups (but we thought that, taking into account that around 70% of the population of Mediterranean Partner Countries is under 30, it does not make much sense to distinguish this group specifically from society at large). We also decided not to focus on some important framework issues determining the development of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, such as the pervading security interests linked to the fight against

international terrorism or illegal migration, American policy in the region or the participation of Israel as one of the partners of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership.

One particularly controversial issue was that of the involvement of social movements of religious inspiration, and notably of Islamists, so far largely (self-)excluded from the activities of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership. Even if the latter has been praised as an alternative to the harmful concept of shock of civilisations, it has to be admitted that so far it has failed to involve that part of civil society whose main programmatic and ideological reference is built on religious principles, at least as far as Islamic social movements are concerned (European Christian movements have indeed been involved throughout the Process). But from the very beginning we agreed on the importance of advancing in the objective stated in the Presidency Conclusions of the Euro-Mediterranean Conference of Ministers of Foreign Affairs in Naples on December 2-3, 2003, to promote "an inclusive approach aiming at a comprehensive representation of civil society from all Partners": Islamist movements are an important component of really existing civil societies in the region (not only in the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean Countries, but amongst the migrant communities in Europe as well) and it would not be coherent with the universal principles of democracy to exclude them altogether, so we decided to make a preliminary exploration of possibilities in this field.

As for our methodological approach, the very concept of civil society was, of course, not an unproblematic one. In this regard, we opted for a pragmatic approach, including under this label all kinds of non-profit, non-state associations and groupings aiming at having an impact on public policies and on the organisation of community life through social action rather than political activities. However, it is important to point out that we do not share the view of civil society in functional terms that is inherent to the widespread good governance approach. Development of civil society is a goal in itself, not a means, and the participation of civil society in political processes is a basic feature of democracy.

Once the thematic approach had been defined, we selected a group of actors that, in all but one case –that of the editor himself- share the double characteristic of being experts in their respective fields and actively involved themselves in different organisations. As such, they

have had first-hand (and very often leading) experience in civil society developments in the framework of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, such as the Civil Fora and the recent constitution of the Non-Governmental Platform. Needless to say, all of them have participated in this project in their personal capacity, and the ideas expressed in their contributions do not engage the organisations for which they work nor the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung in any way.

Each of the authors was asked to make a contribution on a specific issue comprising a brief balance of achievements and shortcomings of the 10-year-existence of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership in their respective fields and, on the basis of that analysis, to formulate a number of concrete proposals (this entailed prioritising them, because from the very beginning we did not want the total number of proposals to exceed 35) and a brief discussion of each of them. The proposals are addressed to the partner states and the Euro-Mediterranean institutions (which, due to the peculiar institutional arrangements of this Partnership, very often are equated with European Union institutions) and the level at which they are formulated varies across issues and contributions: sometimes they are very specific, almost project-level proposals, sometimes they concern procedures or institutions, and sometimes they take the shape of guiding principles or recommendations ; but, in all cases, we made the effort to present them in a action-oriented way and we asked that the discussion of each of them focus on their implementation: costs and benefits, contribution to achieving the goals of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, political feasibility... Of course, the scope of a publication like this does not allow for either an in-depth technical discussion of each proposal and its implementation details (this should be done by competent institutions before implementing them) or an approach to the time horizon for their implementation. Indeed, the way most of our proposals are formulated is as requirements and guidelines for action rather than detailed proposals.

After receiving a first version of the contributions by the authors, the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung in Morocco hosted a workshop in Rabat (March 18-19, 2005) to discuss them, with the participation of a number of experts, in order to gain a broader insight. Then we distributed a revised version of the full set of contributions at the Euro-Mediterranean Civil Forum of Luxembourg for discussion by

participants, and the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung in Brussels hosted a public presentation of this policy brief attended by a group of practitioners from both European institutions and NGOs. The result of this entire process is the publication you have in your hands.

Logic behind the Proposals

Throughout the whole process, the guiding principles for our work were to overcome the artificial division between the three structurally interrelated dimensions of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and to endeavour to bring the Partnership closer to the daily lives, interests and worries of ordinary people (something that, by the way, was already stated as an objective, “to produce results that are relevant to the ordinary man and woman”, in the Presidency Conclusions of the Euro-Mediterranean Conference of Ministers of Foreign Affairs in Naples on December 2-3, 2003).

Of course, it is difficult to make sense in a coherent way of the richness of the 35 proposals put forward (a rather arbitrary but symbolic number). Still there is a common logic which can be deduced from the five contributions and which I have tried to summarize in the table below. We have developed proposals at two levels:

- Proposals regarding the socio-economic and political context in which the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership operates, and, more concretely, the material and legal conditions (in terms of rights) required to make the Partnership possible.
- Proposals regarding the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership as such. In turn, for analytical purposes I have divided those proposals into two areas of action: those designed to substantiate the principle of joint responsibility amongst the partners and those designed to promote exchanges and mutual understanding between the societies of the countries in the North and the South of the Mediterranean. The principle of joint responsibility is an essential element of the Partnership logic and merits some further attention. As established in the framework of the European integration process, it comes into play whenever there is an issue of common interest, and it entails some far-reaching consequences. In relation to those issues of common interest, the partners have the right to receive and the duty to give, on a regular basis, information on developments and policies, they are

required to consult with each other on those issues (through a peer surveillance system) and to search for joint strategies/solutions to tackle problems in those areas, sharing responsibility for the consequences of the implementation thereof. This may sound rather abstract, but it allows for an assessment of the Partnership's performance in different fields. And there is strong evidence that in many fields of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, such as the implementation of the free-trade areas or the measures to face the main economic challenge for the Mediterranean Partner Countries in the coming decades, i.e., employment, this principle has not guided action and cooperation.

For each of these levels, I have classified proposals along three axes (the columns in table : 1) according to the three ultimate goals of our approach: to bring the Partnership closer to the people, to implement the stated goals of the Partnership and to engage organised civil society in it. In this process, the team of authors identified three transversal core issues which are at the heart of any strategy aiming towards these goals: simplifying financing procedures, facilitating the mobility of actors and citizens, and promoting language diversity across the Mediterranean (this means, first and foremost, promoting the learning of Arabic and Turkish by European citizens, but also translations to those languages).

Table 1. LOGICAL PRESENTATION

35 PROPOSALS TO ENGAGE CIVIL SOCIETY IN THE BARCELONA PROCESS

		Bringing the Partnership closer to the people	Implementing the goals of the Partnership	Engaging civil society
Socio-economic and political context	Material conditions	4. Eradicating Illiteracy 5. Euromed Employment Strategy	10. Euromed Cultural Inventory	20. Financing instrument for micro-projects
	Legal conditions/ Rights	6. Strategy for the equal participation of women 7. Mainstreaming HR into the Partnership instruments	11. Implementing the Commission for Communication on HR (including establishment of MEDA HR Programme 12. HR Task Force (monitoring, link to international instruments, actions, dialogue)	21. Strengthening CS in MPC (legal framework) 22. Procedures of national dialogue with SC 23. Strengthening MPC trade unions 24. Policial recognition of the social movements of religious inspiration
1. Simplification of financing procedures				
Partnership	Joint responsibility	8. Social safeguard clause	13. Euromed system social surveillance	25. Défining the role of SC 26. Financial co-responsibility mechanisms 27. Strengthening the NG thematic networks 28. Strengthening the NG Platform 29. Euromed Economic and Social Committee 30. Consultation/ Observation mechanisms 31. Participation in evaluation exercises
	Mutual understanding and exchanges	<i>Spaces of freedom</i> 9. Independent cultural and meeting places	<i>Dissemination</i> 14. Euromed Culture Contact Points 15. Cultural information support by Internet 16. Fund to support mobility <i>Mutual image</i> 17. Intercultural teacher training and school exchanges 18. Journalist training 19. Encounter/dialogue among intellectuals	32. EuroMed Civil Forum (in MPC) 33. Strict adherence to universalism 34. Involvement of actors of the civil society of religious inspiration (organisational adaptation) 35. Creating spaces of dialogue on cultural modules and religious diversity
3. EuroMed Lingua Programme				

Overall, this publication offers a fairly exhaustive assessment of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership in the field of civil society in its first ten years. The 35 proposals which it contains build an ambitious agenda for turning the "Common Vision" which is going to head the work of the Euro-Mediterranean Conference of Heads of State and Prime Ministers to be held in Barcelona on November 28-29 into a common project to advance the goals stated in the Barcelona Declaration approved in 1995 and render the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership effective. Of course, much reflection is still needed on the follow-up to each of these proposals and on how to implement them, but at least we have a grid of measures against which we can assess advances in the near future. Now, it is up to civil society itself to bring forward these proposals and monitor their implementation by Euro-Mediterranean institutions and partners.

Acknowledgements

Since December 2004, when the possibility of launching a policy brief was first envisaged, the editor has received the support and advice of many people whose contributions should be acknowledged. First and foremost, I must acknowledge the five authors, who have done their best to contribute to this endeavour in a very busy year for all of us involved in one way or another in the Euro-Mediterranean Process. This project has contributed to the establishment of links of cooperation and friendship among us, of complicity, that I am sure that will last for long years. Then, of course, I must thank the staff of the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung in Morocco, especially the former Resident Representative, Hans Blumenthal, who first urged the editor to formulate concrete proposals and to submit an action-oriented project on civil society in the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and then supported us enthusiastically and facilitated our work throughout. His staff at the Ebert Foundation in Morocco, notably Mourad Ehrabib as Programme officer and Pascale Haboub, made sure that all logistical and practical arrangements ran smoothly.

But many other people contributed at one stage or another to this project and the contents of this policy brief. I should mention: Michelle Pace of the University of Birmingham and Tobias Schumacher of the Mediterranean Programme of the European University Institute, who initiated and directed the international workshop on "The Impact of

European Union Involvement in Civil Society Structures in the Southern Mediterranean” hosted by FES-Maroc in Rabat on December 4-5, 2004, where the idea of the policy brief first emerged, Marc Schade-Poulsen, Larabi Jaidi of the Université Mohammed V de Rabat, Gemma Aubarell of the European Mediterranean Institut (IEMED) in Barcelona), Isafias Barreñada of the Comisiones Obreras Spanish trade union, Tobias Schumacher and Laura Feliú of the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, who on different occasions discussed with me possible authors for the thematic contributions, Kemal Lahbib de l’Espace Associatif in Morocco, Rabea Naciri of the Université Mohammed V de Rabat, Michelle Pace and Michaela Raab of Oxfam Germany, who took part in the workshop we held in Rabat to discuss the preliminary versions of their contributions with the authors, Beatriz Martín of the Spanish Economic and Social Committee, who discussed with me the issues concerning Euro-Mediterranean social consultation and Economic and Social Committees, and Nelly Bandarra and others who commented on different aspects of the policy brief after the first public presentation of the preliminary results, at the Euro-Mediterranean Civil Forum in Luxembourg on April 1-3, 2005, and at the international seminar organised in Rabat by the Groupement d’Études et de Recherches Méditerranée (GERM) on “The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership: What Relevance Today?” (“Le Partenariat euro-méditerranéen: Quelle actualité?”). Finally, Jürgen Ditthard and all the staff of the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung office in Brussels were extremely helpful in organising the public presentation of the policy brief before the European Institutions. Again, many thanks to all of them.

The full version of this policy brief will be published in English and French. An Arabic translation of the Introduction and the Executive Summary will be published.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and Civil Society

The Barcelona Declaration acknowledges :

« (...) The essential contribution that civil society can make to the development process of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and as an essential factor for greater understanding and closeness between peoples (...).

In the 10 years since the Barcelona Conference in November 1995 there has been quite a number of initiatives in this field, both sponsored by the Euro-Mediterranean institutions and initiated by the civil society itself in this framework. But it is undeniable that there is a discrepancy between the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership's discourse on civil society and on the role which it has been assigned in the last ten years. Confining civil society to the third basket is inappropriate and tends to reduce its role. The role of civil society, which acts both as a complementary actor and a watchdog applies to all components of the partnership, including the establishment of an area of peace and stability, the construction of an area of shared prosperity and the development of human resources, understanding between cultures and exchange between civil societies. On the other hand, there has been a tendency to incorporate within civil society a whole range of actors, and particularly those belonging to decentralized cooperation (local government, universities, institutes) which, although they are not governmental, cannot be considered in the strict sense as independent social actors close to the people and truly representative of their interests.

However, practice has been quite different: independent civil society has hardly been allowed to get truly involved and actions have not

been very consistent. It is basically the intergovernmental dimension, which has prevailed in the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, and civil societies have not been integrated, nor have their needs and interests been adequately addressed. This has been recognized by the European Commission in several declarations on human rights and the promotion of democracy:

« (...) The spirit of partnership has not led to a sufficiently frank and serious dialogue on some issues, such as human rights, prevention of terrorism or migrations. (...) The strategy of constructive defence and support to civil society players, traditionally adopted by the EU, has not always been supported by local governments. (...)

(...) A free and prosperous civil society is a basic prerequisite for the success of the partnership in all its aspects. Nongovernmental organizations which are active in a legal framework may make a valuable contribution in numerous arenas of partnership. One of the major goals of cooperation in the areas of human rights, good management of public affairs and the primacy of law should be the establishment of a climate which facilitates the effective work of NGOs. In the long term, it is the best way for the EU to help them. (...) »

[Reinvigorating the Barcelona Process. Communication of the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament in preparation of the Fourth Meeting of the Euro-Mediterranean Foreign Ministers' Conference, Brussels, 6 September 2000, COM(2000) 497 final.]

However, there has been some progress. EuroMeSCo, in its report on ten years after the Barcelona Process, has pointed out that initiatives and interactions between civil societies from the North and South Mediterranean have increased. But in the Mediterranean partner countries, efforts have not been accompanied by political and legal reform, while the impact of civil societies on the population and on confidence-building measures has been rather limited. More than this, associations of religious inspiration, which are one of the most peculiar expressions of social cohesion, have been entirely excluded from the initiatives supported by the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership.

Several reasons are behind this :

1. There is a lack of a clear definition of the role and possibilities of intervention by civil societies.

2. The ambiguity of the concept of civil society itself.

3. Implicit denial of truly existing independent civil societies is the result of at least a combination of three factors:

a) Reservations made by the EU at the time of dealing with an uncertain counterpart, diverse in the extreme and critical of the governments of the Mediterranean partner countries, while the potential contribution of civil societies is precisely their nature, their independence, their plurality and their closeness to the population.

b) The European Commission's bureaucratic imperatives which come up against the poor management capacities of associations.

c) And resistance shown by governments and groups holding power in the Mediterranean partner countries which refuse to recognize the eminent role of reformist initiatives that are critical of the regimes in power.

4. Inappropriate means. Civil society has been trapped in the third basket of the Euromed Partnership, in regional programmes (decentralized cooperation), in the Euromed Civil Fora and in some capacity-building actions for the associations of the Mediterranean partner countries. Their access to Euromed Partnership instruments has been limited for two reasons basically: financing procedures and resistance from some countries.

2. Overcoming the Artificial Division in Three Chapters, Baskets or Tracks

Paradoxically, what was one of the main innovations of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership at the time –integrating economic, political and social and cultural issues into a single strategy - has become a straitjacket and has become highly dysfunctional for promoting the goals of the Partnership. This is mainly because the political dynamics (and the structure of priorities for the European Union Member States) has tended to ignore the inherent interlinkage between the three baskets. It does not make any sense whatsoever to confine “human affairs”, including such issues as migration and even worker rights to only one of the three “baskets” of the Partnership, arguably the least relevant in terms of resources (both financial and institutional) and priorities.

Such issues are structurally linked to processes like the establishment of the Euro-Mediterranean Free Trade Areas (second basket) or regional conflicts and respect for human rights and democracy (first basket). Even worse, there is increasing evidence that there is at least some potential for contradiction between the dynamics of the three baskets.

Whereas the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership seems to be overdetermined in institutional terms, there seems to be a notorious gap in procedures and in the involvement of social actors. It is paradoxical that the European Union has signed Association Agreements which are supposed to contribute to develop and consolidate democracy in the MPCs and entail such a wide-ranging economic and social impact and transformation agenda for the coming decades after a process that has not, in most cases, involved any internal social consultation with the interest groups, social partners and civil societies in their own countries.

The objectives set out in the Barcelona Declaration for the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership are still fully relevant, as well as the overall approach. But the Euro-Mediterranean partners have to be prepared to re-focus the Partnership, to redefine its priorities around 1) ensuring economic and social rights (education, work, health, access to water) that make a difference in the lives of normal people (other initiatives are all very commendable, but only a few have the privilege of benefiting from attending film festivals, participating in a Tempus programme or even being part of a youth exchange) and 2) establishing democracy within the Partnership itself –extending consultation with social partners and the people involved at all levels, both at the political level (dialogue with societies, rather than dialogue between governments, is true political dialogue) and at the project level, as part of the planning and execution of every MEDA project throughout its whole life cycle.

3. Making Possible the Partnership : Resources, Mobility and Languages

The proposals put forward in this policy brief have been structured along three main axis : 1) Bringing the Partnership closer to the people;

2) Implementing the stated goals of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership; 3) Engaging the civil society in the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership. However, there are three transversal issues which emerged one and again in all contributions and discussions and which lie at the heart of any true Partnership involving the peoples of the North and the South of the Mediterranean: the question of resources, i.e. the need to simplify the financing procedures for civil society actors; the question of mobility of actors and citizens (and very specially the question of visas) and the question of language, i.e. the need to promote a wider knowledge of the Arab language amongst Europeans to facilitate exchanges and a true mutual understanding.

1. Simplifying Access to Financial Resources for Smaller Associations

An in-depth reform of the procedures of access to European funding is required. It is the democratic functioning of the European institutions that is at fault. The absolute rigidity of the many technical and financial mechanisms set up for this purpose place European tenders out of reach. One example is the legal status of associations requested in the rules of procedure. This status is not applicable in a number of countries in the south where the authorisation to set up a non-profit association is no longer delivered, or where these associations are simply not authorised to receive foreign funding.

Access to finance should be eased both for advanced organizations and for the smaller local or poorly structured groups. One should take account of the fact that some NGOs in the Mediterranean partner countries do have the capacity to manage significant funds, so their systematic exclusion should be avoided. Likewise, it is necessary, for those less effectively structured groups, that mechanisms used take account of their specific size (micro-projects), cease to be one-off and not be granted on the basis of projects (pluri-annual solutions should be sought after); they should be accessible and their management simple (simplified processes, reduced administrative charge and support from the Delegations of the Commission).

Legitimacy of social organizations is not only based upon their representativeness, but on the effectiveness of their activities. Their involvement in the partnership concerns every issue related to the

participation of people and democracy. The nature and technical competence of some associations places great difficulty for their access to partnership financing. It is therefore necessary to simplify the procedures and to put in place appropriate mechanisms.

2. Creation of the 'Euromed Cooperation' Visa

The visa policy in the Schengen space and in the Mediterranean countries is a major obstacle to Euro-Mediterranean exchanges. The launch of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership has failed to have any impact on the visa regimen, particularly those imposed on the nationals of the Southern countries wishing to enter Europe, in blatant contradiction with the spirit of the Barcelona Declaration. A clear and simple abolition of the visas between the signatory countries would have been the tangible and symbolic materialisation of the desire to 'make the Mediterranean an area of dialogue, exchanges and cooperation'.

One may propose the creation of a visa that would bear the 'Euromed' label and would be issued to all persons who travel from north to south, south to north and south to south within the framework of Euro-Mediterranean cooperation projects. In addition to 'Tourist', 'Professional' and 'Family' visa categories, a 'Euromed Cooperation' visa would be issued after a simplified and quick procedure (proof of funds, accommodation requirements and other documents to be waived) and guarantee multiple entries over an extended period. The adoption of this system would be made compulsory and reciprocal for all countries signatory of association agreements with the European Union. More generally, all countries signatory of the Barcelona Process should adhere to it.

3. Euromed Lingua: A Programme for Linguistic and Cultural Diversity

In the Euromed region, the promotion and defence of cultural diversity is conditional upon a coherent language policy. In fact, access to the Other's culture, the basis of every intercultural dialogue, entails taking into consideration linguistic diversity, and for the Mediterranean space, taking into account the Arabic and Turkish languages as vital components

of the cultural life of Southern and Eastern Mediterranean Countries.

Nothing exists currently in this field within the EMP. Without claiming to cover all the aspects of the language policy of the Euromed space, Euromed Lingua could tackle in a pragmatic approach the most urgent needs. Euromed Lingua would comprise two parts: supporting Mediterranean languages teaching and learning in Europe, and supporting translation into Arabic and Turkish of European literary works.

a. Dissemination of Arabic and Turkish languages in Europe

Euromed Lingua could undertake several actions in this regard:

- Encouraging the teaching of Arabic and Turkish through supporting the creation of new tools and methods intended for teachers, and cooperation between language teacher training institutions.

- Encouraging the generalisation of early learning of Arabic and Turkish at school and higher studies levels in European countries.

- Encouraging the learning of Arabic and Turkish within the framework of professional training in Europe in the sectors of journalism, tourism, cultural management and universities. A specific support action to the mobility of young people in the process of training should be provided for in this regard.

b. Translation into Arabic and Turkish:

Two initiatives would be financed :

- Supporting the translation of European contemporary authors' works, with a particular emphasis on fiction, poetry and theatre.

- Supporting cooperation among professionals, translation schools, and schools providing training in literary translation, the aim being to contribute towards improving the quality of literary translation and the mobility of translators.

A. BRINGING THE PARTNERSHIP CLOSER TO THE PEOPLE

Ten years after its inception, and whatever the assessment one makes of its track record, there is little doubt that the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership remains distant from the worries, needs and interests of the peoples of the region. It lacks visibility and ownership,

but mainly because it has remained quite irrelevant to the daily lives of common people.

A true Partnership should promote the gradual fulfilment of all economic, social and cultural rights (including social security, an adequate standard of living, housing, and health care). Economic, social and cultural rights are “the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world”, as stated in the International Covenant adopted by the United Nations in this field, but arguably the two truly fundamental rights, which can open the door for achieving all the others, are education, which allows individuals to reach their full potential, and employment, which allows them to integrate into society and achieve personal emancipation.

4. Launching a Euro-Mediterranean Literacy Campaign to Achieve a Reduction of Illiteracy by 80% in Five Years (by 2010) in the Region

There are almost 50 million illiterate adults in the Mediterranean Partner Countries, an average of close to 25% of the adult population (and close to half of adult women). This very figure renders even the concepts of participation in civil society and the Partnership at large void. In pragmatic terms, literacy is a key step, for instance, to promoting a true democracy and public debate, to empowering communities, to optimising micro-credit schemes, and to mobilising migrant remittances to promote development in source societies, let alone to benefiting from the ICT in one way or another. A reduction of illiteracy in the region would arguably even reduce the incidence of conflicts. In other terms, it can be argued that eradicating illiteracy in the region is a material condition for the achievement of the goals of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership.

But literacy is, above all, a fundamental human right. Basic education, within which literacy is the key learning tool, was recognised as a human right over 50 years ago, in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It is a scandal that this right continues to be violated for such a large proportion of the MPCs’ populations.

So eradicating illiteracy in the Mediterranean Partner Countries is, on one hand, a moral bottom-line for the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, and it would be a highly symbolic step indicating the true

hierarchy of priorities. This could be, for once, a genuine European contribution to the 2003-2012 United Nations Literacy Decade.

The literacy campaign itself would create thousands of jobs across the region for a certain period of time, thus contributing to mitigate another of the social scourges of the region, not to mention the fact that literacy and numeracy, together with school education, are the best leverages for the employability of young people. At the same time, literacy campaigns are a powerful mechanism for civil society mobilization and structuring through community participation. It is also the best way to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women.

5. Defining a Euro-Mediterranean Employment Strategy with the Goal of Ensuring that the Number of Unemployed People in the Region Does Not Increase in the Next 10 Years

If the MPCs and the EU are serious about the stated goal of achieving a sustainable and balanced economic and social development, as stated in the Barcelona Declaration, it does make full sense to integrate quantified employment targets and employment impact assessment at all levels of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, including MEDA Funds and EMFTAs, because there can hardly be any other more important social and economic challenge in their near future than the challenge of offering employment opportunities to their rapidly increasing population.

Moreover, a Euro-Mediterranean Employment Strategy should be put in place, combining both a regional surveillance system of employment and employment policy indicators (see next proposal) and the formulation of common orientative guidelines that would be regularly reviewed, with quantified, country-specific goals, the specification of instruments and of commitments to achieve them, and the allocation of necessary resources in the framework of the MEDA programmes. The model to be followed would be that of the European Employment Strategy process in place since 1999.

The first step to launch this wide-ranging initiative would be to convene a Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on Employment formed by Employment ministers of all the Euro-Mediterranean Partner Countries and the European Commission.

4. Human Rights and Barcelona +

As far as the human rights and the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership are concerned, summarising one can say that:

- The human rights situation in the region has not generally improved since 1995.

- Human rights language has slowly gained ground in the declarative (but non-binding) regional documents of the EMP and EU, but has not been followed yet by regional political dialogue, nor by concrete human rights specific activities or programs.

- The EMP almost exclusively addressed civil and political rights issues and not issues relating to women's rights, migrant's rights and economic, social and cultural rights, i.e. human rights promotion took place at the expense of a coherent and holistic approach to rights based development and cooperation.

- Human rights promotion on a regional level has been marginalized at the expense of a bi-lateral approach with a strong emphasis on civil and political rights. The most systematic and promising initiatives seem to lie at the latter level. It is too early to predict how the ENP Action Plans will work. Taking the lack of benchmarking and time lines into consideration a lot will depend on political-diplomatic will to prioritise the human rights agenda.

- Considering the ENP Action Plans, the Commission Communication on Reinvigorating Human Rights and Democratisation in the Mediterranean Region and other documents leads also to concluding that a wide range of instruments to promote human rights within the framework of the EMP has been created that can be constructively used in future work, except:

- Mechanisms for benchmarking
- Mechanisms for gender mainstreaming
- Systematic and coherent dialogue and support to civil society
- The promotion of holistic regional approach to human rights promotion taking the indivisibility of rights into account

Filling these gaps and adding the necessary dose of political will to implement these instruments should be important steps for the future.

6. The EMP Should Develop a Coherent Strategy for the Equal Participation of Women in the Barcelona Process

The only more or less explicit reference to human rights issues in the second chapter of the Barcelona Declaration is the recognition of the key role women play in development and the commitment to promote their active participation in economic and social life and in the creation of employment.

Nevertheless, the Barcelona Declaration does not explicitly acknowledge the relationship between human rights, democracy, development and women's rights, and there has been a tendency by governments in the EuroMed region, as well as within the EU institutions, to regard women's rights as an issue of 'religious norms and cultural traditions' that thus should be treated as a domestic issue.

It was not until November 2001 that gender issues were mentioned in the final conclusions of one Euro-Mediterranean Conference and today women's rights remain inconsistently addressed in the Euro-Mediterranean National Strategy papers, National Indicative Programs and the Neighbourhood Action Plans.

A main concern of the Partnership should therefore be to promote gender equality in the region. This would imply building on best practices in various parts of the EuroMed region.

This would imply :

- The definition of an overall program for encouraging and supporting revision of the existing political and legal framework to sensitise it to gender issues, including for the lifting of reservations to the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), and ratify CEDAW's optional protocol.
- Gender mainstreaming all three baskets of the EMP to include women's rights and equal opportunity issues in all areas of activity, not merely those traditionally deemed to concern women.
- Integrating women's rights into their human rights dialogues under the bi-lateral association agreements and including these as an integral part of country reports.
- Designing affirmative action programmes within the EMP aimed at increasing the participation of women in all main areas of activities and supporting them with appropriate financial and technical resources.

- Using reduced gender disparities as an indicator to the success of legal reform and practice in the countries' development policies and strategies; including a specific chapter on gender in the Annual MEDA report drafted by the Commission; and reserving a financial facility for the prevention of discrimination and violence against women in the MENA region in the MEDA programmes as well as in the EIDHR.

- Ensuring gender-sensitive expertise within staff at all level of the EMP mechanisms at the central level as well as in their representations and delegations in the Partner States.

- Including the representation of relevant independent women's rights organisations in dialogues with civil society by reserving quotas for the participation of women's rights organisations in these consultations.

7. The EMP Partners Should Develop Coherent, Consistent and Efficient Measures to the Mainstreaming of Human Rights in Bi-lateral Cooperation

On the bilateral level, focus on a bi-lateral level should lie on introducing clear benchmarks and time lines for action that could help assess progress and set-backs on the basis of international human rights standards rather than on purely political grounds. As on the regional level an important aspect would be to promote a human rights approach based on the indivisibility of rights and to include structural and systematic consultation with civil society. Human rights and gender mainstreaming into all political dialogues and programmes is also a key element. Thus it is recommendable that :

- Each Neighbourhood Action Plan should identify the relevant rights engaged under each of the Action sections including both civil and political rights and economic, social and cultural rights. In particular strenuous efforts should be made in relation to introducing the latter set of rights into analysis of economic and social issues. In this context the EU should develop as a matter of priority sound and manageable methodologies for human rights evaluations at the project level, and the EuropAid should as a matter of urgency commission pilot projects in this regard.

- All activities should have concrete aims, outputs and timelines

and identify examples of benchmarks and indicators based on the partner country's international commitments.

- The Action Plans should recognise the obligation of the EU in providing assistance through the ENP instrument to respect all stakeholders' rights both in terms of how the projects are implemented and the final results. Therefore it will stipulate the need for appropriate stakeholder analysis to be carried out, identify the relevant rights and duty holders and lines of accountability and offer the prospect of redress where violations occur through poorly planning or implementation.

- The beneficiary participation should be recognised as a cross-cutting issue which should be addressed at all stages of project design and implementation. In line with principles of transparency and accountability such participation should also encompass mechanisms for redress where a project negatively impacts and /or fails to fulfil its aims

- The role of civil society in promoting and protecting all rights and representing those who are often politically and economically marginalized should be recognised by integrating their involvement as far as possible into all Neighbourhood Action Plans rather than merely being the subject of discrete projects.

8. Adopting a Protocol Establishing a Safeguard Mechanism for Economic and Social Conditions in All Euro-Mediterranean Association Agreements

At least over the short term, and particularly in the last four years of the 12-year transitory period provided to establish the Euro-Mediterranean Free Trade Areas in which tariff dismantling is concentrated, the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership risks crossing over the 'social sustainability threshold' –the absolute limit of negative effects of policies and economic reform without sufficient compensating measures that a social group or a whole population may suffer before revolting in one way or another. Beyond this threshold, a country enters a turbulence area of social disturbance, economic breakdown and overall instability, where economic laws no longer hold (preventing anticipated future positive effects of reform from

materializing) and the institutional cruising devices required for guaranteeing civil and political rights would no longer work, giving way in extreme cases to the phenomenon of 'failed states.

To make sure that the implementation of the Euro-Mediterranean Free Trade Areas is not detrimental to the economic and social conditions of the populations involved, it would be possible to establish, as part of the regional surveillance system referred to above, a safeguard mechanism anchoring the starting point of the MPCs regarding certain indicators on economic and social rights as "minimum thresholds" for the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership. On one hand, this would allow the Partnership to envision advances, and in case a setback were detected in one particular indicator, it would allow either a temporary suspension of the identified causes (when they lie in a policy measure, such as trade liberalization in one particular sector or another), or the implementation of automatic compensatory measures such as an increase and/or reorientation of MEDA funds to focus on improving this particular indicator. The application of the safeguard measures would require a decision of the bilateral Association Council –i.e., it would happen on a consensual basis- upon request of one of the parties (i.e., the EU or the Government of the involved country).

5. Mutual Understanding and Cultural Exchanges

The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP) came into existence at the time when the old bipolar world had just expired, carrying into oblivion the stability in world relations which was based on the balance of power between the two superpowers. The fall of the bipolar system and the ensuing warming up of international relations seems to have given Europe, which was persevering in its quest for political integration, a new dynamic that propelled it to first seek rapprochement with its East, and to subsequently launch its strategic initiative towards the South. At the time, the EMP was interpreted as the dawn of a new era of partnership relations between former colonisers and colonised, and, therefore, as heralding the emergence of a new multi-polar world. In the same vein, new, more open and trusting cultural relations were considered possible between the two shores of the Mediterranean Sea. Europe was (re)-discovering the fact that the Mediterranean region was not only synonymous of tourism

at best and boat people at worst, but was also a cultural space rich in its diversity. But what is the situation like ten years later? Threats to cultural diversity have never been more alarming for the Mediterranean and even for Europe.

Over the coming fifteen years, Euro Mediterranean relations will certainly feature at the heart of the European public debate, mostly as a response to Turkey's accession process (a debate already started). But the Mediterranean region will also be on the agenda in light of the perspective of an important and new flow of several millions of migrant workers towards Europe, called upon to compensate for the European demographic deficit, guarantee the functioning of the European social security systems (when the baby boom generation reaches retirement age) and, in a nutshell, called upon to ensure European growth. These two issues will confer heightened importance on relations with the Mediterranean region of which the cultural dimension (and not the inter-religious one) would never have been more crucial yet largely ignored.

The Barcelona Declaration clearly defines the general objective of the Euromed partnership as making the Mediterranean Basin a space for dialogue, exchanges and co-operation. But the substantial innovation in this text remains the association of 'civil society' and 'culture' in the third part, as if explicitly intimating that the dialogue of cultures is first of all a dialogue of societies, and that it is not the exclusive purview of the states or elites on the two shores of the Mediterranean.

Beyond these international constraints, proclaimed ambitions and achievements, what critical perception can we form of these past ten years? The dialogue between cultures has been the topic of such an important number of meetings and declarations, particularly after 9/11, that the notion has ended up losing its true sense and becoming no more than a consensual mantra or at worse a form of disguise. Antithesis of the clash of civilisations, the notion, benevolent in appearance, carries the idea of a face-to-face of cultures which are perceived from an angle that diminishes their uniqueness, as the blocks of a hard core that can only be religious. Yet, each culture is an amalgam of diversities, distinctions and contradictions. It is in fact at the core of each tradition that continual negotiations take place to provide these cultures with the provisional answers to today's challenges. In the

Mediterranean space in particular, cultures are multiple, complex, and intrinsically enmeshed. Therefore, there can be no question of a face to face but rather an acknowledgement of this complexity and the mutual embracing of our cultures.

However, another controversial dynamic exists: everything set in motion today under the label of the 'dialogue between cultures' brings into play interlocutors who are as similar as twins. The intellectual and multilingual elite of the two shores of the Mediterranean Sea work together, conceptualise together, conceive together, and the 'little' that distinguishes them is enough to give them the heady feeling of the dialogue between civilisations. Thousands of projects, programmes and symposia are taking place in this way. Europe is satisfied; the governments of the South cannot aspire to better. And thus goes unnoticed the true reality of the Mediterranean societies, their real concerns and, most of all, the men and women who, north or south of the Mediterranean, speak only their mother tongue, do not have the means to travel, have zero chance of obtaining a visa, are not professionals of the 'Euromed scene', but nonetheless represent the role-players of the cultural, artistic, and associative life of their countries. Dialogue will remain an illusion as long as those who partake of it are perfectly secular, 'modern' and French or English speaking performers. In fact, it is only among those who carry within themselves references that have at their origin a distinct mode of thinking and feeling for traditions that dialogue can rediscover its true meaning.

Spaces of Freedom

9. Independent Culture, Gathering and Art spaces in the Mediterranean : Encouraging the Mutualisation of these Freedom Spaces

For a few years now, we have been witnessing the emergence in some countries of the South of independent cultural structures and spaces. This phenomenon has made possible the emergence of new cultural and artistic adventures played out on the local scenes with the populations themselves. These multidisciplinary venues (music, theatre, visual arts, dancing, etc.), amenable and open spaces, play a very important part in the production and dissemination of young

creations and facilitate access to cultural forms that otherwise have no place in the traditional set-ups. These intermediary spaces (old factories, disused plants, houses) are reclaimed by a strong human dimension and are therefore above speculative and commercial rationales.

It is necessary in this respect to set up support mechanisms (website, collaborative platforms, aid funds...) that would make mutualisation possible, create a space of exchange and promote information sharing. It is also of utmost importance to provide training on the management of these venues which are particularly vulnerable and subject to constraints of all kinds, but nonetheless essential.

B. IMPLEMENTING THE STATED GOALS OF THE PARTNERSHIP

10. A Map of the Cultural Mediterranean: practices, exchanges and sites

A reality check of culture and its needs remains to be carried out. It may constitute the premise of a more profound and solid approach to cultural co-operation in the Mediterranean region and of the public and private action in favour of the Euro-Mediterranean dialogue.

The purpose is to carry out surveys in the Mediterranean countries in order to establish a qualitative reality check of:

- Cultural production (books, translations, discs, plays...)
- The flow of cultural goods,
- The mobility of persons (study trips, movement of students and researchers, cultural tourism, twinning...),
- Existing equipment (libraries, computers and cyber cafés, creativity spaces and access to culture facilities, cinemas...),
- (Basic and professional) training on cultural occupations,
- Financing (private and public, the usual criteria...)

Having collected the necessary elements, the next step would be the identification of the most urgent needs and the formulation of realistic conjectures.

6. Legal Conditions and Human Rights

Fulfilling the objectives of the Barcelona Process in the field of human rights implies first of all the implementation and/or the strengthening of the existing instruments, first of all:

11. The Implementation and Strengthening of the Commission Communication on Reinvigorating EU Actions on Human Rights and Democratisation with Mediterranean Partners

The Communication provides 10 'concrete' recommendations for improving the dialogue between the EU and its regional partners and ensuring complementarity between political dialogue and financial assistance, between the assistance provided under the MEDA programme and under the European Initiative on Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) and between regional and national dimensions.

Taken together the ten recommendations mark a significant step forward in the EU's human rights policy in the region while outlining concrete action points for the EMP.

It should however be strengthened by ensuring from the onset that the

- Proposed country reports are built on the highest human rights standards and that they are made public and thus available for public scrutiny. If they are not, EMP human rights policies will remain non-transparent and progress or setbacks in bi-lateral relation between the EU and the SMP cannot be institutionally assessed.

- Mainstreaming of human rights into all chapters of the Barcelona Process is implemented in a systematic, effective, consistent and coherent manner. This implies amongst other that obligations of both conduct and result are created in MEDA projects providing possibility to assess how the projects were implemented in terms of rights to information, participation and redress as to what were the end results. To this end, the EuropAid should establish pilot studies with regard to the human rights implications of MEDA actions in various sectors as a matter of priority.

Finally, a prerequisite for implementing the principles of the Communication would be to ensure efficient, sustained long-term

financial support to relevant local and regional human rights structures while encouraging the lifting of legal restraints on civil society work. It should be considered to:

- Create in 2005-06 a regional MEDA programme on human rights which would be complementary to the EIDHR.
- Establish a regional Human Rights and Democracy Program within the framework of the future EU Neighbourhood financial instrument for 2007 - 2013.

12. The EMP Should establish a Task Force at the Multilateral Level With the Aim of Advising the Partners on Human Rights Issues of Regional Concern

As mentioned above the regional human rights dimension of the Barcelona Process has remained weak. Establishing a task force within the framework of the EMP could significantly enhance multilateralism.

Priorities of the task force would be to

- Reinvigorate the implementation of existing instruments at the regional level.
- Establish significant links between the conclusions and recommendations of UN mechanisms for the protection of human rights (special rapporteurs, working groups, monitoring committees of the Treaties and Pacts), and the discussions on human rights within the framework of the EMP at multilateral and bilateral level.
- Analyse how various parts of the Barcelona Process interact and have impact on human rights. This would for example include analysing the intricate and complex relation between the establishment of the free trade zone, and the protection and implementation of economic and social rights, hereunder the right to work, the rights of migrants and their families. This would also imply identifying regional mechanism for seeking redress by right holders.
- Propose regional actions in fields of general concern such as the compliance with international norms and conventions of the judiciary, including in the fight against terrorism, and the promotion and protection of the rights of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. The

latter should include steps towards ratifying the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families by all Partner states.

- The task force should also propose relevant mechanisms for structural and systematic thematic dialogue with the most significant regional civil society human rights structures.

13. Establishing a Euro-Mediterranean Regional System of Surveillance of Economic and Social Developments

A minimal core of social and economic rights –along the lines of the European Social Charter- should become an integral part of cooperation with MPCs; this is an essential element of the Partnership, as stated with respect to human rights, of which economic and social rights are an integral and indivisible part. Second, a joint Social Action Plan designed to achieve, as quickly as possible, this set of baseline rights on the basis of joint responsibility should be implemented. Explicit social policy targets in terms of activity rate, poverty incidence, education indicators and social security coverage, together with regular evaluation and monitoring of developments in this field (according to the principle of co-responsibility) should be incorporated as permanent features of the Barcelona Process, as has already been done within the EU in the framework of the social and employment policy surveillance process.

It is important to underline the idea that the multilateral surveillance system advocated is not an observatory-like independent monitoring mechanism, but an information-intensive process of policy-oriented political dialogue, exchange and co-operation between partner Governments (i.e., a political process) aimed at finding common ground in questions of shared interest. To this extent, the participation of civil society as such in the whole process would be limited, but the very existence of the surveillance system and the information generated in this framework (which should be public) would become a key instrument for civil society involvement and political pressure.

Of course, since the whole review process is a knowledge-intensive and information-sharing activity where good-quality data are critical, as well as a politically sensitive exercise, the role in this process of a relatively independent, “technical” body like the European Commission

is a key to its success. Although such an institution has yet to be created in the framework of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, the research institute networks FEMISE and EuroMesco could play an important role in the initial stages.

Dissemination of Culture

14. Creation of Euromed Culture Contact Points in all Mediterranean Countries

The creation of 'Euromed Cultural Contact Points' is proposed in the Southern Mediterranean Countries. The goal would be to bring the cultural partnership and the cultural role-players closer to the civil society in each country; in other words, to bring the European offer closer to its potential beneficiaries.

A real 'interface' at the service of the Mediterraneans, these Contact Points will favour a better understanding of the Euromed programme and a better mastering of the procedures of access to funds, and will provide assistance to project carriers.

It is of importance that these structures be amenable and well equipped in terms of information dissemination means. But most of all, they must benefit from a status guaranteeing their independence from national institutions.

15. Support Independent Internet-Assisted Cultural Information in the Mediterranean Area

To provide independent information based on dialogue and on the points of convergence of the two shores has become of primordial importance. The Internet is an efficient tool for breaking the constraints of information and disentangling it from the above described constraints. Likewise, this instrument relieves the crippling difficulties inherent to the movement of persons living south of the Mediterranean, which difficulties still constitute a major obstacle to understanding, confrontation of ideas and the flow of information in the Mediterranean region.

In addition to the internet sites of major media organs (written press, radio, television...), new expression platforms have emerged in the past few years within the framework of associations that have created alternative and free channels for totally independent information. An example, unique in its kind since being a purely Euro-Mediterranean innovation, is Babelmed.

16. Promoting the Mobility of Independent Cultural Role-Players and Young People through the Creation of Mobility Assistance Funds

Direct meetings are an essential dimension of associative action in the Mediterranean area, both at the individual and collective levels. Multiple contacts, the flow of information and trips are mechanisms for generating initiatives and ideas.

Now that the Euromed Youth programme has just been suspended, the MEDA framework does not provide for any other instrument for extending mobility micro-grants to associative and cultural role-players in the Euromed space.

The creation of mobility-assistance funds managed with administrative flexibility and simplicity should be encouraged. They may derive inspiration from the Roberto Cimetta Fund which awards travel grants to artists and professionals (technicians and creators) in the fields of theatre, dance and visual arts among others

Mutual Understanding and Image

17. Training of Secondary School Teachers on the Inter-Cultural Dimension : Supporting School Exchanges

Intervening in the training of young primary and secondary levels teachers would make it possible to help them acquire the tools of a critical out-look on the contents of their future practice of teaching, and to probably meet the needs felt by the teachers themselves who face a school audience that has evolved, for educational tools that school manuals do not provide satisfactorily.

The proposal would entail the organisation of a series of training sessions dedicated to inter-cultural aspects, benefiting teachers

during their professional training in at least six countries of the southern and northern banks of the Mediterranean. These training sessions would be integrated in the curriculum on an experimental and voluntary basis. An evaluation process of these sessions should subsequently make possible the production of pedagogical tools (brochures and others), providing tangible aid tools for injecting the inter-cultural dimension in the practice of teaching and motivating Euro-Mediterranean school exchanges (methodology, contacts...). In parallel, an observatory of school exchanges would allow the dissemination of information in schools and serve as a monitor of these exchanges.

18. Create and Multiply Training 'Mediterranean' Modules for Young European Journalists

Stereotyped, incorrect and even negative images of the Arab world circulated in Europe generate a feeling of resentment and an attitude of withdrawal not only among the populations south of the Mediterranean Basin but also among the European citizens of Arab descent. The action proposed here would take an upstream direction and start with the training of young journalists.

This proposal is twofold.

First of all, it is necessary to devise and propose training modules that would be integrated in the curricula of training journalists in several European schools. A basic module would be dedicated to general knowledge of the Arab Mediterranean world in all its aspects. It would make possible a first approach to culture in general and would be dispensed to first year students. Specialised modules would provide a more in-depth approach and would be dispensed to second year students. It would be concluded by a traineeship in an Arab country.

The second phase of the project would be to set up a network of participating schools (educational tools sharing, website, joint participation in working visits, etc.).

19. A Programme of Regular Meetings of European and Mediterranean Researchers, Intellectuals and Associative Action Officials: the Islamic Perspective and European Perspective in Dialogue

Rare and almost unique in its kind, a meeting took place in Beirut in February 2004 in a show of open and bold dialogue between the Islamic and European perspectives of today's challenges. The gathering provided a real opportunity for an intellectual face to face of persons hailing from diverse intellectual horizons: a true dialogue, sometimes harsh, on the concepts and values at the root of mutual perceptions, prejudices and misunderstandings between the Islamic world and the European one.

It seems urgent and necessary to ensure the continuity of this type of gatherings which represent a model of good practices, and strive towards the sustainability of this genuine form of dialogue through the organisation of regular gatherings and follow-up meetings of which the contents should be widely disseminated and feed the public debate in societies and public opinions in Europe and the Mediterranean.

C. ENGAGING CIVIL SOCIETY IN THE EURO-MEDITERRANEAN PARTNERSHIP

7. Assessment of Participation of Civil Society in the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership

The role of civil society within the Partnership has been very modest. Its very presence in the language used and in speeches is rather limited.

The EU has been very timid in advocating the role of autonomous civil societies within the EMP. While mention should be made of the resilience shown by some public authorities, which led to a lack of consensus over the role of civil societies, the role of the EU should not be overlooked. The latter, while it has been trying to promote change and democracy without putting the security and stability of the Mediterranean partner countries at risk, has bet on processes under the control of the current governing elites. Moreover, autonomous civil society has been viewed as an anti-governmental sector and not as an agent of effective change.

It is necessary to clearly define the role and place of civil societies within the partnership, ensure that this role and place be assumed by every state and every institution, and urge governments to facilitate the activities of NGOs within their countries as well as promote cross-border cooperation.

The first requirement for the participation of civil societies within the EMP is to strengthen local social expressions and to protect them in order to facilitate their action through ways and means that are specific to them (political influence, intervention) and to allow them to exert pressure from inside (thus contributing to the promotion of democracy and to the revitalization of political and social life).

Secondly, North and South civil societies need to effectively articulate their actions. To this end, they have to go beyond dialogue between associations and work together within the framework of stable cooperation networks. From the European side, there is a need for increased interest in the Euromed within the North countries and in Central Europe.

National platforms and networks must be reinforced. This is particularly complicated in the Euromed area while mobility of actors is rather limited. In this respect, resources must be provided, and associations are in need of accessible regional programmes and adequate financing means for micro-projects while simplifying their administrative management.

Lastly, mechanisms aimed at interacting with the public authorities are needed, be they Euromed institutions or governments.

Ten years after the first Euro-Mediterranean Summit of Barcelona, and now that time has come to make an assessment of the partnership, we should stress the marginal role that has been assigned to the civil society. So far, the lack of consistency between the official declarations and the effective participation of civil society has been so obvious that there are doubts about the actual political will to integrate peoples into the EMP. Nevertheless, at the same time, significant progress has been achieved in the articulation of the autonomous civil society (consolidation of networks, reform of the Civil Fora and creation of a Euromed Non-Governmental Platform), which attests to the firm willingness of associations, NGOs and trade unions to contribute to the revitalization of the partnership.

If a better articulation of civil society within the EMP is considered as necessary, then Euromed institutions are requested to rapidly clarify the role civil society is supposed to play and a political agreement among its members should be reached. This position should be considered as binding for all institutions and all governments and should be translated into the creation of mechanisms of dialogue and the adaptation of EMP financial instruments.

8. Financial Means and Access of Civil Society to Public Funding

In general, associations work with their own funds or with public funding from their governments or from supranational agencies. Transnational activities of civil society have a very high cost that smaller associations are not able to bear, which simply is an obstacle to their participation. However, financial mechanisms accessible to civil society have excluded these small, local or poorly structured, groups, while they are those that most need them. If their contribution is positive, the institutions (referred to in the EMP budget) and governments should provide funding for the activities of civil societies.

The very nature of NGOs (small size, working at the micro-level) requires long-term, effective and sustainable financial support, especially for those active in the Mediterranean space. In addition to their own funds, they should be able to receive public resources, locally and from the EMP, for three main reasons :

- a. to give more impact to civil society's specific actions ;
- b. for the national platforms, sub-regional and regional thematic networks ;
- c. for a better general articulation of the Platform with the Euromed dimension.

Solutions must be found to avoid the veto or circumvent the requirements imposed by some governments (for example MEDA-Democracy has sought out a programme outside EMP for its management).

Funding of civil society structures and of its activities is in no way a huge budget section, but micro-projects are rather heavy to manage and the institutions are reluctant to finance them on a long-term basis.

20. Establishing a Financing Instrument Aimed at Strengthening Civil Society In the Mediterranean Partner Countries, and Particularly Micro-projects

A regional programme or a micro-project line (MEDA-NGO or MEDA-Civil Society) designed to strengthen local civil society associations in the Mediterranean Partner Countries has to be established and could become a financial instrument for the neighbourhood policy (2007-2013).

21. Strengthening Civil Society In the Mediterranean Partner Countries

Strengthening civil society in the Mediterranean Partner Countries requires an appropriate legal framework and the opening of spaces of freedom and the right of independent association. Governments often present para-governmental institutions as civil society groups, while harassing independent associations. The capacity of this civil society to exist and to be active, as well as its recognition is an essential basis.

Secondly, civil society will need resources in order to develop its activities. Its resources must first be local, and can be complemented with public and external resources.

At the Euromed level, strengthening civil society in a country consists, first and foremost, in facilitating its cross-border action, that is to say developing its internal and external interaction with other actors.

22. Establishing of Procedures Designed to Extend the Dialogue with Civil Society at the National Level

It is necessary to establish procedures that are likely to gradually extend practices of dialogue and consensus-building both at the regional level and at the national level, and thus contribute to strengthening the practice of social dialogue by local civil societies, and in a word contribute to the promotion of democracy.

Establish annual consultations to discuss association agreements, meetings for monitoring and evaluation of the agreements and action plans; set up thematic committees; hold meetings between the civil society and the National Parliaments.

Some Mediterranean partner countries may show resistance, while the EU will tend to avoid making this issue become a serious bone of contention. Yet, political dialogue should introduce soft instruments to ease the gradual implication of non-governmental entities: presence of associations with an observer status at official meetings and in the consultative bodies of the institutions and programmes, support to legal reform which would facilitate the work of associations, joint implementation of programmes, etc.

23. Strengthening Trade Unions and Trade Unions' Role in the Mediterranean Partner Countries

Strong, independent and democratic trade unions are an essential element of democratic societies. However, even if the situation differs from country to country, it is possible to identify some common features of the trade union situation in the MPCs which at the same time affect their active participation in the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership: a) lack of autonomy; b) deficient democratic functioning; c) loss of the social base; d) limited trade union activity.

In the framework of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, even though there are social consultative bodies in some countries, unions have been kept completely out of the negotiations (absence of consultation).

In this context, some measures that could make a contribution to the strengthening and modernisation of trade union organizations in MPCs as reliable social partners are the following :

1. Promotion, in a negotiated and consensual manner and within the framework of the current reforms of the national legal framework for labour in the MPCs (reforms of the work codes, etc.), of measures that strengthen and reinforce the independence of unions, respect pluralism, clarify union representativity, strengthen their democratic functioning and protect union rights.

2. Measures to encourage the development of collective bargaining practices in work centres and at the level of industry, as well as measures to encourage a culture of tripartite social dialogue.

3. Actions that reinforce unions' technical capacities (economic and legal advisory teams) in order to increase their capacity for independent analysis and their capacity to make proposals.

4. Encouragement of trans-border trade union cooperation activities (transnational trade union action) either at the Arab regional (south-south) or the Euro-Mediterranean level; such activities could address industry-specific issues, transversal issues, or issues related to specific transnational companies.

The following measures could promote their participation in the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership :

1. Assurance of stable support for the Euro-Mediterranean Trade Union Forum from the European Commission.

2. Establishment of national consultation mechanisms with the economic and social partners on the different instruments of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (implementation of the Association Agreements, National Indicative Programmes, Action Plans, MEDA Programmes...).

3. Specific actions and projects to prompt trade union analysis of the economic and social effects of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership.

4. Joint debates and research activities simultaneously involving governments, employers and trade unions from the region.

5. Establishment of regular Euro-Mediterranean Labour and Social Affairs Ministerial Conferences (no such meeting has taken place so far) with the participation of economic and social agents.

6. Promotion of a regional social dialogue between the Euro-Mediterranean Trade-Union Forum and the Union of Mediterranean Confederations of Enterprises.

7. Establishment of information and consultation mechanisms with trade union organizations (from the EU and the MPCs) in relation to industrial de-localization, with a view to the future establishment of some kind of Euro-Mediterranean work councils.

24. Integration at the National Level of the Political Religious Movements in a Pluralist Political Peaceful and Regulated Arena

The poor involvement of the civil society of religious inspiration in the Partnership is mainly due to the confusion created between these two levels. Since any reference to religion is considered as antagonistic to the universal values on which the Partnership is founded, and is almost immediately categorized as “intégriste” (in French or “fundamentalist”) ... without taking heed of the political and social dynamics in action, often unknown even by the actors themselves, and in spite of their discourse. Therefore, integration of the said civil society requires a change in perceptions, which is only possible through an understanding of the present dynamics over the long term, far from the often tragic jolts of day-to-day events.

These jolts prevent us from seeing what seems to be the major evolution of political religious movements: the progressive renunciation of armed struggle as the principal political mode of action to the benefit of a strategy of peaceful integration into the political arena. Integration at the national level of the political religious movements in a pluralist political peaceful and regulated arena seems therefore a necessary condition to strengthen their involvement in the regional framework offered by the EMP, which in turn cannot grow to meet its founding objectives, while in many countries exclusion of a significant part of the population and of the actors who speak on their behalf continues on the political field, even when these actors have expressed their readiness to represent them peacefully.

This attitude to refuse to take into consideration plurality in society does not come only from states which, under the pretext of combating extremism, reject any peaceful alternating government, but is also reinforced by a similar attitude from civil societies both in the North and the South of the region and from the European partner countries.

In front of the rise of the political religious movements during the last two decades, both within political parties and through associations, large sections of secularised civil society has violently opposed any dialogue with these movements and the associations and the personalities related to them. In the name of defending “laicism” at times, “republican principles”, or “universal principles of human rights” at other times, or sometimes the three arguments altogether, some

people did not hesitate to back up the drastic policies adopted by some governments in the region with the view to eliminating actors related to any political religious movement from the political arena. In some extreme instances (Algeria), government stringent security measures have been explicitly requested. Taking advantage of the legitimate feeling of horror provoked by terrorist actions, some actors have taken ownership of the very notion of “civil society” to their sole benefit, confining it to themselves alone, i.e. only to those who openly oppose so-called “obscurantism” and “backward movements,” etc.

There will be no possibility of openness toward civil society of religious inspiration sectors, and even less so toward their possible involvement in regional initiatives, without a concerted effort to start a dialogue with the actors from the secularised civil society who have so far opposed the desired new initiatives.

25. Definition, by the Highest Authorities of the Partnership, of the Role that the Civil Society Should Play Within the EMP

It is necessary that the highest bodies of the Partnership, and on the basis of a consensus, should define the role of civil society within the EMP. This position should be adopted by a high-level working group (including the most representative NGOs or their coordination structures, the Economic and Social Councils and the Euromed Parliamentary Assembly); the results of this group should be documented in a report and its conclusions should be ratified at a summit and referred to in its final declaration. This position would have to define :

- what is meant by civil society (while taking account in particular of the autonomous initiatives taken by organized people: associations, networks, trade unions, social movements) ;
- the field of action of the civil society within the EMP (in view of the Euromed civil society’s aspiration to take action within all three baskets of the EMP and not only in the third one) ;
- mechanisms and instruments so that this social participation be real (both in the definition of policies and in the participation in the programmes).

26. Developing Mechanisms of Financial Co-responsibility at the National Level

Mechanisms of joint financial accountability at the national level should be considered in order to encourage the combination of local and EMP resources. For example, governments which receive funds from the EU should contribute with an amount in local currency to co-finance civil society activities of this country and in the country or the region.

9. Recognition of the Coordination Structures of Civil Society

By definition, civil society is plural; it takes specific forms in each country and it is active in so many different areas. This fragmentation and variety make it even more difficult to interact with the public authorities. In general, institutions accept to recognize that some social organizations do have some capacity of interaction, for they are representative of this sector or because they have been accepted and recognized thanks to their effective action. Sometimes, institutions accept to grant them a consultative status or to associate them with the programmes in one way or another.

Within the framework of the EMP, civil society's action may be rendered difficult due to their large diversity, the big differences between the two shores, their quite recent articulation, and the will to act at the local, national, regional and Euro-Mediterranean levels. Moreover, their structuring, both in a vertical (thematic networks) and horizontal manner (territorial coordination), is yet very limited. Managing this diversity can only be carried out through intermediary bodies, such as those, which have been developed in the last few years on the basis of common positions and interests, and around specific issues; these networks are spaces of exchange with an inclination for working jointly (cooperation) and for complementing one another.

Coordination structures (the networks and the Euromed Non-Governmental Platform in which they are grouped) must be established with Economic and Social Councils, the social counterparts for each space and in each area. National platforms must be associated to initiatives with the governments which involve their countries within the EMP. Regional and sub-regional networks must get involved into

regional programmes and present among the Euromed institutions, in all regional activities. Furthermore, the Euromed Non-Governmental Platform must become a privileged counterpart of the Euromed institutions, since it represents a substantial and significant part of Euro-Mediterranean civil societies. The following measures could contribute to it :

27. Strengthening Networks of Coordination within the Civil Society

It is necessary to strengthen the (national, sub-regional and thematic) coordination networks of civil society, expand their base, while giving stability to their actions, and increase their political impact. Associations with religious inspiration, as well as economic and social agents, should also engage in networking as actors of social articulation, and lastly, organizations from Northern and Central Europe should get involved more effectively.

These networks must transform into points of reference for civil society in every field, and should be fully involved in the Partnership.

Strengthening networks requires financial support. This also applies to the Platform, which has been able to structure little by little thanks to the support of some European foundations and by drawing benefit from the preparations of Civil Fora. But this dynamics is getting out of breath. Operating a regional structure (with the heavy burden of communications and travels) and a plan of action that meets the requirements of its mandate, both require medium/long term external and stable financial support that should be provided through EMP instruments.

Regional thematic networks are more experienced and better prepared to formulate positions; their impact and work is much more considerable. They should be granted the necessary resources and support from the EMP to be able to carry on with their programmes. They are in the best position to help with the structuring of the Platform.

28. Strengthening the Euromed Non-Governmental Platform

The tendency to reduce participation of civil society to the third basket of the EMP has generated battles for gaining the label of « civil society ». Several criteria justify the choice of the Platform as a counterpart and a partner: its representativeness (it includes a large number of entities and expresses various interests), its legitimacy (transparent and democratic operation) and its effectiveness (capacity of analysis and proposal formulation).

The Platform is under construction and needs to be improved. But it already includes the most significant and vibrant association networks and trade unions in the Euromed area. It offers a large potential of cooperation between the two shores and appropriate interaction with the public authorities.

Because of its multi-sectorial and Euro-Mediterranean structure, it represents a strategic challenge which can only be beneficial to civil society at the local and regional levels. To this end, networks and platforms must get involved even more deeply. Its operation requires substantial financial support and should be clearly separated from the organization of the Civil Fora; and its resources should be made available by a government.

The Platform has defined some internal practices which would, in its operation, take account of the plurality and diversity of its components. Public authorities are requested to recognize the Platform as a privileged counterpart of civil society within the EMP for it is structured and inclusive, representative (regional networks, national platforms and significant organizations) and legitimate (capacity to formulate proposals).

Recognition of the Platform by the public authorities is not devoid of problems, however. If European institutions are familiar with practices of consensus-building with the civil society, difficulties may turn out to be much more serious in some Mediterranean partner countries where, in addition, autonomous associations are viewed as anti-governmental. The influential role that Euromed institutions can play may contribute to changing this situation.

29. Establishing within the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership a Formal Paritary Euro-Mediterranean Economic and Social Committee (EUROMEDESC) along the Lines of the ESC of the EU and Using the Administrative Structures of the EUESC and the National ESC or Similar Bodies in the Mediterranean Partner Countries.

This institution would embody the will to extend the European social consultation model to the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and would be mandatorily consulted on all Euro-Mediterranean economic and social initiatives (i.e., regarding all three chapters of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership). Its opinions would not be binding, but its representatives would be invited to attend the EuroMed Committee and the Ministerial Conferences with an observer status.

To avoid bureaucratisation, the EUROMEDECS would not have, at least in a first stage, a physical existence, i.e., it would not have its own premises or staff. It would work rather as a network of dedicated officers in the member bodies, maybe with a small (rotating ?) Secretariat lodged in two ESC committees (a European national ESC and one from the South). This, in turn, would mean that the financial resources required to put this in place would be very limited, focused on funding several meetings a year, the necessary expert reports to feed the opinions by the EUROMEDECS and a limited amount – on the basis of co-funding – for the officers in member bodies. So it would be a procedures-intensive approach rather than a resource-intensive approach.

The composition of the EUROMEDECS would be paritary, i.e., with an equal number of members from Mediterranean Partner Countries and from the EU, but also in the sense of a paritary number of the three sectors (employers, workers and social economy-farmers-university and others).

10. Participation of Civil society in Information and Consultation Mechanisms

Interaction of civil society with the Euromed institutions and public authorities has been very limited and has mostly consisted of informal procedures and one-off communications. For example, in some ministerial summits (Crete, May 2003), civil society actors were able

to expose their stances and the Declaration of the ECF; representatives from EMHRN were invited to speak at EMP high officials' meetings. But, in general, there is no dialogue, no consultations, and no structured consensus-building. Local consultative bodies have not even been consulted before the signing of the agreements or the National Plans.

The Platform and its members are generally considered as necessary, but not exclusive, counterparts of the institutions both at bilateral and multilateral level, and tend to establish a policy of dialogue. One of the objectives of the Platform is to « promote recognition and active participation of civil society as a counterpart in the different Mediterranean partner countries and within the EMP and the new European Neighbourhood Policy ». The purpose behind building consensus between the institutions and civil society (through its most representative structures) is to contribute to the objectives of the EMP at local, sub-regional and Euro-Mediterranean levels. It is also meant to strengthen civil societies in the different countries.

Lastly, this consensus-building process is not meant to replace but to supplement other initiatives, such as the Euro-Mediterranean Economic and Social Committees.

For civil society to be able to participate in the EMP it must be recognized by the actors; in addition, structures must be provided for dialogue, consultation and consensus-building.

a. Recognition. The first requirement is political, institutional and effective recognition of civil society as a counterpart and as a full-fledged member, in its diversity and both at the bilateral level (national) and at the regional level (Euromed institutions).

b. Dialogue. Civil society and the institutions should establish mechanisms of thematic permanent and structured dialogue which would allow sharing viewpoints and information, as a basis for consultation and consensus-building.

c. Consultations. Civil society must be able to express its opinion on actual policies (for example, under the form of viewpoints) and to have the authority to make proposals at all levels (planning, implementation and evaluation). These consultations should be designed in such a manner as to integrate them effectively within the policy formulation (policy level) and decision-making processes and should not be considered as a mere exercise without practical effect.

d. Consensus-building. A framework for effective consensus-building should be defined: associations should be involved in programme formulation, development and implementation and their know-how should be put to use.

Institutions should make sure that the implication of civil society actors in the mechanisms of dialogue, consultation and consensus-building shall not lead to a reduction in their political and social rights.

In this regard, several measures need to be contemplated.

30. Creating Mechanisms for Permanent Consultation and Participation of Civil Society

It is necessary that consensus-building mechanisms be established in connection with EMP programmes and institutions. Civil society organizations and other structures representing economic and social actors should be able to participate in these consultative structures entrusted with monitoring policies. These consultations should be imperative in the negotiation of agreements and action plans.

Participation of representative civil society structures as guest-observers in the official meetings: such as ministerial summits, Euromed Committee meetings and sectorial ministerial conferences. Holding of regular meetings with the Ambassadors in Brussels in charge of the EMP or with high officials from the European Commission.

Participation in the capacity as guest-observers in other regional initiatives : such as Euromed Parliamentary Assembly meetings and Economic and Social Councils meetings.

31. Gradual Consensus-Building with Civil Society Structures in Some Activities of the EMP, Specially in the Evaluation of Euromed Programmes

Involvement of civil society organizations in some activities of the EMP should be contemplated and is even desirable in the short and medium term, for example in the process of evaluation of Euromed programmes, together with the Euromed Foundation for dialogue among cultures and civilizations, or in the visualization of the EMP.

32. Maintaining Euromed Civil Fora in Their Renovated and Participatory Format, and Holding Them in the Mediterranean Partner Countries

Fora are meeting spaces of undeniable usefulness, but they should lose their centrality as the case has been so far; the main axis around which civil society should be articulated within the EMP must be the networks and the Platform in view of its activities. The organization of Fora and other events should go to the Platform, which is apt to ensure their continuation, give them representativeness and ensure participation. Fora must be organized with EMP resources, so as to avoid being dependent upon the will of the rotating Presidency of the EU. Fora must be more independent and meet civic priorities, both in terms of the agenda (they can be dissociated from the official summits) and in terms of the content (we can think of thematic Civil Fora); Civil Fora should be held alternately on the two shores of the Mediterranean. Fora should have more political impact and their outcome and declarations should be followed up.

11. Participation of Civil Society of Religious Inspiration in the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership

Put in a Euro-Mediterranean context, this title inevitably evokes the central and complex issue of Islam, its socio-political manifestation in the societies of the region, its direct and indirect impact on the Partnership itself, with all the implications contained in the term "Islam" during the past few decades, especially since September 11, 2001, and the following series of terrorist attacks which have since bloodstained several countries in the region.

Regardless of what we think of the Partnership and the evaluation of the involvement of civil society since the Barcelona Conference, we have to note that several dynamics have developed since November 1995, namely the creation of several networks (human rights, environment, trade unions, culture, youth, etc.), the holding of eight Civil Fora, the emergence of a civil-society Platform, the organizing of a large number of regional conferences, and implementation of all kinds of cooperation programs.

It is also indisputable that these various actions have either deliberately or accidentally ignored or disregarded the social actors

with which we are concerned here, as much as the latter themselves, except a few, seemed not so much interested so far in this emerging field of regional cooperation and interaction. So one could assume the co-existence of two dynamics in the Euro-Mediterranean region which ignore, and sometimes even oppose one another; on the one hand a lay-wise and secularised civil society, explicitly adopting the universal values of human rights, and integrated at different degrees – regardless of its criticism or reservations – in the Partnership; and on the other hand a civil society of religious inspiration. . The latter is rejecting in most cases the universal reference framework, but is immersed in a process of secularisation, while staying outside of the Partnership.

We can sum up as follows :

1. There is indeed a civil society of religious inspiration in the Euro-Mediterranean region, which cannot be reduced to mere religious claims, or analysed solely through a mere literal (first-degree) reading of the discourse developed by such actors.

2. We are dealing with social actors who are rooted in history and in the socio-economic realities of their respective societies and in the region, and who are therefore not immune from the heavy influences of their environment, among which there is a real, although not so visible, process of secularisation.

3. Despite the fact that these actors are claiming the right to participate peacefully in the social and political life of their countries, and possibly in the new Euro-Mediterranean space under construction, they are still being ignored or marginalized.

4. The authoritarian attitude of many governments, and resistance of the civil societies to take account of the civil society of religious inspiration constitute a double obstacle to their integration in the ongoing regional initiatives. It is in these two directions that we need to target our action.

5. Integration of these actors at the regional level will not be possible without an initiative to integrate them at the central level in each respective country. In this respect, policies adopted by each government vary widely, ranging from a controlled integration in some countries, to an authoritarian rejection that is costly in terms of freedoms in other countries.

In conclusion, regardless of national specificities, political Islam is now a perennial and sustainable reality within the Euro-Mediterranean socio-political environment. This new actor has to be considered in its diversity, and cannot be reduced to the sole “jihadist” movement which, despite its criminal nature and impact on public opinions, is in fact only an extremely marginal aspect of political Islam.

This epiphenomenon should in no way be used as a pretext to reject pluralism within South and North societies. The vast majority of the new faith-based actors are – often without being aware of it – in a process of secularisation on the one hand, and on the other hand – whenever it is possible – in a dynamic of integration within the legal political arena, which is mainly reflected in their explicit rejection of violence.

The Governments in the region, the Partnership institutions, and civil society actors who claim their adherence to democratic values and universal Human Rights principles, are now faced with this choice: to facilitate and support the efforts of integration of these new actors, and hence remain loyal to the ideals they proclaim, or – under the pretext of a disembodied universalism – to reject these groups and marginalize them. The experience of many countries in the region has shown that the cost of the latter option is extremely high, both in terms of liberties and in terms of socio-economic development.

This stake is to be considered from at least three levels of different nature :

First, in the South, the great development challenges cannot be addressed without pacifying the violent fratricide political confrontations, and without integration of a maximum of actors and the working out of lasting historical compromises based on a peaceful management of pluralism.

Secondly, in the North, societies transformed by the settlement of the immigrant populations, cannot respect their social democratic pact, which characterizes them, without a vibrant policy of active struggle against discriminations and to acknowledge religious and cultural pluralism.

Lastly, the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership cannot achieve any progress, or even be reinvigorated while tolerating the persistence of authoritarian practices from partner states, and participating, even unintentionally in their exclusion and marginalizing policies.

At these three levels, two principles should preside over reflection and potential action. On the one hand, a strict and rigorous adherence to universalism, which means mainly avoiding the double trap of cultural relativism and selectivity among universal rights or the groups that should benefit from them, and on the other hand, a fair appreciation of the religious factor. In fact, taking into consideration this religious dimension by the different actors will in our view support the on-going secularisation processes. Unlike the ecumenical initiatives of inter-religious dialogue, which are ultimately fully legitimate, the objective is to develop national citizen initiatives with these actors based on common concerns.

We took the risk of outlining a few tracks for action directed primarily at secular civil society actors, in order to give impetus to exchange and debate, and who knows, may be the launching of some actions. The two tracks outlined below can be easy to implement and, let's put it clearly, quite "realistic". They in fact do not require any major reform of the EMP, nor do they require any significant upheaval in the political situation in the Southern Mediterranean.

33. A Strict and Rigorous Adherence to Universalism

This means mainly avoiding the double trap of cultural relativism and selectivity among universal rights or the groups that should benefit from them. What position for secularised civil society actors? The commendable initiative which was at the origin of this study paper should be aware of not slipping into cultural relativism. A strategy for the integration of the civil society of religious inspiration cannot be based on a juxtaposition of values, which would be placed on the same level, under the pretext of promoting dialog and joint initiatives. These strategies should be developed and implemented on the strong basis of a set of non-negotiable rights. Once again, let it be clear that what we mean by this strong basis is not a model of civilization or a political model to be "exported", but simply, and that's already much enough, the whole body of treaties and instruments for the protection of Human Rights, as they have been drafted since World War II, which are indivisible and binding for every one, and first and foremost for the governments of the North. These rights cannot be subject to any hierarchy (meaning that one category of rights would have priority over

another), nor should they obey a double standards approach (meaning that one given set of obligations would apply to others but not to ourselves, or apply to certain "enemy" states and not to others). This common heritage of humanity transcends national political models, which are only specific historical constructions, and cannot be reduced to a rhetorical discourse on "freedom" or "democracy". These rights are not the property of a given region and stand only against that which may breach human dignity – within a given cultural context or a given creed.

While keeping from proclaiming in the face of potential partners an "imperative universalism" to "take it or leave it", here and now, as a prerequisite to any joint initiative; we should also not hesitate, when addressing specific stakes, to underline the differences of opinion or fundamental divergences. Naturally, this will at the same time require extreme vigilance and rigor: in no case should the universalistic stand be found at fault, especially by adopting "a double standard policy".

34. Encouraging the Gradual Involvement of Actors of the Civil Society of Religious Inspiration Within the Main and Outstanding EMP Events

Based on the conviction that the recognition of pluralism, including political religious pluralism of the EMP member societies, is a sine qua none condition for a democratic development of the Partnership, all actors should encourage the gradual participation of the civil society of religious inspiration actors in the major events organized by the Partnership (inter-governmental meetings, seminars, academic colloquia, training sessions, exchange of visits among journalists, etc.).

While predicting the hostility of certain governments in the region, secular civil society actors should take the lead to promote such initiatives, especially by inviting civil society of religious inspiration actors to participate in activities they are promoting. Such initiatives could start with the Euro-Mediterranean Civil Fora, and some other initiatives related to the newly established Civil Platform or to one of its components.

With respect to methodology, these new strategies require, in our view, a capacity for organizational adaptation. In terms of the structures that eventually will need to be established, it is opportune,

and even unavoidable, to develop new instruments (not necessarily perennial structures), which require unprecedented alliances among the actors, and/or renewed forms of action (a series of public actions and other more discrete initiatives), and flexible initiatives combining dimensions of formal and informal character.

35. Articulating Actions Against Different Forms of Discrimination Aimed at Immigrant Populations in Europe and the Opening Spaces of Dialogue about Religious and Cultural Diversity in European Societies

Settlement in Europe of immigrant populations of Muslim origin represents a double challenge. While suffering from social inequality, like all the other poor social classes, and from other special forms of discrimination (because of their actual or supposed origin), these populations aspire at the same time to enjoy better possibilities for social promotion, and the right to practice their creed and transmit it to the next generation. At the same time, generations of immigrants born in Europe are experiencing similar difficulties despite their socialization in Europe and their access to citizenship in the host countries, and despite their social and cultural dynamism.

The need for effective policies to ensure equality is no longer contested in theory, neither at the level of the European countries' public authorities nor at the level of European public opinion. However, these policies cannot remain blind in the face of otherness, and should also avoid the inclination to differentiation and "communitarian confinement".

The objective is therefore to encourage the emergence of spaces for dialogue on pluralism, while ensuring that these spaces remain always open unto the social, economic and political realities of the host countries. Here again, action by the secular civil society can be decisive. The example of the Islam/Laicism Commission in France can be considered in this respect not as a model, but as a source of inspiration, to adapt, naturally, according to the philosophical and juridical traditions of each country, to available partnerships and to debated issues within the society under consideration.

WHY (AND HOW) TO PROTECT ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL RIGHTS AND ESTABLISH A SYSTEM OF SOCIAL CONSULTATION IN THE EURO-MEDITERRANEAN PARTNERSHIP

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Ten years after its inception, and whatever the assessment one makes of its track record, there is little doubt that the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership lacks democratic legitimacy and remains distant from the worries, needs and interests of the peoples of the region. It lacks visibility and ownership, but for good reasons; and so far, it has remained quite irrelevant to the daily lives of common people. It is rightly perceived as a rather bureaucratic construction whose only real impact is to impose upon the countries of the region yet another round of economic structural adjustment in the shape of the Euro-Mediterranean Free Trade Areas to be completed sometime between 2008 (for Tunisia) and 2018 (for Syria). This view is partly unfair, but it is justified.

1. Bringing the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership to the People. Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

Of course, a true Partnership should promote the gradual fulfilment of all economic, social and cultural rights (including social security, an adequate standard of living, housing, and health care). Economic, social and cultural rights are “the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world”, as stated in the International Covenant adopted by the United Nations in this field, but arguably the two truly fundamental rights, which can open the door for achieving all the others, are education, which allows individuals to reach their full potential, and employment, which allows them to integrate into society and achieve personal emancipation.

1.A. Education needs to be taken, at least with regard to basic education, as what it is, above all, a fundamental human right, and not, as is often the case, referred to in purely functional terms. But it is also a fundamental driver and enabler of development, the software of development if we define it as “expanding human choices”, especially in societies where close to 30 % of the population is under 15 and almost 70 % of the population under 25.

So development is no doubt an educational challenge, but the same could be said of the Partnership itself; even the neighbourhood may be approached as mainly an (intercultural) educational challenge. Now, we have a fairly good –and depressing– diagnosis of the situation of knowledge and education in the Arab countries (1) and the challenges they pose. But very little has been done so far by the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership to take on this challenge, either because it is considered an exclusive national responsibility or for other reasons. And most initiatives have focused on university education, mainly research and exchanges. These are very valuable, but do not tackle the real problem. Improving the quality of primary and secondary education has a greater importance for the future of these countries; if one had to choose a single priority in the educational field, there is probably no other step more important than giving access to literacy to the quarter of the population who are deprived of this most basic human capability.

1.B. Employment

With unemployment at over 15 per cent of the labour force, Middle East and North African countries are already suffering the highest average unemployment rates of any region in the world. This problem is compounded by demographic dynamics. Although most MENA countries have already completed the demographic transition (birth rates have been reduced to levels compatible with a modest population growth), the extreme youth of the population’s age structure (one-third of the 240 million inhabitants of MENA countries is under 15) will translate into big increases in the working-age

(1) See UNDP’s Arab Human Development Report 2002, available at : <http://www.undp.org/rbas/ahrd/CompleteEnglish.pdf>, as well as the Arab Human Development Report 2003 on “Building a Knowledge Society”.

population during the next two decades. In one of the most conservative estimates of job creation needs in the Mediterranean Partner Countries, FEMISE has calculated that, in order just to keep unemployment rates at current levels, the MPCs should create around 20 million jobs before 2010 and 34 million jobs before 2020 (2). This assumes the maintenance of current activity rates (only 48 per cent of the working-age population is currently part of the labour force, and this falls to 25 per cent in the case of women), which would effectively mean that the vast majority of women would remain unemployed. Still, these calculations do not take into account the anticipated retrenching of rural employment (which amounts to 30 per cent of the total labour force in the region, and 45 per cent in the case of Morocco) during this period. Even if this incredible rate of job creation were achieved, this would still mean an increase in the absolute number of unemployed people from eight to 12 million people in 2010 and to 16 million in 2020(3). Attending to these job creation needs will mean increasing the working population in the region –i.e. the total number of jobs– by more than 50 per cent in the next 10 years, which would require the current levels of economic growth to be doubled, at least (between 1980 and 2001, MPCs grew at an average yearly rate of 2.4 per cent), an accomplishment [...] not even achieved by the high performing East Asian economies during the height of their employment growth periods (4) Taking into account the broadening consensus on the fact that the greatest single issue facing the economies of the Middle East and North Africa is the challenge of employing its people in good jobs, the lack of any pro-active strategy to deal with this enormous challenge in the framework of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership is one of its most astounding features.

The fact remains, in any case, that the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and the European Union, as its promoter, seem to have decided to be largely absent from what are probably the two major

(2) Handoussa, Heba and Reiffers, Jean-Louis (coords.) (2003): Rapport Femise 2003 sur le Partenariat euroméditerranéen, Institut de la Méditerranée, Marsella, available at <http://www.femise.net/PDF/Femise A2003fr.pdf>.

(3) Author's calculations on the basis of the labour force projections contained in the FEMISE report, assuming that the unemployment rate is maintained.

(4) Keller, Jennifer and Nabli, Mustapha (2002), The Macroeconomics of Labour Market Outputs in MENA over the 1990s, World Bank, Washington, available at <http://www.worldbank.org/mdf/mdf4/papers/keller-nabli.pdf>.

socio-economic challenges in the MPCs, and the two most relevant ones for people's daily lives : education and employment.

2. Overcoming the Artificial Division in Three Chapters, Baskets or Tracks

Paradoxically, what was one of the main innovations of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership at the time – integrating economic, political and social and cultural issues into a single strategy – has become a straitjacket and has become highly dysfunctional for promoting the goals of the Partnership. This is mainly because the political dynamics (and the structure of priorities for the European Union Member States) has tended to ignore the inherent interlinkage between the three baskets (5). It does not make any sense whatsoever to confine human affairs, including such issues as migration and even worker rights to only one of the three “baskets” of the Partnership, arguably the least relevant in terms of resources (both financial and institutional) and priorities. Such issues are structurally linked to processes like the establishment of the Euro-Mediterranean Free Trade Areas (second basket) or regional conflicts and respect for human rights and democracy (first basket). Even worse, there is increasing evidence that there is at least some potential for contradiction between the dynamics of the three baskets.

The impact of establishing Euro-Mediterranean free trade areas between the EU and MPCs on people's economic and social rights, on employment and living conditions, the centrepiece of the economic chapter and the most concrete result of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (with binding commitments and a clear schedule), has been fully neglected. Nine years after launching the Barcelona Process and eight years after the first Association Agreement (the one with Tunisia) entered into force, the economic and social effects of the free trade areas are still a worrying terra incognita and we are still waiting for the Sustainability Impact Assessment study approved in 1999 by the

(5) On these interlinkages, see Zaafrane, Hafed and Mahjoub, Azzam (2000) : «The Euro-Mediterranean Free-Trade Zone : Economic Challenges and Social Impacts on the Countries of the South and East Mediterranean », in *Mediterranean Politics*, Vol. 5, Number 1, Spring 2000, Frank Cass, London.

Euro-Mediterranean Conference in Stuttgart (6). It is not clear how the EU and the MPCs intend to take their results into consideration, even though they are already well into the 12-year transitory period for establishing the free trade areas (Tunisia in the ninth year, Morocco in the fifth and so on). But there is increasing evidence for and consensus on the conclusion that these effects are going to be largely negative, at least for a long first period, and that the funds channelled through the MEDA Programmes are totally insufficient for off-setting those negative effects on employment, income, poverty and social expenditure. So the Euro-Mediterranean Free Trade Areas of the second basket may become a source of instability and hence insecurity in the region (first chapter), and there is a risk of deepening the cultural gap and resentment (which runs counter to the objectives of the third chapter) of the southern Mediterranean population against capitalism and Western democracies at large.

Moreover, it can be argued that the deterioration in economic and social rights is detrimental to the actual enjoyment of civil and political rights, for which they build the material basis. So the three-basket structure is making it increasingly difficult to deliver a common logic and, hence, an intelligibility to the whole Euro-Mediterranean Partnership. We are, in fact, increasingly facing three different processes, not just one.

In this context, civil society engagement provides the best way to favour transversal initiatives covering all three chapters of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, but so far consultation with civil society has been confined to basket three, as if people and organised society should have no say in "high politics" issues such as economic and political reform, which, however, determine to a large extent the context in which they live and the opportunities they enjoy.

(6) On this issue, see Iván Martín and Iain Byrne, « Economic and Social Rights in the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership », special issue of *Mediterranean Politics*, Vol. 9.3 (Autumn 2004), especially the Introduction : "Economic and Social Rights in the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership : The Missing Link?" (<http://wdb.sicomnet.edu.mx/alca/intranet/galeria/17/8.pdf>) and the article by Ivan Martín "The Social Impact of Euro-Mediterranean Free Trade Areas: A First Approach with Special Reference to the Case of Morocco" (<http://www.eco.uc3m.es/immartin/SocialImpactMediterraneanpolitics.pdf>).

3. Engaging Civil Society in the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership

Whereas the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership seems to be overdetermined in institutional terms, there seems to be a notorious gap in procedures and in the involvement of social actors. We are so fascinated with the complexity of the institutional framework of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (7) that we tend to overlook its very nature as a basically inter-governmental process, i.e., a process involving only EU institutions and the Governments of Mediterranean Partner Countries. However, when one takes a look at the set of objectives stated in the Barcelona Declaration and the content given to the three “chapters” in which it was divided -political dialogue, economic and financial co-operation and “greater emphasis on the social, cultural and human dimension”- the following can be noted:

a. As far as political dialogue is concerned, the MPCs undertake to “develop the rule of law and democracy in their political systems”, “respect human rights and fundamental freedoms”, “settle their disputes by peaceful means” and “promote regional security”, amongst other aspects.

b. In the field of economic and financial partnership, the long-term objectives they set themselves are the “acceleration of the pace of sustainable socio-economic development”, the “improvement of the living conditions of their populations, increase in the employment level and reduction in the development gap in the Euro-Mediterranean region”.

c. In the framework of the partnership in social, cultural and human affairs, they undertake to develop human resources, promoting understanding between cultures and exchanges between civil societies, recognising the importance of the social development which, in their view, must go hand in hand with any economic development. They attach particular importance to respect for fundamental social rights, including the right to development, and recognise the essential

(7) On this issue of the institutional tissue of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, see the paper by Dorothee Schmid, “Les institutions européennes dans le fonctionnement du PEM: de la repartition des competences à la gestion dynamique du quotidien”, EuroMesco Paper n° 36, October 2004, available at :

http://www.euromesco.org/euromesco/publi_artigo.asp?cod-artigo=109081.

contribution civil society can make in the development process of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, as an essential factor for greater understanding and closeness between people.

All of these aspects, democracy, development and mutual understanding and exchanges, are deep aspirations of people and societies, and cannot be the States' exclusive responsibility. At the same time, they are all inter-related. In any case, it is paradoxical that the European Union, which proclaims its pride in its social model and its standards of consultation with the social partners, promotes a Partnership with its Southern neighbours which excludes any real participation of their respective societies in the decision-making processes.

Moreover, it is paradoxical that the European Union has signed Association Agreements which are supposed to contribute to develop and consolidate democracy in the MPCs and entail such a wide-ranging economic and social impact and transformation agenda for the coming decades after a process that has not, in most cases, involved any internal social consultation with the interest groups, social partners and civil societies in their own countries. This discredits the authenticity of the stated objectives of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, and perhaps even de-legitimizes it, making the whole rhetoric about the "ownership" of the Partnership rather void. Of course, all MPCs submitted the Association Agreements to formal ratification by the legislative chambers, but beyond that they have often been negotiated completely in secret and presented for approval on a yes or no basis (also in the European Union member countries), and civil society and social partners were in no case associated with the negotiations which led to the Association Agreements. Only in a very few exceptional cases (8) was the final text discussed with civil society representatives in what seemed more a political marketing operation than a real consultation process. No wonder, then, that there is hardly any social consensus around these Agreements, and even that they are hardly known by the large majority of the population, which does not perceive

(8) Morocco is a case in point: an extensive –but informal– process of consultation with civil society interests and representatives was launched during the negotiation process of the Association Agreement with the EU.

any link to its daily needs and interests (9). Even at a local, de-centralized level, MEDA projects are being decided and executed in most cases without a participatory approach that takes into account the interests and opinion of the local population directly affected by them.

This notwithstanding, Euro-Mediterranean social partners are taking the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership seriously. They organise activities in the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, they create networks (Euro-Mediterranean Trade Union Forum, Union of Mediterranean Confederations of Enterprises, Euro-Mediterranean Network of Social Economy, Medisamak of fishermen's unions, the very summits of Economic and Social Committees and similar bodies and their TRESMED project), they undertake studies, create publications... But they do not feel listened to and they have no real means to influence the agenda, let alone the decision-making process in the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership. In this sense, it may be stated that the social partners have gone well ahead of Euro-Mediterranean institutions in creating a real "Euro-Mediterranean Social Area" (EMSA) that is complementary to the Euro-Mediterranean Free Trade Area (EMFTA). It is true as well that this lack of political weight has allowed a flexibility in the cooperation amongst Euro-Mediterranean Economic and Social Committees that would probably not have been possible in a more formalised setting, given the political constraints of many of these bodies, notably in the South: there are no big consensual declarations of principles on where and how to act, on the qualification criteria to become a member, or a strict definition of functions or procedures, but here, as in other fields of the Euro-Mediterranean, a certain voluntarism and a stern attachment to basic principles may yield enormous benefits in the middle term. In this context, the strengthening of trade unions as the weakest social partners in Mediterranean Partner Countries should be a priority, both as a means to promote democracy and social dialogue and as a means to facilitate their participation in the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership.

(9) See the paper by Hanaa Ebeid "The Partnership in Southern Eyes: Reflections on the Discourse in the Egyptian Press", EuroMesco Paper n° 37, October 2004, available at http://www.euromesco.org/euromesco/publi_artigo.asp?cod_artigo=109124. Although very limited in its scope, this article reflects the irrelevance of the EMP for Egyptian public opinion. The situation is different, of course, in Maghreb countries, especially in Morocco and Tunisia.

To sum up, the objectives set out in the Barcelona Declaration for the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership are still fully relevant, as well as the overall approach. But the Euro-Mediterranean partners have to be prepared to re-focus the Partnership, to redefine its priorities around 1) ensuring economic and social rights (education, work, health, access to water) that make a difference in the lives of normal people (other initiatives are all very commendable, but only a few have the privilege of benefiting from attending film festivals, participating in a Tempus programme or even being part of a youth exchange) and 2) establishing democracy within the Partnership itself – extending consultation with social partners and the people involved at all levels, both at the political level (dialogue with societies, rather than dialogue between governments, is true political dialogue) and at the project level, as part of the planning and execution of every MEDA project throughout its whole life cycle. National Indicative Programmes, as well as the new Neighbourhood Action Plans – which were kept secret during the whole negotiation process until the very moment of their official publication-, should be the result of both a political negotiation process and a social consultation process involving the organisation of public debates in the countries involved. Reinforcing the autonomy of social partners – a field where European institutions, member States, and civil societies can play a determinant role- is in itself a very important contribution to the advance of democracy in MPCs.

This is the only way to give credibility and legitimacy to the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and discard legitimate criticism reducing it, in the worst of cases, to a neo-colonialist endeavour or, in a milder perspective, to a process indulging, as the current Spanish Minister of Foreign Affairs wrote three years ago, in “economicist bureaucratism”.

Launching a Euro-Mediterranean Literacy Campaign to Achieve a Reduction of Illiteracy by 80 % in Five Years (by 2010) in the Region

There are almost 50 million illiterate adults in the Mediterranean Partner Countries, an average of close to 25 % of the adult population (and close to half of adult women). This very figure renders even the concepts of participation in civil society and the Partnership at large void. In pragmatic terms, literacy is a key step, for instance, to

promoting a true democracy and public debate, to empowering communities, to optimising micro-credit schemes, and to mobilising migrant remittances to promote development in source societies, let alone to benefiting from the ICT in one way or another. A reduction of illiteracy in the region would arguably even reduce the incidence of conflicts in the region. In other terms, it can be argued that eradicating illiteracy in the region is a material condition for the achievement of the goals of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership.

But literacy is, above all, a fundamental human right. Basic education, within which literacy is the key learning tool, was recognised as a human right over 50 years ago, in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It is a scandal that this right continues to be violated for such a large proportion of the MPCs' populations.

Besides that, investing in literacy does make economic sense. Literacy correlates strongly with income (a coefficient of 0.584 to the per capita GNP). There is also a direct and strong correlation between increased literacy and elevated worker productivity and some indicators of welfare (literacy with infant mortality : - 0.815 ; literacy with life expectancy : 0.822) (10). And with such an extremely young population structure as the one in the MPCs (70 % of the population under 30), most of the "adult" illiterates have a long active life before them. They are a human capital which cannot be wasted because of illiteracy.

So eradicating illiteracy in the Mediterranean Partner Countries is, on one hand, a moral bottom-line for the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, and it would be a highly symbolic step indicating the true hierarchy of priorities. This could be, for once, a genuine European contribution to the 2003-2012 United Nations Literacy Decade. There is no excuse not to tackle this issue : no lack of natural resources (as in the case for lack of access to safe water) or infrastructures (as it is the case for health care and education).

(10) Correlations were done in the framework of a study for UNESCO in the software program Global Data Manager. Literacy rates come from Central Intelligence Agency, World Factbook 1989 (Washington, D.C.: CIA, 1989). Per capita GNP is from The World Bank, pp. 178-179; infant mortality and life expectancy are from World Population Data Sheet 1990. See

http://www.unesco.org/education/tlsf/theme_a/mod02/www.worldgame.org/wwwproject/what05.shtml.

On the other hand, literacy campaigns are probably the most cost-effective and straightforward development strategy. According to data of the National Literacy Campaign in India, the cost per learner of the Total Literacy Campaign stands in the 1 to 3 €, and the cost for a Post-Literacy Campaign in the range of 1.5 to 2.3 additional euros (follow-up campaigns are a key factor to the success of literacy campaigns to avoid backsliding, as has been the case in some countries, such as Nicaragua). Allowing for higher costs in some Mediterranean countries due to the lower population density, this would still translate into a relatively small amount (even for modest Euro-Mediterranean standards), if compared with the tremendous impact it would have on the social and economic prospects of the population involved and on their daily lives.

The reason for not going for a full eradication of illiteracy is the fact that the marginal cost of literacy campaigns increases as one tries to extend them to an ever-increasing percentage of the population, since it is far more expensive to make older people or people with less motivation or in far-away areas literate.

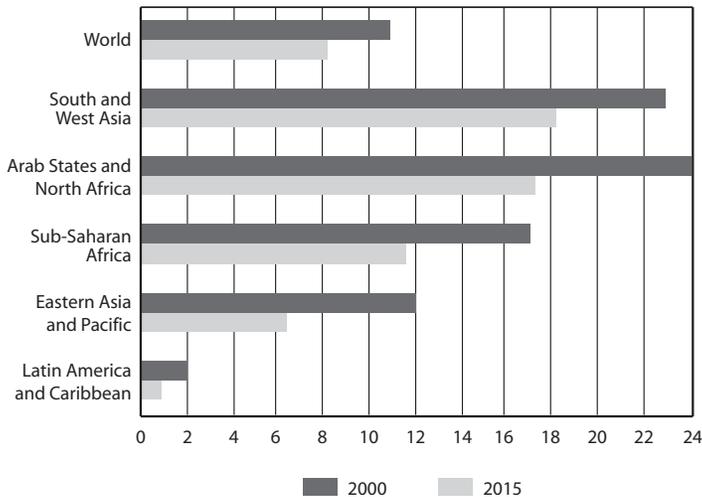
The literacy campaign itself would create thousands of jobs across the region for a certain period of time, thus contributing to mitigate another of the social scourges of the region, not to mention the fact that literacy and numeracy, together with school education, are the best leverages for the employability of young people. At the same time, literacy campaigns are a powerful mechanism for civil society mobilization and structuring through community participation.

It is also the best way to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women, as shown by Figure 1, indicating that it is precisely in Arab States and North Africa (together with South and West Asia) where the gender gap in literacy rates is more pronounced (around 23 percentage points in each of these regions).

Source : United Nations

In the face of all these potential benefits, political considerations cannot be an alibi for not tackling this social scourge directly. If all the talk about joint responsibility means anything, there is hardly any other field where this could be proven better, particularly because the European Union Member States and MPCs are going to jointly feel the consequences of their current actions or omissions in the future.

Figure 1



Defining a Euro-Mediterranean Employment Strategy with the Goal of Ensuring that the Number of Unemployed People in the Region Does Not Increase in the Next 10 Years

If the MPCs and the EU are serious about the stated goal of achieving a sustainable and balanced economic and social development, as stated in the Barcelona Declaration, it does make full sense to integrate quantified employment targets and employment impact assessment at all levels of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, including MEDA Funds and EMFTAs, because there can hardly be any other more important social and economic challenge in their near future than the challenge of offering employment opportunities to their rapidly increasing population. It is highly significant that, so far, no single MEDA programme has focused on employment as such (although, of course, many MEDA projects have a small-scale employment impact).

Moreover, a Euro-Mediterranean Employment Strategy should be put in place, combining both a regional surveillance system of employment and employment policy indicators (see next proposal) and the formulation of common orientative guidelines that would be regularly reviewed, with quantified, country-specific goals, the specification of instruments and of commitments to achieve them, and

the allocation of necessary resources in the framework of the MEDA programmes. The model to be followed would be that of the European Employment Strategy process in place since 1999.

The first step to launch this wide-ranging initiative would be to convene a Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on Employment formed by Employment ministers of all the Euro-Mediterranean Partner Countries and the European Commission. It is difficult to understand that Euro-Mediterranean sectorial ministerial conferences have been called on trade (4x), industry (5x), environment (2x), water (2x), information society, energy (3x), agriculture, culture (2x) and health, but not a single one on employment –or education, for that matter.

It is important to mention that the formulation and follow-up of this Euro-Mediterranean Employment Strategy as such would have no direct cost for either the EU or the MPCs, except for the small cost involved in preparing the necessary documents and information and holding the meetings, at the political and technical levels. The common employment strategy could then be articulated in national employment strategies following the general guidelines (and methodological approach?) defined by the Ministerial conference and regularly monitored and discussed in the framework of the Association Councils –where a sub-committee on employment could be created, just as there are other subcommittees for different issues and, when relevant, as part of the Neighbourhood Action Plans. Then these national strategies could be integrated with the European Employment Strategy into a single Euro-Mediterranean Employment Strategy.

The formulation of this Euro-Mediterranean Employment Strategy should involve social partners (notably trade unions and employers). It should also take into consideration the potential for creating employment of the so-called third sector or social economy, including micro-credit, cooperatives, etc.

At the same time, the new Euro-Mediterranean Employment Strategy should be integrated with direct investment promotion efforts, as well as with the vocational training and industrial modernization (*mise-à-niveau*) endeavours undertaken with MEDA funds. So far, investment promotion and support and the upgrading of the competitive capacity of local firms in the MPCs have been approached to a large extent as a separate track not related to employment strategies, but rather to legal conditions, economic climate, business partnerships and markets.

Establishing a Euro-Mediterranean Regional System of Surveillance of Economic and Social Developments

It is a moral paradox that, while the EU takes steps to safeguard and consolidate its own social model, it ignores this aspect completely in its relations with its 'partners,' and notably with the Mediterranean Partner Countries. In this view, first a minimal core of social and economic rights –along the lines of the European Social Charter- should become an integral part of cooperation with MPCs; this is an essential element of the Partnership, as stated with respect to human rights, of which economic and social rights are an integral and indivisible part. Second, a joint Social Action Plan designed to achieve, as quickly as possible, this set of baseline rights on the basis of joint responsibility should be implemented. Explicit social policy targets in terms of activity rate, poverty incidence, education indicators and social security coverage, together with regular evaluation and monitoring of developments in this field (according to the principle of co-responsibility) should be incorporated as permanent features of the Barcelona Process, as has already been done within the EU in the framework of the social and employment policy surveillance process.

The EU has extensive experience in the multilateral surveillance of social and employment policies under the "Social Policy Agenda" and the "European Employment Strategy". But it has put it into practice exclusively among its Member States, not in its relations with "third countries"; however close a partnership it has with them. The interest of EU surveillance methodologies –developed over time on a trial and error basis- lies precisely in the fact that, in these matters, the EU institutions have no competence of their own, so they have to work on the basis of voluntary commitments, peer review and pressure, and political incentives, rather than by way of legal coercion and a waiver to sovereignty by national authorities. To this extent, the legal situation is comparable to the one prevailing between the EU and the MPCs under the Association Agreements.

It is important to underline the idea that the multilateral surveillance system advocated is not an observatory-like independent monitoring mechanism, but an information-intensive process of policy-oriented political dialogue, exchange and co-operation between partner Governments (i.e., a political process) aimed at finding common ground

in questions of shared interest. To this extent, the participation of civil society as such in the whole process would be limited, but the very existence of the surveillance system and the information generated in this framework (which should be public) would become a key instrument for civil society involvement and political pressure.

Social policy surveillance within the EU works on the basis of a monitoring process of a number of selected indicators against the double benchmark of the regional average and a set of explicit, quantitative goals (both for all the Member States and for individual States), agreed upon amongst the members/partners, which have to be achieved within specific time frameworks. This allows the construction of a scoreboard reflecting the performance of each country taking part in the exercise and the regular publication of progress reports and recommendations/guidelines (either for each individual country or for all countries as a group) without legally binding effects, but with a strong political and media impact. If undertaken at the regional level, this 'scoreboard approach' could create both a fair benchmarking framework and a strong incentive for progress in those areas through comparative analysis both by placing political pressure on laggards as well as by offering financial incentives to leaders (this has already been provided for under the new European Neighbourhood Policy as a means of so-called "positive conditionality"). This outcome-oriented policy review process also lends itself to a country-by-country differentiated approach, taking into account the countries' different initial levels or various degrees of commitment. Goals can be defined not in absolute terms (i.e.; "to achieve an unemployment rate of 10% with an activity rate of 60 %"), but in relative terms (i.e. "to reduce the unemployment rate by 10% and increase the activity rate by 5 percentage points") in order to take account of these differences. It could also work as a basis for the identification and transfer of the best practices in particular fields.

Of course, since the whole review process is a knowledge-intensive and information-sharing activity where good-quality data are critical, as well as a politically sensitive exercise, the role in this process of a relatively independent, "technical" body like the European Commission is a key to its success. Although such an institution has yet to be created in the framework of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, the research institute networks FEMISE and EuroMesco could play an important role

in the initial stages. As social and employment policies as such would remain fully under the competence of partner countries, the direct cost of establishing such a surveillance system would be very limited (and largely attributable to already existing official institutions and State administrations), particularly if compared with the strong leverage it could have on policy-making at the regional level.

Finally, surveillance of employment and social policy performance could be integrated into a more general surveillance process monitoring economic and social policy as a whole (as has happened within the EU, where, since 2003, the annual Guidelines and Recommendations on Member States' Employment Policies have been subsumed into the broad exercise of the Broad Economic Policy Guidelines).

Adopting a Protocol Establishing a Safeguard Mechanism for Economic and Social Conditions in All Euro-Mediterranean Association Agreements

At least over the short term, and particularly in the last four years of the 12-year transitory period provided to establish the Euro-Mediterranean Free Trade Areas in which tariff dismantling is concentrated, the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership risks crossing over the 'social sustainability threshold' –the absolute limit of negative effects of policies and economic reform without sufficient compensating measures that a social group or a whole population may suffer before revolting in one way or another (11). Beyond this threshold, a country enters a turbulence area of social disturbance, economic breakdown and overall instability, where economic laws no longer hold (preventing anticipated future positive effects of reform from materializing) and the institutional cruising devices required for guaranteeing civil and political rights would no longer work, giving way in extreme cases to the phenomenon of 'failed states.' A good case can be made that, in the current demographic, social and economic environment in many MPCs, the implementation of the Euro-Mediterranean Free Trade Areas without the required countervailing and accompanying measures to cushion their negative social impact could cross this social sustainability line and end up being destabilizing

11) See the article quoted in footnote 6.

and detrimental to the development prospects of those countries.

To make sure that the implementation of the Euro-Mediterranean Free Trade Areas is not detrimental to the economic and social conditions of the populations involved, it would be possible to establish, as part of the regional surveillance system referred to above, a safeguard mechanism anchoring the starting point of the MPCs regarding certain indicators on economic and social rights as “minimum thresholds” for the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership. On one hand, this would allow the Partnership to envision advances, and in case a setback were detected in one particular indicator, it would allow either a temporary suspension of the identified causes (when they lie in a policy measure, such as trade liberalization in one particular sector or another (12)), or the implementation of automatic compensatory measures such as an increase and/or reorientation of MEDA funds to focus on improving this particular indicator. The application of the safeguard measures would require a decision of the bilateral Association Council –i.e., it would happen on a consensual basis- upon request of one of the parties (i.e., the EU or the Government of the involved country).

At a micro-level, this safeguard mechanism should translate into the establishment of a system of redress for local populations whose economic and social rights have been violated in some way by the implementation of Euro-Mediterranean MEDA projects throughout the whole project life cycle (13).

This system would convey to the societies involved the image of the Partnership as a “no-lose” game –which is far from being the case now- and would embody the principle of joint responsibility of all the partners for the individual performance of each one.

Adoption of new Protocols is, of course, a burdensome political-legal process entailing the modification of the Association Agreements as

(12) This temporary suspension is already provided for under special circumstances under the safeguard clauses contained in the Association Agreement regarding trade measures or national defense interests, but they do not refer to social and economic rights.

(13) See the article by Iain Byrne “Mainstreaming Human Rights: A Tentative Operational Approach to Monitoring and Enforcing Human Rights in MEDA Development Projects”, in *Mediterranean Politics*, Vol. 9.3 (Autumn 2004), p. 542-555.

international instruments (with a full ratification procedure by European institutions and the national parliaments of all Partners countries), but it has already been done –to include the pan-Euro-Mediterranean Protocol on rules of origin into the Association Agreements and to adapt them to the accession of 10 new Member States to the EU in 2004- and should be no obstacle in the framework of an evolving Partnership, the Barcelona “Process”, as the Partnership is referred to.

Strengthening Trade Unions and Trade Unions Role in the Mediterranean Partner Countries

Strong, independent and democratic trade unions are an essential element of democratic societies. However, even if the situation differs from country to country, it is possible to identify some common features of the trade union situation in the MPCs (leaving aside the very special cases of Turkey and Israel) which at the same time affect their active participation in the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership :

a. Lack of autonomy. Trade unions are still under the burden of their origins and the links to the national movements that brought about independence (in the Maghreb countries), the national liberation struggle (in Palestine) or nationalistic revolutions (in Egypt and Syria). Most trade union federations are still somewhat in the grip of political power, lacking any autonomy from government or political parties. Often, in public opinion, trade unions are just an extension of a party or even a State institution.

b. Deficient democratic functioning. The authoritarianism and centralism of the hegemonic parties and of the political regimes have permeated the trade union organizations. There is a democratic deficit that is at the same time internal (transparency and cleanness in the electoral processes, decision-making procedures, etc.) as well as external (lack of acknowledgement of a real union pluralism in several countries).

c. Loss of the social base. This is a direct consequence of economic reforms (the shrinking public sector, privatisations, unemployment and informality) and political reforms (growing

acceptance of a political pluralism that has an impact on trade union activities).

d. Limited trade union activity that does not fit the challenges that the MPCs are facing. There is hardly any company union activity, collective bargaining, or tripartite social dialogue. The unions have a very limited capacity to make proposals. International or transnational union action with reference to multinational companies has hardly developed at all.

In spite of this, there is a growing consciousness among the Arab unions themselves of their limitations and weaknesses and of the need for profound reforms and a democratisation, modernization and de-politicisation of their work.

In the framework of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, even though there are social consultative bodies in some countries, unions have been kept completely out of the negotiations (absence of consultation). This notwithstanding, in April 1999 the main MPC unions, along with their European counterparts, formed the Euromed Trade Union Forum (EMTUF). The EMTUF has received sporadic support from the European Commission (through the ETUC and the CIOSL). In addition, Arab unions have participated in the Euro-Mediterranean initiatives of the Economic and Social Committees and, to varying extents, in other initiatives of Euro-Mediterranean civil society (such as Civil Fora....).

The EMTUF has achieved substantial progress in defining a common trade union position with respect to the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, but this has not penetrated the trade union bases nor has it been completely integrated into their work agenda.

In this context, some measures that could make a contribution to the strengthening and modernisation of trade union organizations in MPCs as reliable social partners are the following :

- Promotion, in a negotiated and consensual manner and within the framework of the current reforms of the national legal framework for labour in the MPCs (reforms of the work codes, etc.), of measures that strengthen and reinforce the independence of unions, respect pluralism, clarify union representativity, strengthen their democratic functioning and protect union rights.

- Measures to encourage the development of collective bargaining practices in work centres and at the level of industry, as well as measures to encourage a culture of tripartite social dialogue.

- Actions that reinforce unions' technical capacities (economic and legal advisory teams) in order to increase their capacity for independent analysis and their capacity to make proposals.

- Encouragement of trans-border trade union cooperation activities (transnational trade union action) either at the Arab regional (south-south) or the Euro-Mediterranean level; such activities could address industry-specific issues, transversal issues, or issues related to specific transnational companies.

The following measures could promote their participation in the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership :

- Assurance of stable support for the Euro-Mediterranean Trade Union Forum from the European Commission.

- Establishment of national consultation mechanisms with the economic and social partners on the different instruments of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (implementation of the Association Agreements, National Indicative Programmes, Action Plans, MEDA Programmes...).

- Specific actions and projects to prompt trade union analysis of the economic and social effects of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership.

- Joint debates and research activities simultaneously involving governments, employers and trade unions from the region.

- Establishment of regular Euro-Mediterranean Labour and Social Affairs Ministerial Conferences (no such meeting has taken place so far) with the participation of economic and social agents.

- Promotion of a regional social dialogue between the Euro-Mediterranean Trade-Union Forum and the Union of Mediterranean Confederations of Enterprises.

- Establishment of information and consultation mechanisms with trade union organizations (from the EU and the MPCs) in relation to industrial de-localization, with a view to the future establishment of some kind of Euro-Mediterranean work councils.

Establishing within the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership a Formal Paritary Euro-Mediterranean Economic and Social Committee (EUROMEDESC) along the Lines of the ESC of the EU and Using the Administrative Structures of the EUESC and the National ESC or Similar Bodies in the Mediterranean Partner Countries

So far Euro-Mediterranean Economic and Social Committees or similar bodies have held nine yearly meetings and published numerous reports and resolutions. They were very quick to react to the launching of the Barcelona Process, holding their first meeting in Madrid on the 12-13th December 1995. At that summit, they already underlined that “besides advances towards economic prosperity, an effort is to be made to achieve a Euro-Mediterranean Social Area, thereby consolidating a model of balanced growth throughout the region.” Since then, they have held eight more summits focused on the consultative function in the Euro-Mediterranean region and the drafting of thematic reports on relevant issues: those reports have, in fact, the social and political value of the social partners endorsing them, but have been all but ignored by Euro-Mediterranean institutions. So ten years later, there is a stark lack of institutionalisation either on the front of consultation procedures – basically, those meetings that take positions on developments and decisions which have already taken place and are already being implemented – or on the front of formalization.

This institution would embody the will to extend the European social consultation model to the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and would be mandatorily consulted on all Euro-Mediterranean economic and social initiatives (i.e., regarding all three chapters of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership). Its opinions would not be binding, but its representatives would be invited to attend EuroMed Committee and the Ministerial Conferences with an observer status. It is true that this practice is not very extended, even at the national or European level, but it is also true that Euro-Mediterranean meetings at this level have a purely declarative-orientative political function and content and this would be a way to compensate the deep democratic deficit of Euro-Mediterranean institutions.

To solve the problem of the absence of ESCs as such in some countries (i.e. Syria, Jordan, Egypt, Morocco), each country would be

allowed to designate a similar body (i.e., a body including all major social partners) to act as part of the EUROMEDESC or, as an alternative, to split representativity amongst bodies representing the three “sectors” of social partners, insofar as they respect the institutionalised format and commit themselves to advancing towards an homogeneous system of ESCs (this should be no problem in a context where there are more and more references to common values, for instance, under the European Neighbourhood Policy, taking into account that standard and institutional harmonization is a common feature in many other fields of Euro-Mediterranean co-operation).

To evaluate advances, a brief yearly report on the state of social consultation in each Euro-Mediterranean country would be made, discussed and published, and the establishment of ESCs where they do not exist would be included in the National Action Plans for those countries. Alternatively, the countries not having formal ESCs would only be entitled to appoint observer members, not full members, to the EURMEDECS. In this way, the very functioning of this institution would arguably promote the establishment and consolidation of ESCs in the MPCs and strengthen the institutionalised social dialogue both at the national level in the MPCs and at the Euro-Mediterranean level.

To avoid bureaucratisation, the EUROMEDECS would not have, at least in a first stage, a physical existence, i.e., it would not have its own premises or staff. It would work rather as a network of dedicated officers in the member bodies, maybe with a small (rotating?) Secretariat lodged in two ESC committees (a European national ESC and one from the South). This, in turn, would mean that the financial resources required to put this in place would be very limited, focused on funding several meetings a year, the necessary expert reports to feed the opinions by the EUROMEDECS and a limited amount –on the basis of co-funding- for the officers in member bodies. So it would be a procedures-intensive approach rather than a resource-intensive approach.

The composition of the EUROMEDECS would be paritary, i.e., with an equal number of members from Mediterranean Partner Countries and from the EU (30-30 seems a sensible number to allow for one representative from each sector from each MPC and at the same time to keep the total number operative), but also in the sense of a paritary

number of the three sectors (employers, workers and social economy-farmers-university and others).

Of course, the implementation of these proposals would need a previous “preparation and pre-establishment period” to make all necessary political transactions (between different ESC models in the North and the South of the Mediterranean, between the European ESCs and the national ones, to clearly define the functions, means and rules of operation of the EUROMEDESC). The experience of the UE-Turkey Joint Consultative Committee could be very useful in this respect. But the very initiation of this process itself would give a clear sign of the political will to involve civil society in the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership. It would also give an immediate meaning to the meetings and activities of the network of Euro-Mediterranean ESCs and probably trigger a virtuous circle for social consultation in the region.

Proposals to Advance Human Rights and Promote the Participation of Women in Economic, Social and Political Life through the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership

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When the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP) was established in November 1995 one of the main achievements was the substantial commitments to human rights values made by the (then) 27 Partners.

The overall objective of the EMP is to create an area of peace, stability and development in the EuroMed region. The key component is the establishment of a regional free trade area, enhanced political dialogue and strengthen social and cultural exchanges, by means of regional cooperation and bi-lateral association agreements between the EU and the South Mediterranean Partners (SMP).

However, by adopting the Barcelona Declaration the Partners committed themselves to respect and promote human rights and recognised the important role of civil society, i.e. to act in accordance with the United Nations Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; to develop the rule of law and democracy in their political systems; respect human rights and fundamental freedoms; combat manifestations of intolerance, racism and xenophobia, etc.

The partners also agreed to recognize the essential contribution civil society can make in the process of development of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and to encourage actions of support for democratic institutions, the rule of law and civil society.

In addition, all bi-lateral association agreements - key instruments in creating the new EuroMed geo-political configuration - included legally binding human rights clause (article 2) stating that respect for human rights and democratic principles is an essential element.

This paper seeks to provide a general assessment of whether the promises made in Barcelona 1995 were upheld and to evaluate the attention given to human rights in the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP) at regional multilateral level and bilateral level during this time-span. It also makes proposals for how to strengthen the human rights and democratization aspects of the EMP.

The main focus of the paper is on the relation between human rights and the institutional aspects of the Barcelona Process rather than with empirical human rights facts in the ground. The latter would require an extensive rendering of the situation in each country of the Partnership which lies outside the scope of the paper and which is an exercise already well done in annual reports of Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders (1).

The paper is structured according to the build-up of the EMP in dealing first with the regional level, and then the bi-lateral level and finally other aspects of interest to the EMP.

Evaluating the EMP

a. The regional level

Looking back on the past ten year's experience it is difficult to say that the EMP helped improve the human rights situation in the region or that human rights principles were coherently and consistently applied in regional cooperation.

Except for the case of Turkey the few noticeable improvements in the past decade - such as the Truth and Reconciliation Process and the reform of the *Mudawana* (2) in Morocco, - were first and foremost matters of internal changes in individual countries, and not of a proactive relation between the Partners to the Barcelona Declaration. Changes for the better in Turkey were the outcome of a bi-lateral pre-accession strategy and not of the dynamic created by the Barcelona

(1) For a previous evaluation please see Barcelona + 5: *What results for Human Rights? White book presented to the Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Meeting in Marseille* (Amnesty International, Article 19, EMHRN; FIDH, Human Rights Watch, OMCT, Penal Reform International, Reporters sans Frontières), November 2000.

(2) The Personal Status Code.

Process. The latest timid signs of change in the SMP – such as the popular demands in Lebanon to get rid of Syrian, and some indication of reform in Egypt – are much more the outcome of the complex situation created by the increased presence of the US in the region than of the EMP per se, the latter having acted in a reactive rather than proactive way to reform issues.

In this context it is worrying to notice that the region has seen a rise in both the North and the South of restraints and violations of civil liberties in the aftermath of the September 11, 2001 attacks despite the fact that systematic reference is made to human rights in relation to the fight against terrorism in EMP documents. Also migrants and asylum seekers rights have been under constant attack as exemplified lately by the refoulement of boat people to Libya by the Italian authorities.

It is also discouraging to remind of the past ten years marginalising of human rights as a basis for Peace in the EMP's approach to the aborted Oslo Process, the Road Map and current unilateral Israeli plans for withdrawal from Gaza (3).

Several grave and structural human rights issues relating to the judiciary are persisting such as the existence in several countries of courts with exceptional jurisdiction (state security courts, military courts, etc.) being the most evident expression of the subordination of justice and the judiciary to political power (4).

The question of the disappeared in countries as Algeria, Lebanon and Syria also remains an acute and largely unaddressed issue, as well as of course the curbing of political freedoms and systematic use of torture in many MPCs as well as the generally discriminatory Family Laws.

Looking at the Presidency conclusions of the Ministerial meetings over the years since Barcelona 1995, confirms the picture of human rights being marginalised on a regional level. It is only after the 11th September 2001 that references to human rights became more prominent as in the Valencia Conclusions and Action Plan.

(3) See for example two EMHRN reports : *Tightened Spaces for Human Rights - Palestinian NGO Work, a discussion paper, March 2004* , *A Human Rights Review on EU and Israel – Relating Commitments to Actions, December 2004*

(4) Cf. *Justice in the South and East Mediterranean Region*, (Sian Lewis-Anthony & Mohammed Mouaqit), EMHRN, Copenhagen, 2005.

In general, human rights have been left at a declarative level while reference to binding obligations of Partners to respect international human rights standards has been carefully avoided. One had to wait for the Commission Communication on Reinvigorating Human Rights and Democratisation in the Mediterranean Region (May 2003) and the EU Commission Communication regarding a Work Programme to Meet the Challenges over the Next Five Years (April 2005) to find proposals that may result in commitments of more binding character.

Looking carefully into the activities that have taken place within the different chapters of the Barcelona Process is illustrative of the above remarks.

The First Chapter

In the first chapter of the Barcelona Process it is hard to identify any initiatives except on the declarative level.

High Officials did at some point exchange information about the international human rights Conventions signed/ratified by their respective countries and they did initiate a (short) series of presentations on why some countries had made reservations to some of the Conventions.

High officials also at one point invited representatives of the Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network (EMHRN) to give a presentation at one meeting, while the Malta Training courses for Young diplomats and a EuroMeSCo annual meeting included sessions making explicitly reference to human rights.

Two documents dealing with the regional dimension of the Barcelona Process proved the post 11 September tendency towards making more explicit declarative reference to human rights, democracy, good governance and the independence of the judiciary, while remaining of a non-binding character i.e. the 2002 Program for Cooperation in the field of justice, combating against drugs, organised crime and terrorism as well as cooperation in the treatment of issues relating to the social integration of migrants, migration and movement of people against and the Regional Indicative Program for 2004-2006. However these were not followed by any operational action on human rights, as they did not propose any particular activity, programme or budget line to sustain activities addressing this field directly.

Another document, the Commission Communication on Reinvigorating EU Actions on Human Rights and Democratisation with Mediterranean Partners proposes 10 highly operational recommendations to promote human rights and human rights dialogue in the region. It was approved by the EU Council in Presidency Conclusions of the Ministerial meetings and highly welcomed by human rights NGOs. However, its current status seems unclear despite the Commission Communication on a Work Programme to Meet the Challenges over the Next Five Years making explicitly reference to this document and it is not yet clear whether it will be 'overruled' by the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) and ENP Action.

The Second Chapter

Human rights are universal, indivisible, and interdependent and interrelated, as expressed in the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 and reaffirmed in the Vienna Declaration and Program of Action of 1993. However an overview of activities and programs under the Second Chapter of the Barcelona Declaration relating to economic and financial cooperation shows that despite the MEDA regulation's article 3 and 11 emphasizing that respect for human rights and democracy are essential elements of cooperation, no systematic procedure or attempt to incorporate human rights concerns exist under this chapter (whether in the phase of programming, implementation or evaluation).

This means for example that no vetting mechanism has been put in place to ensure against direct or collateral harm arising out of the design and implementation of the MEDA projects, including programs for budgetary support to structural adjustment. No evaluation of EU programs and projects under the second chapter has so far included a specific human rights perspective. Beneficiaries of aid in the region are not been considered as rights holders with entitlements that both the Partners Country and the EU has the duty to fulfill and thus possibility is excluded for providing redress when things goes wrong⁽⁵⁾.

(5) See The Human Rights Implications of the Meda Programmes (Iain Byrne and Charles Shamas), EMHRN, Copenhagen 2002.

This also means that regional issues pertaining to free trade and their impact on human rights (for example the right to work, development and migrants' rights) are left unaddressed by the EMP.

Women's rights

The only more or less explicit reference to human rights issues in the second chapter is the recognition of the key role women play in development and the commitment to promote their active participation in economic and social life and in the creation of employment.

Two conferences on this question took place under Portuguese and Belgium Presidencies of the EMP. A first positive step is the launch of a small EU regional program, that to become significant should be followed up and widened to cover a larger range of women's rights issues including the question of gender mainstreaming.

Nevertheless, the Barcelona Declaration does not explicitly acknowledge the relationship between human rights, democracy, development and women's rights, and there has been a tendency by governments in the EuroMed region, as well as within the EU institutions, to regard women's rights as an issue of 'religious norms and cultural traditions' that thus should be treated as a domestic issue.

Several EMP countries discriminate against women in Personal Status Laws, in Penal, Nationality and other laws. Furthermore women are discriminated against when it comes to education and employment and political representation. Violence, physical as well as psychological, is widespread in the whole of the EuroMed region by state as well as non-state actors, and in the family sphere.

Despite recent high-lighting of the importance of gender equality for democracy promotion (see the UNDP Arab Development Reports) several barriers impede international engagement in the promotion of women's rights, notably the reservations of the MENA states to the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) (6).

(6) See The Integration of Women's Rights into the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, (Rabea Naciri and Isis Nusayir), EMHRN, Copenhagen 2003.

It was not until November 2001 that gender issues were mentioned in the final conclusions of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership Summit and today women's rights remain inconsistently addressed in the Euro-Mediterranean National Strategy papers, National Indicative Programs and the Neighborhood Action Plans.

The Third Chapter

It is possible, in the Third Chapter of the Barcelona Declaration, to find more concrete examples of initiatives aimed at human rights promotion (7) : First of all the Civil Forum meetings that since the Civil Forum in Stuttgart 1999 had human rights high on the agenda and recently (in Cyprus, June 2004) translated into the adoption of a Civil Society Charter based on human rights values.

Also a number of Wilton Park conferences (co-funded by MEDA) are worth mentioning as they brought human rights activist, government officials and experts together to dialogue on human rights matters. A MEDA sponsored seminar in May 2001 on Access to Justice in the Euro-Mediterranean region did the same, as well as a civil society meeting on migrant's and refugees' rights under the German Presidency, February 1999, that later reported back to a High Level meeting.

These meetings have been important as 'ice breakers' between people that rarely meet.

Finally, it is worthwhile mentioning that human rights have been included as main concerns of the EuroMed Youth Platform and the newly established Anna Lind Foundation for Dialogue between Cultures and Civilisation. In addition, human rights are key concerns of the newly established EuroMed NGO Platform that after the Dublin Ministerial meeting (May 2004) is recognised as a co-organiser of the Civil Forum meetings.

However, it is important to add that until today none of the conclusions on human rights of the meetings under the third chapter seems to have been taken on board for operational consideration at the official level and no program can be identified under the third

(7) It lies outside the scope of this paper to examine to which degree cultural rights have been promoted and protected in the EMP framework.

chapter where human rights have been flagged as the key issue. One has to turn to programs and activities that lie at the bilateral level or outside the direct remit of the EMP (see below) to find conspicuous initiatives relating to human rights.

b. The Bi-lateral level

The bi-lateral dimension of the Barcelona Process may have had a bit more impact on the human rights situation in individual countries (8) and human rights promotion and protection seem increasingly to get a more prominent role in the bi-lateral relations between the EU and the Mediterranean partner countries.

The Human Rights Clauses of the bi-lateral Association agreements are legally binding commitments to respect human rights. Now that all association agreements are coming into force it seems that human rights concerns are raised more systematically at Association Councils and committee meetings, although there is still a lack of consistency and real dialogue on this issue. Moreover EU countries tend to seek towards the lowest common denominator when agreeing on how strong criticism can be raised on certain issues.

It is to be welcomed that several EU country strategies for 2002-06 and now most of the EU national indicative programs for 2005-06 for Mediterranean countries deal with human rights and include human rights programs funded by MEDA. It will be essential that the EU evaluate these programs and their impact on the situation on the ground.

c. The European Neighbourhood Policy

The most important development taking place today is contained in the European Neighbourhood Policy Country Reports and Action Plans.

(8) EU policies in this regard, however, still remain very limited and are incoherently applied. An example of incoherence is the reform of the Family Code in Morocco (the *Mudawana*) that, amongst other, was the result of successful cooperation between women's rights groups some of which at some points received funds from the European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR). However, the fact that the EU discontinued funding of human rights NGOs while the campaign was peaking is an example of the EU lacking a clear strategy for Morocco (Morocco was not selected as a focus country of the EIDHR and no funds were allocated to human rights in the NIP for 2002-2004).

The European Neighbourhood Policy was first outlined by the Commission in March 2003 in its Communication on Wider Europe – Neighbourhood : a New Framework for Relations with our Eastern and Southern Partners (9).

The Communication contains a section on the promotion of human rights ‘as part of contributing towards greater mutual understanding, tolerance and overcoming stereotypes...including ‘contributing towards a flourishing civil society centred on protection of free expression and association’.

Despite several flaws (10) the Communication does open new possibilities for dealing proactively with human rights in the EuroMed region, in particular on a bi-lateral level.

An analysis of the seven EU individual country reports (11) shows that they appear to be reflections of many of the key human rights issues in each state. The fact that the EU reports are on occasion quite critical of the human rights situation in the countries is testament to how far the EU has come to provide a more objective appraisal. Each report includes a list of the international human rights obligations of each country.

In general the content of the ENP do relate to many of the priority issues identified in the Country Reports. At the same time – while running in parallel to the MEDA National Indicative Programs - they do mark a stronger emphasis on human rights than these through their (albeit not universal) reference to the need to fulfil international treaty obligations and the use of monitoring mechanisms to measure progress.

(9) COM (2003) 104 final (11 March 2003)

(10) Inter alia that the Communication contains no reference to the main UN human rights treaties ratified by partners in terms of those instruments to be used as a basis for establishing benchmarks against which progress on the National Action Plans (NAPs) can be measured.

(11) Egypt, Israel, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestinian National Authority and Tunisia.

The proposal to establish sub-committees on human rights in several countries is also to be welcomed (12).

However, beyond this a somehow narrow conceptualization of rights continues to prevail as the ENP Country Reports and Action Plans focus predominantly on civil and political rights.

Economic, social and cultural rights receive a clear lack of attention as evidenced by the fact that human rights are not discussed at all under the economic and social issues section despite the potential negative impact on human rights of policies such as structural adjustment and market reforms. Issues such as development, education and poverty are also not presented in terms of relevant rights under the UN International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and other relevant treaties binding on partner countries. Nor do human rights figure to any great extent under Justice and Home Affairs despite the clear impact on a range of civil liberties.

Furthermore, no mention is made of what or how specific benchmarks and indicators will be used or of implementation timelines. Much activity seems to be predicated on 'initiating dialogues or exploring possibilities' without the concrete timelines or outputs envisaged in earlier Communications.

Finally, practically no role has been given so far to dialogue and consultation with civil society in the process of drafting, implementation and evaluation of the plans. This contradicts the wording of the Communication on Reinvigorating EU Actions on Human Rights and Democratisation with Mediterranean Partners and the June 2004 EU Strategic Partnership with the Mediterranean and the Middle-East.

(12) These Sub-Committees will gather officials from the European Commission, the EU Presidency and Member States and from each of the Mediterranean countries concerned in order to work specifically on the issue of human rights. A first meeting of this kind might take place soon with Jordan and in a few months time with Morocco. The draft Action Plan with Tunisia included the establishment of such a Sub-Committee, but the Tunisian government seems to do some steps back. The Action Plan with Israel included the creation of a Sub-Committee on human rights, but it was regretfully withdrawn from the final version of the Plan.

d. Other Actions related to the EMP and human rights in the region

The most visible and successful approach to human rights promotion is the one promoted by the European Initiative for Democratisation and Human Rights (EIDHR, originally the MEDA Democracy Program established at the request of the European Parliament to promote independent civil society and human rights work in the region).

Under this program numerous local human rights NGOs have been funded and important regional bottom-up initiatives have grown such as the Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network, the regional program of the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), the Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies, the Arab Institute for Human Rights, Penal Reform International, etc. They have provided real opportunities – often with the support of the European Parliament - for intercultural exchange, capacity building and policy making to an extent that the human rights NGOs in the region are among the most articulate and proactive defenders of regional cooperation

This relative success has however, to a vast extent been hampered by legal and practical constraints to human rights work in most South Mediterranean Countries, the most well-known cases being the arrest of Saad El-Din Ibrahim Director of the Ibn Khaldun Centre for Developmental Studies on charges of receiving foreign funds without prior state approval and the Tunisian government's freezing of EIDHR funds allocated to the Tunisian Human Rights League.

Also regular dysfunction/ restructurings of the EIDHR including discontinued funding of some of the most successful initiatives have hampered civil society work.

Generally, the EMP has benefited to an unnecessarily little degree from these initiatives as no regular dialogue has taken place between the human rights groups and the officials of the Partnership except in more informal meetings and conferences (13).

(13) Two sub-regional conferences in Amman and Casablanca (in 2002) which were initiated by the European Commission to consult with NGOs on the EIDHR were welcomed, but reports from these meetings, including significant recommendations, were regrettably never published.

Summarising one can say that

- The human rights situation in the region has not generally improved since 1995.

- Human rights language has slowly gained ground in the declarative (but non-binding) regional documents of the EMP and EU, but has not been followed yet by regional political dialogue, nor by concrete human rights specific activities or programs.

- The EMP almost exclusively addressed civil and political rights issues and not issues relating to women's rights, migrant's rights and economic, social and cultural rights, i.e. human rights promotion took place at the expense of a coherent and holistic approach to rights based development and cooperation.

- Human rights promotion on a regional level has been marginalised at the expense of a bi-lateral approach with a strong emphasis on civil and political rights. The most systematic and promising initiatives seem to lie at the latter level. It is too early to predict how the ENP action plans will work. Taking the lack of benchmarking and time lines into consideration a lot will depend on political-diplomatic will to prioritise the human rights agenda.

- Considering the ENP Action Plans, the Commission Communication on Reinvigorating Human Rights and Democratisation in the Mediterranean Region and other documents leads also to concluding that a wide range of instruments to promote human rights within the framework of the EMP has been created that can be constructively used in future work, except :

- Mechanisms for benchmarking
- Mechanisms for gender mainstreaming
- Systematic and coherent dialogue and support to civil society
- The promotion of holistic regional approach to human rights promotion taking the indivisibility of rights into account

Filling these gaps and adding the necessary dose of political will to implement these instruments should be important steps for the future.

Proposals

a. In general

Fulfilling the objectives of the Barcelona Process in the field of human rights implies first of all the implementation and/or the strengthening of the existing instruments, first of all the

The Implementation and Strengthening of the Commission Communication on Reinvigorating EU Actions on Human Rights and Democratisation with Mediterranean Partners

The Communication provides 10 'concrete' recommendations for improving the dialogue between the EU and its regional partners and ensuring complementarity between political dialogue and financial assistance, between the assistance provided under the MEDA programme and under the European Initiative on Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) and between regional and national dimensions.

The 10 Recommendations are divided between various areas of EU partnership activity and do provide some type of normative framework within which progress can be assessed both in terms of process and sources of information.

Four recommendations are presented under the Dialogue Between the EU and its Partners : **Recommendation 1** requires the systematic inclusion of human rights and democracy in all dialogues taking place on an institutionalised basis and the exploration of the possibility of establishing technical sub-groups to address such issues. In doing so it seeks a better operational focus including cooperation on legal reforms and frameworks governing the operation of NGOs and other non-state actors.

Recommendation 2 mandates EU country delegations to draw up detailed country reports on the human rights situation and to regularly update them to form the basis for systematic discussion between Heads of Missions.

Recommendation 3 promotes greater co-ordination between Missions and EU member states embassies by inter alia convening expert meetings at country level on implementing human rights aspects of the MEDA, enhanced input into Heads of Mission meetings

on human rights and democracy and working to ensure a more active role in the implementation of UN resolutions and reports of UN treaty bodies and Special Rapporteurs.

Recommendation 4 aims at facilitating a dialogue between partner governments and civil society through regular meetings.

Recommendations 5 and 6 concerning the aims and content of both the National and Regional Action Plans continue the theme of attempting to provide a more systematic approach to assessing human rights progress. In relation to the former it is envisaged that the National Action Plans will analyse the context and situation of each country particularly as regards human rights legislation, draw up a list of specific action points accompanied by measurable benchmarks of performance with clear timelines whilst at the same time identifying technical and financial assistance needed to achieve the objectives. Specific aims include analysing constitutional and other legal rights and proposing appropriate reforms, supporting the implementation of human rights treaties to which each state is a party and promote adherence to those which it has yet to ratify, analyse the rights of women and how best to involve them in the development, support the development of appropriate national legislative frameworks, the integration of dialogue with civil society, promoting the exchange of information on best practice and strengthening the capacity of local NGOs through training and capacity building. Regional Action Plans will focus on regional co-operation issues such as women's rights and justice.

The remaining four recommendations focus on mainstreaming human rights through the existing MEDA Programming with Recommendation 7 addressing the National Indicative Programmes, Recommendation 8 looking at the Regional Indicative Programme and Recommendations 9 and 10 concerning the EIDHR.

Taken together the ten recommendations mark a significant step forward in the EU's human rights policy in the region while outlining concrete action points for the EMP.

It should however be strengthened by ensuring from the onset that the :

- Proposed country reports are built on the highest human rights standards and that they are made public and thus available for public scrutiny. If they are not, EMP human rights policies will remain non-

transparent and progress or setbacks in bi-lateral relation between the EU and the SMP cannot be institutionally assessed. .

- Mainstreaming of human rights into all chapters of the Barcelona Process is implemented in a systematic, effective, consistent and coherent manner. This implies amongst other that obligations of both conduct and result are created in MEDA projects providing possibility to assess how the projects were implemented in terms of rights to information, participation and redress as to what were the end results. To this end, the EuropAid should establish pilot studies with regard to the human rights implications of MEDA actions in various sectors as a matter of priority.

Finally, a prerequisite for implementing the principles of the Communication would be to ensure efficient, sustained long-term financial support to relevant local and regional human rights structures while encouraging the lifting of legal restraints on civil society work. It should be considered to :

- Create in 2005-2006 a regional MEDA programme on human rights which would be complementary to the EIDHR;
- Establish a regional Human Rights and Democracy Program within the framework of the future EU Neighbourhood financial instrument for 2007-2013.

b. On a regional level

The EMP should establish a task force at the multilateral level with the aim of advising the Partners on human rights issues of regional concern

As mentioned above the regional human rights dimension of the Barcelona Process has remained weak. Establishing a task force within the framework of the EMP could significantly enhance multilateralism.

Priorities of the task force would be to :

- Reinvigorate the implementation of existing instruments at the regional level to priorities of the task force would
- Establish significant links between the conclusions and recommendations of UN mechanisms for the protection of human

rights (special rapporteurs, working groups, monitoring committees of the Treaties and Pacts), and the discussions on human rights within the framework of the EMP at multilateral and bilateral level.

- Analyse how various parts of the Barcelona Process interact and have impact on human rights. This would for example include analysing the intricate and complex relation between the establishment of the free trade zone, and the protection and implementation of economic and social rights, hereunder the right to work, the rights of migrants and their families. This would also imply identifying regional mechanism for seeking redress by right holders

- Propose regional actions in fields of general concern such as the compliance with international norms and conventions of the judiciary, including in the fight against terrorism, and the promotion and protection of the rights of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. The latter should include steps towards ratifying the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families by all Partner states

- The task force should also propose relevant mechanisms for structural and systematic thematic dialogue with the most significant regional civil society human rights structures.

The EMP should develop a coherent strategy for the equal participation of women in the Barcelona Process

The question of women's rights in the Barcelona Process has until today been marginalised by the Partner states despite the fact that the role and status of women in society is intrinsically linked to sustainable development and democracy.

A main concern of the Partnership should therefore be to promote gender equality in the region. This would imply building on best practices in various parts of the EuroMed region and stop treating women's rights as an issue primarily of 'religious norms and cultural traditions'.

This would imply :

- The definition of an overall program for encouraging and supporting revision of the existing political and legal framework to

sensitise it to gender issues, including for the lifting of reservations to the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), and ratify CEDAW's optional protocol.

- Gender mainstreaming all three baskets of the EMP to include women's rights and equal opportunity issues in all areas of activity, not merely those traditionally deemed to concern women.

- Integrating women's rights into their human rights dialogues under the bi-lateral association agreements and including these as an integral part of country reports.

- Designing affirmative action programmes within the EMP aimed at increasing the participation of women in all main areas of activities and supporting them with appropriate financial and technical resources.

- Using reduced gender disparities as an indicator to the success of legal reform and practice in the countries' development policies and strategies ; including a specific chapter on gender in the Annual MEDA report drafted by the Commission; and reserving a financial facility for the prevention of discrimination and violence against women in the MENA region in the MEDA programmes as well as in the EIDHR.

- Ensuring gender-sensitive expertise within staff at all level of the EMP mechanisms, in the central level as well as in their representations and delegations in the Partner States.

- Including the representation of relevant independent women's rights organisations in dialogues with civil society by reserving quotas for the participation of women's rights organisations in these consultations

c. On the bi-lateral level

The EMP Partners should develop coherent, consistent and efficient measures to the mainstreaming of human rights in bi-lateral cooperation

Focus on a bi-lateral level should lie on introducing clear benchmarks and time lines for action that could help assess progress and set-backs on the basis of international human rights standards

rather than on purely political grounds. As on the regional level an important aspect would be to promote a human rights approach based on the indivisibility of rights and to include structural and systematic consultation with civil society. Human rights and gender mainstreaming into all political dialogues and programmes is also a key element. Thus it is recommendable that

- Each Neighbourhood Action Plan should identify the relevant rights engaged under each of the Action sections including both civil and political rights and economic, social and cultural rights. In particular strenuous efforts should be made in relation to introducing the latter set of rights into analysis of economic and social issues. In this context the EU should develop as a matter of priority sound and manageable methodologies for human rights evaluations at the project level, and the EuroAid should as a matter of urgency commission pilot projects in this regard.

- All activities should have concrete aims, outputs and timelines and identify examples of benchmarks and indicators based on the partner country's international commitments (eg Article 10 of CEDAW guarantees the right of women to have equal access to education; the NAP will seek to ensure by 2007 that the number of women entering higher education will increase from 5 % to 15 % ; this will be measured by analysis of official government education statistics, university enrolment records and UNESCO reports)

- The Action Plans should recognise the obligation of the EU in providing assistance through the ENP instrument to respect all stakeholders' rights both in terms of how the projects are implemented and the final results. Therefore it will stipulate the need for appropriate stakeholder analysis to be carried out, identify the relevant rights and duty holders and lines of accountability and offer the prospect of redress where violations occur through poorly planning or implementation.

- The beneficiary participation should be recognised as a cross-cutting issue which should be addressed at all stages of project design and implementation. In line with principles of transparency and accountability such participation should also encompass mechanisms for redress where a project negatively impacts and /or fails to fulfil its aims.

- The role of civil society in promoting and protecting all rights and representing those who are often politically and economically marginalized should be recognised by integrating their involvement as far as possible into all Neighbourhood Action Plans rather than merely being the subject of discrete projects.

Finally, and most importantly, key importance for the Partner States of the Barcelona Process should be to agree seeking highest possible standards in the field of human and support human rights with necessary doses of political will.

Mutual Understanding and Cultural Exchanges in the Mediterranean Region

Assessment of the Euro-Mediterranean Policy and Proposals for its Revitalization

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A.

The Mediterranean represents a privileged field for observation, and possibly a unique space for experimenting new international relationships.

In our attempt to make an assessment of the achievements within the last ten years, we will first examine the changes that the region has undergone. For the sake of this exercise, we will deliberately place ourselves at the heart of the Mediterranean space and abstain from looking at it from the outside (from Europe and even less from the West). Indeed, our intention is not to consider the Mediterranean as a disease plaguing today's world, but rather as the place that certainly holds the remedy.

The first question that we will endeavour to answer is the following: what are the most important changes that have occurred in the Mediterranean region since the advent of the Barcelona Process in 1995, and what are the repercussions of these changes from the cultural perspective?

1.

The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP) came into existence at the time when the old bipolar world had just expired, carrying into oblivion the stability in world relations which was based on the balance of power between the two superpowers. The fall of the bipolar system and the ensuing warming up of international relations seems to have

* Original contribution in French.

given Europe, which was persevering in its quest for political integration, a new dynamic that propelled it to first seek rapprochement with its East, and to subsequently launch its strategic initiative towards the South. At the time, the EMP was interpreted as the dawn of a new era of partnership relations between former colonisers and colonised, and, therefore, as heralding the emergence of a new multi-polar world. In the same vein, new, more open and trusting cultural relations were considered possible between the two shores of the Mediterranean Sea. Europe was (re)-discovering the fact that the Mediterranean region was not only synonymous of tourism at best and boat people at worst, but was also a cultural space rich in its diversity.

But what is the situation like ten years later ? Threats to cultural diversity have never been more alarming for the Mediterranean and even for Europe. The end of the cold war has given birth to a new world order based on North American unilateralism within which Europe's voice is so faint that it seems inaudible. More so after the 9/11 events, we have witnessed a kind of contraction and a shrinking of the very notion of the West around the United States and their initiative. Under these new skies, inequalities between countries and cultural diversities are considered more as evidence of the existence of a value and hierarchy system between traditions, peoples and civilizations(1).

Indeed, the United States seem intent on playing the lead in the Mediterranean region: first on the political front through the strategy of the 'reform' of the Arab world (cf. the Forum of the Future organised in Morocco in December 2004) ; then through an aggressive thrust in the economic field as witness to the free trade agreements concluded or under negotiation with a number of countries south of the Mediterranean. The example of the free trade agreement with Morocco is highly significant with a cultural chapter that represents a serious threat to all the Moroccan cultural industries. Still vulnerable, despite protection and quotas, the cultural sector is in serious danger of being swept away by the 'free competition' of the heavyweights of North American cultural industry just as the diverse components of the Moroccan culture (of which the Amazigh) are being

(1) Cf. Franco Cassano, *Homo Civicus. La regione vuole follia beni comuni*, Dedalo, 2004, p. 85 (Un altro Occidente). Riflessioni sull'Europa).

recognised. Is this the end of cultural diversity? Is culture in the process of becoming a mere merchandise? Are the Mediterranean countries, as they progressively open up to the rest of the world, and to Europe in the first place, capable of defending their cultural uniqueness?

2.

There is, however, a pivotal question which will enable us to gauge the extent of deterioration that has affected the situation in the Mediterranean region since 1995, and of which the repercussions clearly impact on the so-called 'cultural' scene. Let us take a flash back. November 1995, date of the Barcelona Conference, represents the apogee of the Oslo Process. This date is in fact also that of the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin, an event that marks the beginning of a progressive and dramatic slide towards the demise of every agreement and every political process. Yet, the partnership launched in Barcelona was largely motivated by the idea that an area of 'peace and shared prosperity' could be edified based on a just settlement of the Israeli Palestinian conflict, a solution that seemed within reach at the time and towards which the Partnership would have contributed by consecrating Israel and Palestine as players in the Euro Mediterranean concert. The end of Oslo and the end of the primacy of politics as time went by weakened the Euromed Process of which the political fragility stood in the way of any influence on the course of events. The consecration of the use of force in conflict resolution, of which the Anglo-American war on Iraq is the most recent expression, negating the voice and path of politics, has served a fatal blow to the relations of trust that had started to weave their web in this and that part of the Mediterranean region. The so-called cleavage between good and evil, between the Christian West and Islam, has divided the Mediterranean region in two parts with repercussions of which the cost continues to be paid by societies on the two shores.

3.

The final element in this equation is Europe and its frontiers. Over the 1990s, Europe began negotiations with the East European countries as a prelude to their accession, and engaged on a phase of enlargement and dynamic movement. At that time, the debates that marked the creation of the EMP addressed the political perspectives

that Europe could propose to the Mediterranean countries beyond the free trade zone in 2010. Bold voices rose in defence of the perspective of a political integration of which the modus operandi was still to be defined. It is in fact this political perspective that would have made the Partnership less of a target and more of a truly mobilising political project. The mere fact of recalling these debates enables us to appreciate in its true nature the radical change in the current context. Today, Europe seems to walk backwards into the launch of negotiations with Turkey. It launches the European Neighbourhood Policy which freezes its borders and lands up in an ideological debate on the European identity (Christian or otherwise), ignoring the contribution of the Muslim populations who represent nowadays a full-fledged component of its identity, and forgetting by the same token the cultural dimension that inherently ties it to the whole Mediterranean Basin.

The Mediterranean that seemed capable of existing again as a field for experimenting new relations between Europe and the Arab world is today divided. The notion in vogue at present is not that of the Euro-Mediterranean, but that of the 'Middle East and North Africa – MENA- region, an Anglo-Saxon notion which seems to have become readily accepted even by the Europeans who by so doing, remove themselves outside the Mediterranean angle and consider it from a wary angle. In contrast to a weakening Euro-Mediterranean political vision, the notion of the 'Broader Middle East' emerges and entrenches the divide between Europe and the Mediterranean region.

Over the coming fifteen years, Euro Mediterranean relations will certainly feature at the heart of the European public debate, mostly as a result of Turkey's accession process (a debate already started). But the Mediterranean region will also be on the agenda in light of the perspective of an important and new flow of several millions of migrant workers towards Europe, called upon to compensate for the European demographic deficit, guarantee the functioning of the European social security systems (when the baby boom generation reaches retirement age) and, in a nutshell, called upon to ensure European growth⁽²⁾. These two issues will confer heightened importance on relations with the

(2) Green Book on an EU Approach to the Management of Economic Migrations. COM (2004) 811. Final, European, Commission, 11 January 2005.

Mediterranean region of which the cultural dimension (and not the inter-religious one) would never have been more crucial yet largely ignored.

More importantly, the Mediterranean is essential for Europe (not only the opposite), for historical and for cultural reasons, as well as in view of the commonality of our destiny.

B.

Before we tackle current priorities, let us take a look at the achievements made within the framework of EMP.

The Barcelona Declaration clearly defines the general objective of the Euromed partnership as making the Mediterranean Basin a space for dialogue, exchanges and co-operation. Europe maintains privileged ties with the Mediterranean Region forged by neighbourhood and historical affinities. This geographical and historical recognition constitutes a basis for the joint programme that the twenty-seven signatory states adhere to. This programme is rich in promises since the third part of the Declaration explicitly addresses, in addition to a sustainable policy in the area of education, cultural exchanges and dialogue, the thorny issue of mobility, which issue was only to worsen and that the parties undertook to solve by 'namely improving administrative procedures'. Furthermore, the 'vital contribution' of civil society is affirmed for the first time as a crucial element in the achievement of rapprochement between the Mediterraneans.

Sharp observers (3) have noted that the place granted to culture in the structure devised in Barcelona was not as pivotal in the first drafts of the declaration (which date back to the spring of 1995), and that it took the obstinacy of a number of 'Mediterraneanists' to push the draft forward and towards its final version.

But the substantial innovation in this text remains the association of 'civil society' and 'culture' in the third part, as if explicitly intimating that the dialogue of cultures is first of all a dialogue of societies, and

(3) Cf. Paul Balta. *La culture: le paren pauvre*. Confluences Méditerranée, N° 35. Autumn 2000.

that it is not the exclusive purview of the states or elites on the two shores of the Mediterranean.

Naturally, Euro-Mediterranean civil societies had not waited for the Barcelona Conference to engage in cultural co-operation through a multitude of initiatives that wove the fabric of exchanges in the region. A considerable part of these initiatives had benefited from the financial support of the European Commission within the framework of the New Mediterranean Policy (1990-1995), the MED programmes, which provided aid mechanisms for decentralised co-operation (between the media, territorial communities, universities, etc). Other projects, including some of a humble size, secured their financing directly from Brussels within the framework of what was labelled 'micro actions'. This flexible and smooth financing method was progressively abolished in the face of the more constraining mechanisms that are 'regional programmes'.

C.

In terms of culture and human exchanges, one can identify three moments in the conceptualisation and implementation of the frameworks of the Euro-Mediterranean culture policy: the launch of 'regional programmes' (1996-1999), the extension to the Mediterranean countries of European cultural and educational programmes (starting 2002), and the creation of the Anna Lindh Foundation for the Dialogue of Cultures (decided in 2002, and inaugurated in the spring of 2005).

1. Euromed Regional Programmes

As from the spring of 1996, the EMP ministers of culture met for the first time in Bologna (Italy) to debate the theme of the Mediterranean heritage. The meeting gave birth to the first regional programme, Euromed Heritage. As we have seen, the past constituted the cornerstone of the Euro-Mediterranean cultural policy. It was therefore no surprise that the Partnership ministers inaugurated their action with this consensual theme. Exchange of technical know-how, training, cataloguing, cultural development and tourism were on the agenda of this programme. Supported by a relatively substantial financing package (17.2 million for the first term 1997-2000, 20 million for the

second one 2001-2008 and 10 million for the third one 2003-2008), it funded 36 regional projects of which the majority benefited from an approximate subsidy of about 3 million. Very little civil society involvement was noted in Euromed Heritage since the projects were carried out by universities and by the ministries of culture and their attached institutions. Making matters even worse was the fact that Europeans headed all the beneficiary projects.

Devised in 1997 and launched in 2000, Euromed Audio-visual (€ 20 million) funded six projects which focused on the production, marketing, conservation and distribution of European and Mediterranean films. A new programme was announced for the period of 2005-2007 with a € 15 million financing package. This project will address issues of a logistical nature (the creation and modernisation of cinemas), such as distribution, regulations and legislation.

The Euromed Heritage and Audio-visual programmes have undoubtedly made it possible to implement projects that were often excellent. However, their technical and financial specifications and the importance of their budgets confined them within the circles of highly professional specialists, thus failing to impart any tangible or visible impact on the Euro-Mediterranean societies.

Euromed Youth Programme I, adopted in 1998 and to which € 9.7 million were allocated (of which six million euros came from the MEDA funds) for 1999-2001, financed exchange and training programmes involving youth organisations in the Euromed space. It made possible the creation of a network of national co-ordinators made up of institutional representatives for each country involved. The 2002-2004 term of the programme, consolidated by additional funds of 14 million, gave priority to training activities and made possible the creation in September 2003 of a Euromed Youth Platform, a network of youth associations and NGOs. In total, the programme financed more than 500 projects (2003) (4).

Finally, since 1998, a global financing package of € 65 million was allocated for the development of the electronic interconnection between Euro-Mediterranean countries within the framework of the

(4) This regional programme has been suspended since 2005. Cf. the evaluation drawn up in December 2004 for the period 2001-2003:

<http://europa.eu.int/comm/youth/program/eval/euromed2004>. (in PDF format)

Eumedis programme for the Euro-Mediterranean information society. Some selected projects pertaining to internet-supported tourism and heritage were considered by the European Commission as a contribution towards the fostering of inter-cultural understanding.

2. European Programmes

In 2002 and after the Valencia ministerial conference (Barcelona V), the Commission adopted a new course, claimed for long by the civil society, namely the opening of certain European programmes to the Mediterranean countries.

A first example is the Tempus programme. Devised with the aim of encouraging the reform of higher education in Central and Eastern European countries in 1990, the programme was enlarged to Mediterranean partner countries as of 2002. One of its aims is to encourage multilateral co-operation mainly between universities on curricula matters and the modernisation of the management of universities via joint Euro-Mediterranean projects and mobility scholarships in favour of university staff. Tempus MEDA had at its disposal a budget of € 43 million for the 2002-2004 exercise.

In 2004, the Erasmus programme, promoting the mobility of students in Europe was converted into Erasmus Mundus (€ 230 million for 2004-2008), hence becoming accessible to Mediterranean universities and students who could now study for a Masters degree in Europe. More than 9000 mobility scholarships will be granted in a bid to encourage the flow of students, while 1000 teaching/research grants will be awarded to universities from non-European countries.

Starting 2005-2006, the MEDIA programme (of the GD of culture) will be open in its training part to the Mediterranean audio-visual professionals since partner countries in the region have now become eligible.

Another relevant example is the Culture 2000 programme. This framework programme of European cultural co-operation finances annual and pluri-annual projects which focus every year on a different "sectorial priority". The 2004 focus was ancient cultural heritage. However, even though this programme has been opened for Mediterranean countries since 2003, the cultural role-players of these countries do not qualify for the status of project co-organiser

but have to be content with the role of “associate partner”. They are therefore deprived of the co-responsibility of devising and implementing the projects.

To conclude this brief overview, it is necessary to mention the most recent novelty in the field of fundamental research and human and social sciences. The VI Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development, an instrument of the Mediterranean Research Area has now made room for Mediterranean countries. Mainly devised as a scientific co-operation instrument, it also provides opportunities for exchange and joint activities between the two shores of the Mediterranean Basin. Within this context, a Euro-Mediterranean network of research institutes in human sciences has come into existence on the Mediterranean scene (5).

One is tempted to draw attention to a European incongruity: the most important financing actions of cultural projects within the Mediterranean region are nowadays carried out outside MEDA. This is particularly true of the last example cited. In fact, the Euromed Humanities Programme, one of the most legitimate and most anticipated ones has been prevented from becoming a reality within the Euromed framework because of the inability of the Barcelona Process architects to identify the modalities of its implementation.

Another equally important observation is the absence of programmes for Euro-Mediterranean relations in the fields of primary and secondary education (including language learning) and the media. The report of the High-Level Advisory Group laid special emphasis on these two fundamental aspects in the creation of reciprocal representation and the persistence of stereotypes (6).

The opening of European instruments and programmes to the Mediterranean region beyond MEDA seems hence to be on the rise and one can only be delighted about that. Nonetheless, these

(5) Network of Research Centres in Human Science on the Mediterranean Area– REMSH, a pilot project of MMSH of Aix-en-Provence.

(6) Dialogue between Peoples and Cultures in the Euro-Mediterranean Area. Report by the High-Level Advisory Group created at the recommendation of the President of the European Commission, Autumn 2003. Publications of the European Community, 2004, p. 38 and p. 45.

programmes have been devised through a European logic and not with an eye on partnership. Very often, they relegate south-Mediterranean countries to a secondary position that is far removed from equality.

Furthermore, access to these programmes remains a true challenge. The administrative procedures (forms, deadlines, legal status of the applicants...) often turn out to be complex and daunting. They require technical, administrative and financial competencies that are absolutely beyond the reach of the cultural role-players on the southern shore as well as in the North. Other aggravating factors, such as the linguistic barriers (Arabic not being an accepted language) and the legislation within southern Mediterranean countries, often constitute insurmountable obstacles for the promoters of cultural projects.

3. The Anna Lindh Euro-Mediterranean Foundation for the Dialogue between Cultures

The year 2002 was marked by the launch of an ambitious initiative that sought to give a new impetus to the cultural dimension of the Euromed Partnership which had suffered many setbacks since 9/11. First institution to have been created within the framework of the Barcelona Process, the Foundation aspires to 'promote understanding between cultures and exchanges between civil societies', basing its future action on a network of 35 institutions designated by the thirty-five countries of the EMP. However, several question marks have dogged the creation of this new institution which is supposed to kick-start its activities during 2005.

The first concern pertains to the inadequacy of the resources at its disposal (11.8 million over three years of which 5 million are provided by MEDA) in comparison to its announced ambitions and the strategic nature of the dialogue of cultures in the Mediterranean space. The second concern relates to its inter-governmental status. In fact, the Foundation falls under the authority of the Euromed Committee made up of representatives of the Partner States, while its legitimacy and its credibility, particularly on the southern shore, have as fundamentals "an open and transparent functioning that is independent of governmental patronage" (7).

(7) Declaration of the Euromed Non-Governmental Platform and the Naples Civil Forum (December 2003).

The triennial draft programme of the Foundation presents interesting tracks (8) while leaving ample room for the synergies and partnerships that it intends to carry into action with major international inter-governmental institutions (UNESCO, ALECSO, Council of Europe...). Furthermore, its consultative council, presented as the entity that will forge a place for the cultural civil society, is made up of government-appointed members. One may wonder then about the position that the independent role-players of each Euromed country will find within the structure of the Foundation and its actions. Dialogue between cultures can no longer remain confined to the spheres of specialists or of states. It must become the action of societies in their entirety. The Anna Lindh Foundation will certainly be judged for its capacity to be close to grassroots levels on the two shores and to meet this challenge. Up to date, nothing in either its conception or its structuring calls for optimism (9).

4. The Euromed Civil Fora and Networks.

A reality check of the achievements of the Euromed partnership in matters of human and cultural exchanges would not be complete without mention of the role played by the Euromed Civil Fora over the past decade.

Since 1995, the near totality of all forums that convened on the sidelines of the foreign ministers meetings have addressed these themes within workshops that have generated a considerable volume of reflections and recommendations as can be read in the proceedings of these international meetings. Collated, these documents add up to an impressive volume of exchanges and projects of which the impact on the reality of Euromed relations, probably weak, needs to be gauged some day (10).

(8) Cf. www.euromedalex.org.

(9) An interesting passage in the Report by the High-Level Advisory Group warned against the risks of the project : « If the Foundation were unable to play the central role that rightfully belongs to it, for lack of political will and the necessary resources, it would be better not to press ahead with a project that would fall short of the stated ambitions: its inadequacy would have a catastrophic effect on public opinion and would seriously demotivate civil society » *Op. cit*, page 49.

(10) The René Seydoux Foundation (Paris) has already carried out in 2000 a first compilation of the recommendations of these meetings on the occasion of the 5th anniversary of the Barcelona Process. The follow-up is in preparation.

On the sidelines of the Civil Fora, and sometimes as offshoots, we have witnessed over the past ten years the birth of networks of active cultural role-players on the Mediterranean scene. These are often informal, non-institutionalised networks born out of trust relations and linked to a given project or meeting. Of very low profile sometimes, these informal experiences nonetheless feed the Mediterranean with intellectual and solidarity exchanges.

Another recent phenomenon, the birth of Arab cultural networks, marks an important phase in the structuring of the civil environment of south-Mediterranean societies. An example among many is the Ramallah-based Palestinian Network of Art Centres which aims not only at building the capacities of cultural and artistic organisations in the West Bank and Gaza, but represents a platform for co-operation with European artistic circles. At the regional level, we can cite the DBM network (Danse Bassin Méditerranée) of dance professionals and the FEMEC (Euro-Mediterranean Forum of Cultures) created by the Civil Forum of Marseilles in 2000 and which brings together artists, translators, academics, cultural operators, association or magazine managers in Europe and the Mediterranean, as significant expressions of the independent Euro-Mediterranean cultural scene. Another innovative example, the unique cultural information site Babelmed.net, carries out its activities thanks to a network of independent journalists from 12 Mediterranean countries.

Can these new civil society networks be the consequence of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership when the latter provided them with neither political nor financial assistance? One can possibly argue that most independent role-players on the Euromed cultural scene have initiated their actions in the spirit of dialogue that the Euromed Partnership intends to promote.

D.

1. Beyond these international constraints, proclaimed ambitions and achievements, what critical perception can we form of these past then years?

Poor cousin of the Partnership, the cultural dimension of Euromed relations has over the few past years accrued considerable importance in discourse and exposure.

But what does the dialogue between cultures refer to in the Euro-Mediterranean context ?

The dialogue between cultures has been the topic of such an important number of meetings and declarations, particularly after 9/11, that the notion has ended up losing its true sense and becoming no more than a consensual mantra or at worse a form of disguise. Antithesis of the clash of civilisations, the notion, benevolent in appearance, carries the idea of a face-to-face of cultures perceived as blocks, when in fact each culture is a combination of diversities, distinctions and contradictions. It is in fact at the core of each tradition that continual negotiations take place to provide these cultures with the answers to today's challenges. In the Mediterranean space in particular, cultures are multiple, complex, and intrinsically enmeshed. Therefore, there can be no question of a face to face but rather an acknowledgement of this complexity and the mutual embracing of our cultures.

This recognition of the plurality of cultures should however guide us away from the pitfall of indulging in a certain cultural relativism which, through 'respect of specificities', would open the way for discourse on the impossibility of transposing certain values or applying certain principles. Dialogue and negotiation between what is different can and should be engaged in from a non-negotiable premise of values that are based on the respect of freedoms and rights everywhere.

However, another controversial dynamic exists: everything set in motion today under the label of the 'dialogue between cultures' brings into play interlocutors who are as similar as twins. The intellectual and multilingual elite of the two shores of the Mediterranean Sea work together, conceptualise together, conceive together, and the 'little' that distinguishes them is enough to give them the heady feeling of the dialogue between civilisations. Thousands of projects, programmes and symposia are taking place in this way. Europe is satisfied; the governments of the South cannot aspire to better. And thus goes unnoticed the true reality of the Mediterranean societies, their real concerns and, most of all, the men and women who, north or south of the Mediterranean, speak only their mother tongue, do not have the means to travel, have zero chance of obtaining a visa, are not professionals of the 'Euromed scene', but nonetheless represent the

role-players of the cultural, artistic, and associative life of their countries. Dialogue will remain an illusion as long as those who partake of it are perfectly secular, 'modern' and French or English speaking performers. In fact, it is only among those who carry within themselves references that have at their origin a distinct mode of thinking and feeling that dialogue can rediscover its true meaning

2. What are the conditions of true dialogue ?

In order to replace the human dimension at the heart of the convergence of the two shores, it will be necessary to make the Mediterranean a real space for the movement of men and women. Reopening the space sealed off by frontiers involves the radical modification of visa policies that often prevent persons from moving, participating in each other's projects and devising the latter together. Abolishing often humiliating practices imposed by consular authorities and that so many Mediterraneans are constantly subjected to, has become urgent if we wish to confer credibility on the Barcelona Declaration. Facilitating movement rather than hindering it, and therefore making possible smooth and fluid movement would enrich the dialogue between cultures with a substantial content. Dialogue can only make sense if based on trust that only direct and regular contacts can build. In concrete terms, this would mean the abolition of short stay visas or the granting of multiple entry visas for the nationals of the countries that have ratified association agreements with the European Union.

The true objective of cultural dialogue is not only mutual understanding but also and more crucially the ability to visualise a common future for societies that share the same sea. Yet, between north and south, the Mediterranean countries suffer blatant inequalities, not only at the economic level but also in terms of liberties. Come to mind here the inequalities of access to knowledge and education, and access to the sources of information, but also inequalities in the production of cultural industries and in training for artistic professions, and last but not least, in the freedom of creation and expression. How can we engage in dialogue when we are confronted by such deeply unequal situations ?

To ignore the issue of inequalities in exchanges would be tantamount to emptying dialogue of all meaning and engaging in a game in which one of the players is a de facto loser.

Another pivotal element, often neglected, is that of the obstacles to the movement of works of creation. In fact, the flow of exchanges between the two shores is to a large extent dominated by the productions of the north. Access to contemporary creations of Arab countries is a *sine qua non* condition for the elimination of the prejudices that affect these countries whose wealth of literature, dance, music and theatre is largely unknown in Europe. A considerable support for the movement of these works would be the very concrete translation of the European discourse on dialogue with the Arab world.

It is only thus that we can start to imagine a willing and sustainable policy for education in the inter-cultural form. The challenge is weighty since the task is not only to defend cultural diversity within Europe itself but also to protect it as a common property and fight against the privatisation of culture, an increasingly recurrent phenomenon. Ultimately, there can be no dialogue of cultures without equal access to the financial resources dedicated to culture, and without the creation of flexible mechanisms for the promotion of exchanges (young creation, training...). To a large extent, this task falls to the States. However, the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership can play a major role in this.

If we look at the first aspect of the in-depth reform of the procedures of access to European funding we will find that it is the democratic functioning of the European institutions that is at fault. We have briefly reviewed the many programmes set up for this purpose. However, the absolute rigidity of the technical and financial mechanisms that govern them place European tenders out of reach. One example is the legal status of associations requested in the rules of procedure. This status is not applicable in a number of countries in the south where the authorisation to set up a non-profit association is no longer delivered, or where these associations are simply not authorised to receive foreign funding.

The issue of the Arabic language as a tool of communication between Europe and the Mediterranean must be considered as crucial for dialogue.

Developing the capacity to finance culture and cultural and educational exchanges in the countries of the southern shore is also a decisive factor. The Euromed Partnership should encourage the creation of financing funds that would be fully independent from the

state's supervision, capable of functioning within the countries themselves and conditioned as much as possible by the needs of local role-players. The association agreements could be put to contribution through the inclusion of a compulsory clause on the funding of the cultural field.

However, the Euro-Mediterranean Foundation seems to focus all the EMP initiative on this field: is it ultimately doomed to be the only instrument of cultural policy of the Partnership? Alarming as it is, this could very well become the case as one can hardly imagine how it can meet all needs with a very limited budget and largely government-backed structures.

In a general way, everything seems to be unfolding as if the European Commission had forsaken its political steering of the Euro-Mediterranean cultural action, leaving the door open for the 'managerial' and bureaucratic rationales of the MEDA architects. The political seems to have lost all control over the techno-structure.

3. The final aspect of the assessment deals with civil society

Although active and inventive within the Euromed space since 1995, cultural and social role-players share part of the responsibility because they have not always managed to meet the expectations of the role they were entrusted with (on paper admittedly) within the Mediterranean policy of the European Union.

In the cultural field at least, this took the shape of an inability to influence public (national and community) policies, and also by the impossibility of speaking in a strong and unified voice.

Marked by division and a very strong compartmentalisation (artists and academics do not interact for example), motivated sometimes by competitive urges, cultural circles have over the last years conferred on the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership an embittered discourse marked by inadequacy.

In parallel, we have witnessed over the years the emergence of really specialised and professional groups who have monopolised the discourse on the Mediterranean, emptying it of its solid content in a drive to convert it into a trendy 'business venture, and sought to capture the most valuable funds available, often with the active backing of the

governments. The serious consequence of this phenomenon has been the depreciation and downgrading of the discourse on the Mediterranean which has lost all its credibility in the process.

Recently, a new co-ordination framework of civil society role-players of all fields has been created with the Euromed Non-Governmental Platform (www.euromed.org), an important novelty in the regional landscape. Transversality, interdisciplinary and solidarity are the key words of this new independent structure of which the objective is to build the capacities of associative action in the Euromed space. Cultural role-players (networks and associations) will gradually join it and share the ambition to defend the pivotal status of cultural challenges, including within civil networks. Here again, the fight is far from being won.

Concrete Proposals

The following are proposals for courses of action. The proposed projects seek to meet some of the needs identified. Many other proposals could be made considering the vastness of the field of action and the immensity of needs.

In as much as it was possible, due account was taken of the already existing potentialities, as well as of the achievements, projects and teams that stand behind the richness of the Euro-Mediterranean exchanges. Judging at their true value the legacy of practices and exchanges of the past years has been at the forefront of our concerns when formulating these proposals since at every phase of the Barcelona Process, one of the temptations has been to claim the re-invention of the wheel in total amnesia of what can and should be optimised today.

1. A Map of the Cultural Mediterranean: practices, exchanges and sites

Dialogue between cultures often keeps under silence inequalities in matters of culture (production capacity, independent spaces, mobility, freedom of creation...) among the Mediterraneans who are supposedly the role-players and beneficiaries of this dialogue.

A reality check of culture(11) and its needs remains to be carried out. It may constitute the premise of a more profound and solid approach to cultural co-operation in the Mediterranean region and of the public and private action in favour of the Euro-Mediterranean dialogue.

The purpose is to carry out surveys in the Mediterranean countries in order to establish a qualitative reality check of :

- Cultural production (books, translations, discs, plays...);
- The flow of cultural goods ;
- The mobility of persons (study trips, movement of students and researchers, cultural tourism, twinning...);
- Existing equipment (libraries, computers and cyber cafés, creativity spaces and access to culture facilities, cinemas...);
- (Basic and professional) training on cultural occupations ;
- Financing (private and public, the usual criteria...).

Having collected the necessary elements, the next step would be the identification of the most urgent needs and the formulation of realistic conjectures.

This 'inventory' would be addressed first of all to the role-players of these exchanges, the associative world, territorial communities, donor organisations, all of whom would benefit from such action-geared information.

The most important sectors of culture could be addressed: books, cultural Internet, the media, performing arts, cinema, languages, heritage, festivals (music, cinema, religious, local...).

The Anna Lindh Euro-Mediterranean Foundation could play a rallying role within the framework of this project.

2. Creation of Euromed Culture Contact points in all Mediterranean Countries

Towards the end of 1990, the European Commission created in the EU Member States and the European Economic Community support structures intended for the professionals of the cultural sector to help

(11) René Seydoux Foundation (Paris) currently studies the feasibility of this project and the partnerships to be struck in order to implement it.

them navigate the European programmes likely to finance their projects, and most of all to deal with the mechanisms of the Culture 2000 programme.

These support structures are Culture Contact Points that have the status of an association and are financed from the EU budget and through a contribution of Member States.

Following in the same steps as this example, the creation of 'Euromed Cultural Contact Points' is proposed in the Southern Mediterranean Countries. The goal would be to bring the cultural partnership and the cultural role-players closer to the civil society in each country; in other words, to bring the European offer closer to its potential beneficiaries.

A real 'interface' at the service of the Mediterraneans, these Contact Points will favour a better understanding of the Euromed programme and a better mastering of the procedures of access to funds, and will provide assistance to project carriers.

It is of importance that these structures be amenable and well equipped in terms of information dissemination means. But most of all, they must benefit from a status guaranteeing their independence from national institutions. The EU delegations in the South Mediterranean could guarantee their autonomy and neutrality.

The funding of their operation would be secured from either the cultural budget (local and regional activities) of the delegations, or by MEDA, thus featuring among the National Indicative Programmes of each partner country.

3. Create and increase training 'Mediterranean' modules for young European Journalists

The Report of the High-Level Advisory Group (Autumn 2003) convened by Romano Prodi, President of the European Commission, reiterated the crucial nature of the media's part in dialogue between cultures. Indeed, the media (particularly televisions) contribute to forging images and perceptions of Mediterranean countries that are often profoundly shocking to public opinion by the degree of their ignorance of the realities they address.

While this may be true for both shores of the Mediterranean, much more work needs to be done on the European media that are widely perused in the South (much more than those of the South are accessible in the North).

Stereotyped, incorrect and even negative images of the Arab world circulated in Europe generate a feeling of resentment and an attitude of withdrawal not only among the populations south of the Mediterranean Basin but also among the European citizens of Arab descent.

The action proposed here would take an upstream direction and start with the training of young journalists. In fact, most European schools of journalism do not provide in their curricula any approach to the Mediterranean and Arab world.

This proposal is twofold.

First of all, it is necessary to devise and propose training modules that would be integrated in the curricula of training journalists in several European schools. A basic module would be dedicated to general knowledge of the Arab Mediterranean world in all its aspects. It would make possible a first approach to culture in general and would be dispensed to first year students. Specialised modules would provide a more in-depth approach and would be dispensed to second year students. It would be concluded by a traineeship in an Arab country.

The second phase of the project would be to set up a network of participating schools (educational tools sharing, website, joint participation in working visits, etc.).

In addition to being financed by private and public organisations in the European countries involved, the project could also be supported by the Anna Lindh Foundation and identify useful synergies with the Foundation's own 'Educational and Cultural Journalism' action.

4. Support independent internet-assisted cultural information in the Mediterranean area

Today, the need for independent information and for dialogue has become a vital necessity for the two shores of the Mediterranean. In the light of a tense international juncture, the northern bank

entertains a flawed image of reality in the South, while the southern shore is undergoing an extremely critical phase. In terms of media, a recent report of 'Reporters without Frontiers' has shown that the Middle East was tolling the bell for the freedom of the press, marked by a conspicuous absence of independent media and a tendency towards heavy self-censorship practised by the professionals of the media. In Europe, a phenomenon of dwindling civil societies-related information is gaining alarming proportions in favour of sensational information that is far from being innocent of ideological manipulations. The Italian ramblings are but one example.

In view of this, to provide independent information based on dialogue and on the points of convergence of the two shores has become of primordial importance. The Internet is an efficient tool for breaking the constraints of information and disentangling it from the above described constraints. Likewise, this instrument relieves the crippling difficulties inherent to the movement of persons living south of the Mediterranean, which difficulties still constitute a major obstacle to understanding, confrontation of ideas and the flow of information in the Mediterranean region.

In addition to the internet sites of major media organs (written press, radio, television...), new expression platforms have emerged in the past few years within the framework of associations (cf. www.naros.info/, and on a more cultural plane: www.planet-dz.com) that have created alternative and free channels for totally independent information.

Another example, unique in its kind since being a purely Euro-Mediterranean innovation, is Babelmed (12). This site has become the cultural information website par excellence in this field and pursues the objective of promoting cultural exchanges in Europe and the Mediterranean region and ensuring a flow of information and ideas that evolve around this shared sea. It is the most widely visited site dealing with Mediterranean cultures (13).

Run by an international editing team based in Rome, and thanks to its network of independent journalists spread around

(12) www.babelmed.net

(13) Instruments measuring the frequency of visitors of internet sites place this site at the 94 680th rank in the world over 45 million active websites. In 2004, it jumped to the 30 000th position several times.

12 Mediterranean countries, the site produces and publishes original documents and contents in three languages - English, French and to a lesser extent Arabic - thus ensuring a much wider exposure.

However, and as is the case with all associative initiatives, the website remains vulnerable. Therefore, it is of utmost importance to ensure the durability of this vital and unique instrument through a sustained support from independent donor parties.

5. Promoting the mobility of independent cultural role-players and young people through the creation of mobility assistance funds

One of the main obstacles to movement within the Mediterranean region is of an economic nature. Along with the issue of visas, economics often prevent participation in the process of joint project conceptualisation. This is particularly true for youth associations. It is common knowledge that travel monopolises the lion's share in the budgets of most exchange projects.

Direct meetings are an essential dimension of associative action in the Mediterranean area, both at the individual and at the collective levels. Multiple contacts, the flow of information and trips are mechanisms for generating initiatives and ideas.

Now that the Euromed Youth programme has just been suspended, the MEDA framework does not provide for any other instrument for extending mobility micro-grants to associative and cultural role-players in the Euromed space.

The creation of mobility-assistance funds managed with administrative flexibility and simplicity should be encouraged. They may derive inspiration from the Roberto Cimetta Fund (14) which awards travel grants to artists and professionals (technicians and creators) in the fields of theatre, dance and visual arts among others. Set up in 2000, the fund provides assistance for the travel of individuals through micro financing. Since its creation, it has honoured more than 250 grants of which the beneficiaries were often young Mediterraneans who could not otherwise secure the means to

(14) www.cimettafund.org.

participate in training programmes, projects in the process of conceptualisation, or even professional gatherings.

6. Independent culture, gathering and art spaces in the Mediterranean : encouraging the mutualisation of these freedom spaces

For a few years now, we have been witnessing the emergence in some countries of the South of independent cultural structures and spaces. This novelty is a reminder of what has been taking place in Europe since the 1970s. Peri-urban spaces (sometimes even in rural areas) were taken over by often very young teams to serve as venues for artistic performances, experiments and creations. Spaces of freedom, these hubs are sometimes located in abandoned sites which were subsequently reclaimed to carry out cultural and artistic projects, and operate in totally novel modes. This phenomenon has made possible the emergence of new cultural and artistic adventures played out on the local scenes with the populations themselves.

These multidisciplinary venues (music, theatre, visual arts, dancing, etc.), amenable and open spaces, play a very important part in the production and dissemination of young creations and facilitate access to cultural forms that otherwise have no place in the traditional set-ups.

Another major aspect is the fact that the promoters of such rallying spaces often ardently champion local development and, unlike institutionalised cultural spaces, are able to weave a more open relationship with the public and its social environment.

These intermediary spaces (old factories, disused plants, houses) are reclaimed by a strong human dimension and are therefore above speculative and commercial rationales.

It is necessary in this respect to set up support mechanisms (website, collaborative platforms, aid funds...) that would make mutualisation possible, create a space of exchange and promote information sharing. It is also of utmost importance to provide training on the management of these venues which are particularly vulnerable and subject to constraints of all kinds, but nonetheless essential.

7. Training of secondary school teachers on the inter-cultural dimension: supporting school exchanges

School manuals disseminate representations of the national history of each country, as well as outlooks on other countries, often incorrect, inadequate and sometimes outright erroneous. But these representations evolve. If we look at French-German relations, we still notice some resistance and the persistence of the stereotypes conveyed at school despite the changes that have marked perceptions within societies, particularly among the younger generations.

For the Mediterranean region, UNESCO launched several years ago the idea of a review and revision of textbooks on the two shores. However, this project has encountered difficulties owed to the reluctance of national authorities to challenge the premises governing the transfer of what is considered at the core of the identity of every country. Furthermore, the complex nature of the system of textbook approval and adoption (publishers' pressures, freedom of choice exercised by teachers, etc) is another obstacle to the reform of the contents conveyed through school channels.

What is proposed here is to address the issue from the more simple aspect of teacher training. Intervening in the training of young primary and secondary levels teachers would make it possible to help them acquire the tools of a critical out-look on the contents of their future practice of teaching, and to probably meet the needs felt by the teachers themselves who face a school audience that has evolved, for educational tools that school manuals do not provide satisfactorily.

The proposal would entail the organisation of a series of training sessions dedicated to inter-cultural aspects, benefiting teachers during their professional training in at least six countries of the southern and northern banks of the Mediterranean. These training sessions would be integrated in the curriculum on an experimental and voluntary basis.

An evaluation process of these sessions should subsequently make possible the production of pedagogical tools (brochures and others), providing tangible aid tools for injecting the inter-cultural dimension

in the practice of teaching and motivating euro-Mediterranean school exchanges (methodology, contacts...). In parallel, an observatory of school exchanges would allow the dissemination of information in schools and serve as a monitor of these exchanges.

The project could benefit from the support of the Anna Lindh Foundation within the framework of its 'Our Common Future' programme that dedicates a specific chapter to teacher training, in cooperation with the Council of Europe and ALECSO.

8. Euromed Lingua: a programme for linguistic and cultural diversity

In the Euromed region, the promotion and defence of cultural diversity is conditional upon a coherent language policy. In fact, access to the Other's culture, the basis of every intercultural dialogue, entails taking into consideration linguistic diversity, and for the Mediterranean space, taking into account the Arabic and Turkish languages as vital components of the cultural life of the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean Countries.

Fighting stereotypes also means facilitating exposure to the heritage produced by another culture. This is equally true in the North-South direction, ensuring that the European literary creation is made more accessible to Mediterranean societies in the south.

A programme such as Euromed Lingua could be instrumental in drawing benefits from the experience acquired by the European support programmes geared towards cultural diversity in Europe, such as Ariane (1997-1999) and the Lingua actions (integrated since the mid-nineties in the framework programmes of Socrates and Leonardo).

Nothing exists currently in this field within the EMP. Without claiming to cover all the aspects of the language policy of the Euromed region, Euromed Lingua could tackle in a pragmatic approach the most urgent needs.

Euromed Lingua would comprise two parts: supporting Mediterranean languages teaching and learning in Europe, and supporting translation into Arabic and Turkish of European literary works.

Part I: Dissemination of Arabic and Turkish languages in Europe

Euromed Lingua could undertake several actions in this regard :

- Encouraging the teaching of Arabic and Turkish through supporting the creation of new tools and methods intended for teachers, and cooperation between language teacher training institutions.
- Encouraging the generalisation of early learning of Arabic and Turkish at school and higher studies levels in European countries.
- Encouraging the learning of Arabic and Turkish within the framework of professional training in Europe in the sectors of journalism, tourism, cultural management and universities. A specific support action to the mobility of young people in the process of training should be provided for in this regard.

Part II : Translation into Arabic and Turkish :

Two initiatives would be financed :

- Supporting the translation of European contemporary authors' works, with a particular emphasis on fiction, poetry and theatre.
- Supporting cooperation among professionals, translation schools, and schools providing training in literary translation, the aim being to contribute towards improving the quality of literary translation and the mobility of translators.

Euromed Lingua would be a new MEDA regional programme but it could benefit from additional funds extended by other European budgetary lines such as the GD for Education and Culture, and the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI).

9. A programme of regular meetings of European and Mediterranean researchers, intellectuals and associative action officials : the Islamic Perspective and European Perspective in Dialogue

Rare and almost unique in its kind, a meeting took place in Beirut in February 2004 (15) in a show of open and bold dialogue between the Islamic and European perspectives of today's challenges.

(15) The Islamic World and Europe : from Dialogue towards Understanding, international conference. Beirut, 17-18-19 February 2004.

It was organised by the Consultative Council for Studies and Documentation, the Orient Institute, the Friedrich Ebert Foundation (of Beirut) and the Centre for the Study of Islamic and Christian-Muslim Relations (in Birmingham).

The gathering provided a real opportunity for an intellectual face to face of persons hailing from diverse intellectual horizons: a true dialogue, sometimes harsh, on the concepts and values at the root of mutual perceptions, prejudices and misunderstandings between the Islamic world and the European one.

European university lecturers, intellectuals and academics and intellectuals close to the Hezbollah and other radical Islamic movements were able to address a large spectrum of issues : the debate on "democratisation", the distinct perception of the notions of violence and resistance, the "cultural invasion" of Arab societies by the West, the association of Islam with fundamentalism and terrorism, as well as the image of the West as the aggressor and neo-coloniser.

The mutual apprehensions fed by the lack of understanding were at the heart of this rich face-to-face. This gathering has departed from the tradition of Euro-Mediterranean events where participants are faced with their mirror and are content with a sham dialogue during which only consensual themes are addressed without daring to engage in the scrutiny of deep, yet fecund, differences between traditions of thought.

It seems urgent and necessary to ensure the continuity of this type of gatherings which represent a model of good practices, and strive towards the sustainability of this genuine form of dialogue through the organisation of regular gatherings and follow-up meetings of which the contents should be widely disseminated and feed the public debate in societies and public opinions in Europe and the Mediterranean.

10. Creation of the 'Euromed Cooperation' Visa

The visa policy in the Schengen space and between the Mediterranean countries is a major obstacle to Euro-Mediterranean exchanges.

Delivering a visa for any country is a decision that stems from the sovereignty of each State. This decision, in most cases governed by the

principle of reciprocity, is conditional upon diplomatic relations between states and evolves accordingly. In other words, the requirement of a visa for the citizens of certain countries may be waived.

The launch of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership has failed to have any impact on the visa regimen, particularly those imposed on the nationals of the Southern countries wishing to enter Europe, in blatant contradiction with the spirit of the Barcelona Declaration. A clear and simple abolition of the visas between the signatory countries would have been the tangible and symbolic materialisation of the desire to 'make the Mediterranean an area of dialogue, exchanges and cooperation'.

On the contrary, and as the years went by, some countries such as Italy hardened their consular procedures even though it had been proven that the imposition of visas or refusal to issue them has no influence whatsoever on the flow of illegal immigrants.

Those who pay dearly for this situation are the Mediterraneans themselves who are very often prevented from stepping across the borders for cooperation projects that pertain to all fields and particularly to cultural exchanges. It is important to underline that young generations are particularly affected by traffic restrictions as clearly shown by the evaluation report of the Euromed Regional Youth Programme (December 2004).

Euromed Civil Fora have always denounced this situation and made proposals that ranged from the abolition of the short-term visas (Marseille 2000), to the delivery of multiple entry visas to partners in Euro-Mediterranean projects. These measures would imbue cultural cooperation projects with great fluidity.

With the experience acquired over these last ten years in mind, one may propose the creation of a visa that would bear the 'Euromed' label and would be issued to all persons who travel from north to south, south to north and south to south within the framework of euro-Mediterranean cooperation projects.

In addition to 'Tourist', 'Professional' and 'Family' visa categories, a 'Euromed Cooperation' visa would be issued after a simplified and quick procedure (proof of funds, accommodation requirements and other documents to be waived) and guarantee multiple entries over an

extended period. The adoption of this system would be made compulsory and reciprocal for all countries signatory of association agreements with the European Union. More generally, all countries signatory of the Barcelona Process should adhere to it.

Pending the creation of such a 'Euromed visa', a transitional measure could be the enlargement of the field of application of the European Council resolution (No. 13649/00) of 14 December 2000 to all the countries that are part of the Barcelona Process. This resolution pertains to the action plan promoting mobility in Europe and the removal of obstacles, particularly for the young, students, training supervisors and researchers.

Measures to strengthen the participation of civil society in the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership through NGOs

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It is undeniable that there is a discrepancy between the Euromed Partnership's discourse on civil society and on the role which it has been assigned for the last ten years. Confining civil society to the third basket is inappropriate and tends to reduce its role. The role of civil society, which acts both as a complementary actor and a watchdog applies to all components of the partnership : including the establishment of an area of peace and stability, the construction of an area of shared prosperity and the development of human resources, understanding between cultures and exchange between civil societies(1). On the other hand, there has been a tendency to incorporate within civil society a whole range of actors, and particularly those belonging to decentralized cooperation (local government, universities, institutes) which, although they are not governmental, cannot be considered in the strict sense as independent social actors close to the people and truly representative of their interests. In addition, social organisations have had very few concrete opportunities to participate in the Euromed partnership. Lastly, participation of associations has generally been confined to the Euromed Civil Fora which can certainly be considered as significant events that have generated various meetings and debates, but which have for a long time been official initiatives responding to the interests of the European Commission and its governments.

However, throughout these last ten years, three interrelated developments have emerged and can be used as a basis for any strategy designed to strengthen civil societies :

* Original contribution in French.

(1) Concerning this double function of civil society, see Annette Jünemann, "From the bottom to the top: civil society and transnational non-governmental organisations in the Euro-Mediterranean partnership", *Democratization*, 9.1, 2002, pp. 87-105.

1. Several thematic networks of Euro-Mediterranean regional nature have been created.

2. Civil Fora have been reformed and civil society organizations have taken control of them.

3. Hence, a Euromed Non-Governmental Platform was established in order to coordinate the voices of civil societies in the Euromed space and act as the counterpart to the institutions within the framework of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership.

Objectives of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and progress achieved

It is undeniable today that new non-state forces, able to act at different levels, namely at the normative level, (see the capacity of some NGOs to formulate proposals), manage most diverse issues (human rights, environment, development cooperation), and even monitor compliance with international standards by the traditional players, have established themselves in the international scene.

Participation of the civil society is a question that is increasingly present in international relations. People have already started to refer to the concept of « global civil society ». The Cardoso report gives clear evidence of this. Among other recommendations, this report has suggested to involve NGOs in intergovernmental institutions and to promote better relationships between the United Nations agencies and civil society organizations (2). In the same line, in the report of the "High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change", the role of civil society has been recognized in the area of collective security, mediation and poverty alleviation strategies. It is reaffirmed that civil society should play a more significant role in the consolidation of peace(3). However, although civil society can contribute not so much an alternative but a rather complementary dose of legitimacy, it is neither fully recognized nor integrated as an observer in the organs of the

(2) Cardoso Report, *We, the peoples: Civil Society, the United Nations and Global Governance* (doc. A/59/354), drafted by the Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations-Civil Society relations, received by Kofi Annan on June 11, 2004. <http://www.un.org/reform/panel.htm>.

(3) *A More Secure World: Our Shared Responsibility* (doc A/59/565) <http://www.un.org/secureworld>.

institutions. The role of these players breaks the traditional governmental monopoly over external action.

The European Union has, to some extent, taken the lead of this dynamics by recognizing the role of non-state actors (economic and social agents, NGOs), and by first associating them to its internal policies, then to its external action⁽⁴⁾, as in the case of the Cotonou Agreement or the Mediterranean policy; this is indeed explicitly mentioned in the Barcelona Declaration:

« (...) [the participants] recognize the essential contribution civil society can make in the process of development of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership and as an essential factor for greater understanding and closeness between peoples ; they accordingly agree to strengthen and/or introduce the necessary instruments of decentralized cooperation to encourage exchanges between those active in development within the framework of national laws : leaders of political and civil society, the cultural and religious world, universities, the research community, the media, organizations, the trade unions and public and private enterprises (...)» [*Barcelona Declaration*, 27-28 November, 1995]

The role vested by the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership in the civil society is related to the very idea of "partnership" and to its threefold objective to create a common zone of peace and stability, shared prosperity and mutual understanding, which is otherwise impossible to achieve by the action of governments alone, and in which peoples and organized populations, i.e. civil society, should get involved.

However, practice has been quite different: independent civil society has hardly been allowed to get truly involved and actions have not been very consistent ⁽⁵⁾. It is basically the intergovernmental dimension, which has prevailed in the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, and civil societies have not been integrated, nor have their needs and interests been adequately addressed. This has been recognized by the European Commission in several declarations on human rights and the promotion of democracy :

(4) "The Role and Contribution of Organised Civil Society in the European Construction", Opinion of the European ESC (EESC 851/1999) on September 22, 1999.

(5) Ulrike Julia Reinhardt, Civil society co-operation in the EMP: from declaration to practice, EuroMeSCo Papers, 15 May 2002.

« (...) The spirit of partnership has not led to a sufficiently frank and serious dialogue on some issues, such as human rights, prevention of terrorism or migrations. The EU human rights policy in the region has suffered from a lack of coherence. The strategy of constructive defence and support to civil society players, traditionally adopted by the EU, has not always been supported by local governments. Further efforts are necessary to promote the respect of universal human rights (...) ».

« (...) A free and prosperous civil society is a basic prerequisite for the success of the partnership in all its aspects. Nongovernmental organizations which are active in a legal framework may make a valuable contribution in numerous arenas of partnership. One of the major goals of cooperation in the areas of human rights, good management of public affairs and the primacy of law should be the establishment of a climate which facilitates the effective work of NGOs. In the long term, it is the best way for the EU to help them (...) ».

[Reinvigorating the Barcelona Process. Communication of the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament in preparation of the Fourth Meeting of the Euro-Mediterranean Foreign Ministers' Conference, Brussels, 6 September 2000, COM(2000) 497 final.]

« (...) (Dialogue with civil society) Civil society plays an essential role in the implementation and monitoring of any human rights and democratization policy. Within the Barcelona Process and through the European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights, the Commission has supported the efforts of NGOs and other Non-State Actors, both those of the region and those working from Europe, to improve their effectiveness in identifying problems and lobbying for improvements. Actions have focused on training and sharing of best practice in this field. The issues have been addressed in all the meetings of the Civil Forum (bringing together NGOs and other representatives of civil society from the EU and its Mediterranean partners) which have preceded the Euro-Mediterranean Foreign Ministers' Meetings.

(Recommendation n°4) At national level, The Commission Delegations should organize with member states regular workshops with civil society, seeking as conditions allow a constructive involvement of national authorities. As much as possible, efforts should

be made for this dialogue not to be limited to the national civil society, but to reach out to civil society organizations working at the regional level. The agenda would be discussed between Commission Delegations and member states.

These workshops would serve to :

- contribute to overall EU knowledge of local conditions, thus providing valuable input to the formulation of EU policy, including in the establishment of national and regional indicative programmes;
- generate recommendations to assist with the programming of EIDHR and the identification of projects;
- contribute to structuring the debate at the regional level through the Civil Fora held in the framework of the Barcelona Process;
- promote EU policies in the area of human rights, democratisation and rule of law including gender equality, as cross-cutting issues;
- in addition, these meetings will help associations, foundations and NGOs working in the region to better structure and coordinate their work.

[Reinvigorating EU actions on Human Rights and democratization with Mediterranean partners. Strategic Guidelines. Communication of the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament. Brussels, 21 May, 2003, COM(2003) 294 final]

However, there has been some progress. EuroMeSCo, in its report on ten years after the Barcelona Process (6), has pointed out that initiatives and interactions between civil societies from the North and South Mediterranean have increased. But in the Mediterranean partner countries, efforts have not been accompanied by political and legal reform, while the impact of civil societies on the population and on confidence-building measures has been rather limited. More than this, associations of religious inspiration, which are one of the most peculiar expressions of social cohesion, have been entirely excluded from the initiatives supported by the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership. However, some NGOs, basically of human rights nature, have played a leadership role in Justice and Home Affairs Programmes by getting

(6) Barcelona plus: Towards a Euro-Mediterranean Community of Democratic States. EuroMeSCo, February 2005.

involved in actions aimed at the administration of the judiciary, training of the police or civil servants, with funding from MEDA-Democracy and the European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights

Several reasons are behind this :

1. There is a lack of a clear definition of the role and possibilities of intervention by civil societies. The Barcelona Declaration or other official documents do not explicitly state when, how and with which resources civil societies may act on the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership. Therefore, everything is in the hands of Euromed institutions: from the definition of civil society (which gives preference to the least conflicting one), to accessible programmes or events attesting to its presence in the EuroMed Partnership. The capacity of intervention and influence of the civil society has therefore been very limited.

2. The concept of civil society itself. Without going into an academic debate on the meaning of civil society, it is clear that, when it is applied to the Euromed case, there is a discrepancy between the institutions and the social movements. The European Commission has opted, in the case of the EuroMed Partnership, for a very vague definition which would avoid any polemic in the Mediterranean partner countries: any entity that is not governmental belongs to civil society, from economic agents to paragonovernmental or public entities, from municipalities, universities, enterprises, means of communication, parliaments to consultative institutions (such as economic and social councils and other such like institutions). All of them are formal entities with management capacity. For actors of decentralized cooperation, this option has led to confining civil society to the third basket issues of the Euromed Partnership.

Euromed institutions have been rather timid when it came to include social initiatives that are less articulated (community associations, NGOs), and which carry a higher degree of political risk (human rights associations, conflict-resolution groups) or those inclined to raise issues of the economic basket (trade unions, environmentalists, producers or consumers). This has indeed contributed to disregarding the association movements, has gone against the need to truly strengthen civil society in the Mediterranean partner countries and has hindered their coordination with European civil societies. The specific treatment which has been applied to these movements has confined them to the Euromed Civil Fora.

3. Implicit denial of truly existing independent civil societies is the result of at least a combination of three factors:

a. Reservations made by the EU at the time of dealing with an uncertain counterpart, diverse in the extreme and critical of the governments of the Mediterranean partner countries, while the potential contribution of civil societies is precisely their nature, their independence, their plurality and their closeness to the population.

b. The European Commission's bureaucratic imperatives which come up against the poor management capacities of associations.

c. And resistance shown by governments and groups holding power in the Mediterranean Partner Countries, which refuse to recognize the eminent role of reformist initiatives that are critical of the regimes in power.

4. Inappropriate means. Civil society has been trapped in the third basket of the Euromed Partnership, in regional programmes (decentralized cooperation), in the Euromed Civil Fora and in some capacity-building actions for the associations of the Mediterranean partner countries. Their access to Euromed Partnership instruments has been limited for two reasons basically: financing procedures and resistance from some countries.

a. Red tape constraints have led to giving pre-eminence to the financing of relatively large-scale actions which generated an administrative charge (at the expense of easy-to-manage micro-projects), thus excluding a large part of the civil society.

b. In view of their very nature, the expressions of civil societies cannot always articulate their activities around (strengthening, complementing) governmental policies. Often, their activities would serve to counter-balance or watch out governmental policies. Their implication thus necessitates the establishment of mechanisms that would help avoid both governments' veto and protection measures.

Critical evaluation of the viewpoints of social partners and concerned populations

As part of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, several programmes and initiatives have been considered as tools for involving civil societies: meetings of Parliamentarians, consultative social and economic

committees, universities and research centres, trade unions, local government officials and technicians, and the Mediterranean Civil Fora.

Euromed regional programmes started in 1992 as part of the Renovated Mediterranean Policy. Their aim was to further involve non-governmental actors, both public and private, in cooperation. This "decentralized" cooperation has been articulated within a set of programmes (Med-Urbs, Med-Invest, Med-Campus, Med-Media) which have contributed, from 1992 to 1995, to the setting up of 470 networks with participation of more than 2,000 entities (67 million ECU). Although this experience came to a halt in 1996 for administrative reasons, new regional programmes have been launched since 1998 (EUMEDIS-Development of the Information Society, Euromed Heritage, Euromed- Audiovisual, Euromed-Youth Action, Euromed-Dialogues, and more recently TEMPUS for universities). Their specific mission has particularly led them to focus on the strengthening of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership in its cultural, social and human aspects, with the view to bringing it closer to the people. These programmes helped create smaller networks and strengthen trans-mediterranean cooperation experiences at different levels and between certain social actors. Yet, they have basically involved business leaders, technicians, experts, professionals or artists; they are not really concerned with the independent civil society (7). Therefore, it would not be right to say that they have strengthened the civil societies of the Mediterranean Partner Countries, nor have they contributed to rapprochement between the societies of the two shores of the Mediterranean.

What is more, the decision taken by the Commission in 2000, for bureaucratic and administrative reasons, to reduce the number of projects and increase the budget for each one of them, has limited the diversification of actions and has de facto aggravated the exclusion of civil society groups and broad-based associations (it is the end of micro-projects).

Instruments aimed at supporting civil society initiatives remained much too limited. One of these was MEDA-Democracy Programme, which was implemented in 1996 and which was a specific case, for it was directed towards NGOs that are active in the area of human rights and democracy. Based on the kind of issues it addressed, proposals were

(7) U.J. Reinhardt, *op.cit.*

selected by the Commission and not by the Euromed Committee, while actions financed in this framework were not allocated to the MEDA budget except for the European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) and were managed by EuropAid (budget heading B7-7050). EIDHR financed the activities of several NGOs in the Mediterranean partner countries in this area. Furthermore, certain National Indicative Plans have included a financial allowance for the civil society.

However, the independent civil society has significantly participated within the framework of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership around three major dynamics in particular: Mediterranean Civil Fora, regional thematic networks and the Euromed Non-Governmental Platform.

1. Euro-Mediterranean Civil Fora. Since the implementation of the Euromed Partnership in November 1995 in Barcelona, Euro-Mediterranean Civil Fora (8) have been held in parallel to, or taken place before, several summits and Foreign Ministers meetings. Representatives of civil society from the two shores of the Mediterranean met in these fora and a large number of issues have been addressed, ranging from citizenship, democracy, human rights, the environment, security and peace, social and economic rights, to equality, culture and youth. All Fora are closed with a declaration which is submitted to the official summit.

Due to official initiatives (it is the acting Presidency which decides to hold them, fixes the date and chooses the entity to be entrusted with organizing them), each Civil Forum was different from the others in terms of the format used, the themes addressed and even the participants invited. In some cases, the strong institutional imprinting of these fora has led to the organization of parallel alternative events(9).

(8) Barcelona in 1995, Malta and Naples in 1997, Stuttgart in 1999, Marseille in 2000, Brussels in 2001, Valencia in 2002, Chania-Crete in May 2003, Naples in November 2003 and Luxemburg in April 2005.

(9) These alternative events were organised in two occasions: the Alternative Mediterranean Conference in Barcelona (1995) and the Mediterranean Meeting against Neo-liberal Globalisation in Marseille (2000). In these cases, the ECF played a mediation role between social initiatives and the institutions, while the alternative conferences are viewed as watchdog forces. Later, these initiatives ended up integrating into the ECF dynamic or into the national, Arab, or Mediterranean social fora. Annette Jünemann, "The Euromed Civil Forum: Critical Watchdog and Intercultural Mediator", in Panebianco, Stefania (dir): *A new Euro-Mediterranean Partnership Cultural Identity*. Frank Cass, London 2003, p. 84-107.

In other cases, and in view of the political circumstances in the host country, it was decided that their organization would implicate the actors themselves (cases of Stuttgart in 1999 and Marseille in 2000). Yet, their structure has evolved and they have become a space where civil society itself was able to play a more active role in their preparation and implementation. Since 2003, the Euromed Non-Governmental Platform has been playing a central role in the organization of the Euro-Mediterranean Civil Fora(10).

Strengths :

1. Euro-Mediterranean Civil Fora have become meeting opportunities for civil society. They have facilitated exchange, mutual knowledge, coordination of actions and network building; they have also provided an opportunity for discussing cross-cutting themes of present interest.

2. These Fora have helped define common stands reflecting the conclusions of working groups and the final declarations. These declarations have underlined the need to strengthen the social basket of the Euromed Partnership and the civil society.

3. The vibrant nature of these Fora has contributed to giving an eminent role to the thematic networks.

Weaknesses :

1. The major problem of these Fora is their lack of autonomy. The European Commission and the governments which preside over the EU have decided to hold these Fora and have designated local operators who do not always have a good knowledge of the subject and, as a general rule, have no contact with the previous organizers. In the best case, the operator may take account of certain civil society structures.

2. This rotation of the organizers has had an influence (until 2003) on these Fora and turned them into one-off and 'event-driven'

(10) On the evolution of the Civil Fora, see: *El proceso del Foro Civil Euromediterráneo. Revisión crítica 1995-2000*. ACSUR, Madrid, 2002 (mimeo). Eduard Soler i Lecha, « The external dimension of sub-national governments: dealing with human rights at the Barcelona and Valencia Euromed Civil Fora », *Mediterranean Politics*, 8 :2-3, 2003. Helena Oliván : « El Fórum Civil Euromed : balance, continuidades y cambios », *Quaderns de la Mediterránea*, 2-3, 2001.

operations, which led to a change in their format, caused a lack of consistency in their content, and generated a poor follow-up of their conclusions.

3. This model has led to decreased participation in the preparations (for example in setting up the agendas and objectives), and to a lack of representative participants (who come from certain circles, from a certain elite); some of the issues that are particularly of concern for the civil society have been simply neglected.

4. What is worse, because these Fora are considered as an initiative of the acting Presidency of the EU, and in view of their media-related impact, they have taken place in the North exclusively.

5. Euro-Mediterranean Civil Fora are one-off events and not an end in themselves. Therefore, participation of the civil society in the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership may not be reduced. These Fora have not, for example, influenced the agenda of the summits, nor the decision-making process; at best, the official declarations have mentioned the holding of a Euro-Mediterranean Civil Forum and sometimes cited some of the issues addressed by the forum.

6. Euro-Mediterranean Civil Fora have not contributed much to rousing interest among public opinion for the Euro-Mediterranean partnership through civil society organizations and the media.

7. Lastly, they have acted as an alibi for the Commission; they did not cost much, but they have been presented as the best means for structuring civil society.

These weaknesses have given rise to discontent and frustration, especially after the Fora of Brussels (2001) and Valencia (2002), and without questioning the Euro-Mediterranean Civil Fora as such, some actors (networks and former organizers) have decided to take action. Their aim is to consolidate the strengths of the Fora and to ensure that this promising instrument does not disappear. A gradual reform of the Euro-Mediterranean Civil Fora has been developed while a permanent structure representing the civil society within the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership has been set up for the organization of events and coordination of common initiatives, and for acting as the major counterpart for the institutions.

By the end of 2002, and early 2003, a "Non-Governmental Platform for reinvigorating the Euromed Civil Forum" has been established and

its provisional secretariat entrusted to Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network (EMHRN) which is the most articulate network. Measures have been identified to reform the Euro-Mediterranean Civil Fora and strengthen the role of civil society (11). At Chania (May 2003), the question was examined at length and, in cooperation with the European Commission and the future operator of the Forum, a mechanism including the Platform was agreed upon: a joint steering committee. In the following months, the idea of a reformed Euro-Mediterranean Civil Forum has started to take shape (12).

Therefore, from 2003 onwards, the Fora have become significantly different. Their organization is in the hands of a structure which seeks the involvement of a local operator and a representative structure. In addition, a new element of participation has been introduced, through a process of previous national consultations within most Mediterranean partner countries and some EU countries. As part of the process of preparation for the Euro-Mediterranean Civil Forum of Naples (28-30 November, 2003) more than 500 organizations have been involved and taken part in 8 consultations in the Mediterranean Partner Countries and 3 EU countries. Thus, both the agenda and the objectives are being discussed and are the outcome of a consensus among thematic networks and national platforms. Good coordination between the local operator and the Platform allows the participants to regain interest in the Euro-Mediterranean Civil Forum, and debates have been significantly improved. This very dynamics applies to the preparations for the latest Forum which was held in Luxembourg (1-3 April, 2005). The Platform has been working closely with the designated operator, while fifteen national consultations have been held (8 in the Mediterranean partner countries and 7 in the North), and participants have been selected within the national meetings and by the thematic networks (13). Such an approach will undoubtedly help the Luxembourg

(11) Strategic Paper: Amending the Euromed Civil Forum. Strengthening Civil Society Cooperation in the Barcelona Process. February 2003 :

<http://www.euromedforum.org/IMG/rtf/FINALstrategypaper-eng170203.rtf>.

(12) Communiqué of the Follow-up group "Non-Governmental Platform for the Euromed Civil Forum" (6.6.2003).

(13) Mention should be made that at the beginning, and by general agreement with the EU Presidency, the possibility of holding a first forum in a Southern Mediterranean country was considered. Finally, the idea was dropped on the advice of the Arab organisations themselves, in view of the situation in the Middle East.

Euro-Mediterranean Civil Forum become the most participatory and representative of all the Fora which have taken place so far.

2. Euromed regional thematic networks. The Barcelona Process and the Civil Fora have contributed to set up thematic networks with a Euro-Mediterranean scope. Some of these networks already existed prior to 1995; this is the case of the Forum of Mediterranean Citizens. In other cases, we find a pre-existing coordination structure. This is the case of the Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network (EMHRN - REMDH) which was set up in 1997 and has a membership of over forty associations in twenty countries; this network has been intensively monitoring the situation of human rights and has been involved in active lobbying (14). Another case is the Euro-Mediterranean Trade Unions Forum which was established in April 1999, on the occasion of the Euro-Mediterranean Civil Forum of Stuttgart. This forum brings the trade unions affiliated to the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) together with the main trade unions of the Mediterranean partner countries, which are affiliated to the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (CISL-ICFTU) or the International Confederation of Arab Trade Unions (CISA-ICATU). As to the Euromed Cultural Forum (FEMEC) which was set up in 2000 on the occasion of the Euro-Mediterranean Civil Forum of Marseille, it brings together a group of figures active in the world of Mediterranean research and culture (15). Some of these networks have received finance for their activities from the European Commission.

Yet, these networks reflect a rather irregular dynamics. Sometimes, even when new networks have been created in one given sector, they cohabit with other former networks, such as women and environment networks (16). Regional networks do not always include every association in the sector, but they do articulate quite a large number

(14) www.euromedrights.net.

(15) www.femec.org.

(16) In 1995 the Med Forum was established (Mediterranean NGO Network for Ecology and Sustainable Development) which includes more than 80 associations from 17 countries. But this network joined other relevant networks: Arab Network for Environment and Development (RAED), Environment Action in the Third World (ENDA), European Environment Bureau (EEB), Friends of the Earth Med Net Programme (FEO), World Wild Fund Mediterranean Programme (WWF/MedPo), Mediterranean Information Office for Environment, Culture and Sustainable Development (MIO-ESCE).

among the most significant ones (the trade unions forum is faced with the fact that only one trade union member is allowed for each Mediterranean partner country, even when there is trade union diversity). Networks help define common stances (as in the case of the EMHRN and the Trade Unions Forum). Furthermore, some very specific networks have been set up such as the 'Dance in the Mediterranean Area Network' (Danse Bassin Méditerranéen, DBM), created in 1998; the RECEPTIS network for industrial and labour relations. The creation of regional thematic networks has also contributed to incorporating networks with a sub-regional scope and association platforms with a national scope within the Euromed dynamics (ANND, the Arab NGO Network for Development platform; Arab human rights networks; Arab and Maghrebian women networks; PNGO, the Palestine NGO platform for Development; Ittijah, the Palestinian associations platform in Israel; or the Moroccan Espace Associatif).

3. The Euromed Non-Governmental Platform. The creation of a permanent structure, aimed at coordinating the independent Euromed civil society, which is capable of representing it, is the outcome of a process which goes back to the Euro-Mediterranean Civil Forum of Valencia (2002), which has continued through Chania (Crete, May 2003), and has been consolidated during the preparations for the Euro-Mediterranean Civil Forum of Naples (November 2004). It was at Chania that a 'Non-Governmental Platform for Euromed Civil Fora' was first created, which was to organize the following Fora jointly with the local operators designated for this purpose. The Platform would be structured during the preparations for the Euro-Mediterranean Civil Fora and with support from some European foundations. National consultations would help to establish a participatory process in the definition of the Platform, as reflected in a preliminary document(17).

The Platform includes regional thematic networks, sub-regional networks, pre-existing national platforms or platforms created ex professo (bringing together associations interested in the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership), individual foundations and organizations, but also institutions which had previously organized Euro-Mediterranean Civil Fora, some research centres, individual organizations and various figures.

(17) The Euromed Non-Governmental Platform. Rapport d'évaluation, 2004 (mimeo).

A decisive moment in the process was the enlarged meeting of what is now called the Euromed Non-Governmental Platform at Limassol (Cyprus, 25-26 June 2004) in which some 80 organizations have participated including NGOs, trade unions, networks, institutes and former organizers; they have adopted :

- a Charter of Principles (to which members have to adhere to be part of the Platform) reflecting shared values, objectives and working principles.

- a provisional organizational structure based on the thematic networks and national platforms. The structure is supported by a 16-member provisional follow-up group.

- a Plan of Action (2004-2005) which seeks to hold a Euro-Mediterranean Civil Forum during the Luxemburg EU Presidency, enlarge the Platform (mechanism for internal information, web-page) and hold the constitutive general assembly to approve the statutes of the Platform and elect a Board.

On 1st April, 2005, just before the Civil Forum meeting, the constitutive general assembly of the Platform was held. Its statutes were approved and a Board was elected. The Platform will have its headquarters in Paris (18).

The objectives of the Platform are defined as follows :

1. to strengthen civil society in its plurality and diversity, and materialize its active involvement in the Barcelona Process, as well as all the policies implemented with a view to developing relationships between the European Union and the Mediterranean countries, namely through the EMP.

2. to promote recognition and active participation of the civil society as a counterpart in the different EMP member countries and within the framework of the EMP and the new European Neighbourhood Policy.

The Platform has opted for a more limited definition of civil society: these are non-profit organizations, working on the basis of universal

(18) Press Communiqué, Constitution of the Euromed Non-Governmental Platform in Luxemburg, April 4, 2005. [http://www.euromedforum.org/article.php3?id_article=290].

values of human rights, democracy and international law, through peaceful means and independently of the authorities, and which mobilize public opinion or take action in the social arena.

To make its voice heard within the EMP, civil society must enlarge its base (by strengthening local dynamics, by helping to set up and stabilize national platforms, and by effectively associating the existing thematic networks), promote democratic and transparent operation, be recognized as a counterpart and establish a dialogue with the institutions through which it will be possible to ensure a follow-up of the civil society's stands (Resolutions of the Euromed Civil Fora and others).

In some way, the Platform seeks to address the contradiction inherent in the civil society, i.e. that which exists between its political ambition to appear as a solid force within the EMP, and its heterogeneous nature.

The Platform is now recognized by the public authorities as the organizer of the Fora (19). The European Parliament has stressed the importance of promoting close cooperation with the Platform, by regularly inviting its members to expose their points of view within the framework of the EMP (20). The Euromed Parliamentary Assembly has, at its first plenary session (Cairo, 12-15 March 2005), expressed its willingness to closely cooperate with the Platform (21).

Assessment

– The role of civil society within the Partnership has been very modest. Its very presence in the language used and in speeches is rather limited.

– The EU has been very timid in advocating the role of autonomous civil societies within the EMP. While mention should be made of the resilience shown by some public authorities, which led to a lack of

(19) Conclusions of the Presidency of the intermediary Euromed Summit of Foreign Ministers, both in Dublin (May 5 and 6, 2004) and in The Hague (November 29 and 30, 2004).

(20) Resolution of February 23, 2005 (PE 354.218).

(21) Point 48 of the Resolution of the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly on the Assessment of the Barcelona Process on the Eve of its Tenth Anniversary, adopted on March 15, 2005 in Cairo.

http://www.europarl.eu.int/intcoop/empa/plenary_sessions/cairo_03_05_final_conclusions-en.pdf.

consensus over the role of civil societies, the role of the EU should not be overlooked. The latter, while it has been trying to promote change and democracy without putting the security and stability of the Mediterranean partner countries at risk, has bet on processes under the control of the current governing elites. Moreover, autonomous civil society has been viewed as an anti-governmental sector and not as an agent of effective change.

- It is necessary to clearly define the role and place of civil societies within the partnership, ensure that this role and place be assumed by every state and every institution, and urge governments to facilitate the activities of NGOs within their countries as well as promote cross-border cooperation.

- The first requirement for the participation of civil societies within the EMP is to strengthen local social expressions and to protect them in order to facilitate their action through ways and means that are specific to them (political influence, intervention) and to allow them to exert pressure from inside (thus contributing to the promotion of democracy and to the revitalization of political and social life).

- Secondly, North and South civil societies need to effectively articulate their actions. To this end, they have to go beyond dialogue between associations and work together within the framework of stable cooperation networks. From the European side, there is a need for increased interest in the Euromed within the North countries and in Central Europe.

- National platforms and networks must be reinforced. This is particularly complicated in the Euromed area while mobility of actors is rather limited. In this respect, resources must be provided, and associations are in need of accessible regional programmes and adequate financing means for micro-projects while simplifying their administrative management.

- Lastly, mechanisms aimed at interacting with the public authorities are needed, be they Euromed institutions or governments (22).

(22) The need for dialogue between civil societies and governments of the Mediterranean Partner Countries is referred to in point 47 of the European ESC Opinion, "For an increased involvement, at national and regional levels, of organised civil society in the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership" (EESC 217/2003), September 25, 2003. See also Bettina Huber, *Civil society dialogue and cooperation, human rights, good governance and political participation - good practices, future challenges*. EuroMeSCo, January 2005.

PROPOSALS

- I.1 Definition, by the highest authorities of the Partnership, of the role that the civil society should play within the EMP; and demonstration through a strong act.
- I.2 Establishing of procedures designed to enlarge the dialogue with civil society at the national level.
- II.1 Strengthening civil society in the Mediterranean Partner Countries.
- II.2 Strengthening networks of coordination with civil society.
- II.3 Strengthening the Euromed Non-Governmental Platform, and its recognition as one of the privileged counterparts of civil society within the EMP.
- II.4 Ensuring the mobility of civil actors within the Euromed space.
- II.5 Maintaining Euromed Civil Fora in their renovated and participatory format, and holding them in the Mediterranean Partner Countries.
- III.1 Establishing a financial instrument aimed at strengthening civil society in the Mediterranean Partner Countries.
- III.2 Simplifying access of financial resources to smaller associations.
- III.3 Developing mechanisms of joint financial responsibility at the national level.
- IV.1 National dialogue between civil society structures and governments.
- IV.2 Multilateral dialogue between the regional structures of civil society and Euromed institutions and other initiatives.
- IV.3 Creating mechanisms for permanent consultation and participation of civil society.
- IV.4 Gradual consensus-building with civil society structures in some activities of the EMP.

I. Need for clarification of the role of the autonomous civil society within the EMP. Ten years after the first Euro-Mediterranean Summit of Barcelona, and now that time has come to make an assessment of the partnership, we should stress the marginal role which has been assigned to the civil society. So far, the lack of consistency between the official declarations and the effective participation of civil

society has been so obvious that there are doubts about the actual political will to integrate people into the EMP. Nevertheless, at the same time, significant progress has been achieved in the articulation of the autonomous civil society (consolidation of networks, reform of the Civil Fora and creation of a Euromed Non-Governmental Platform), which attests to the firm willingness of associations, NGOs and trade unions to contribute to the revitalization of the partnership.

If a better articulation of civil society within the EMP is considered as necessary, then Euromed institutions are requested to rapidly clarify the role civil society is supposed to play and a political agreement among its members should be reached. This position should be considered as binding for all institutions and all governments and should be translated into the creation of mechanisms of dialogue and the adaptation of EMP financial instruments. Two measures are likely to contribute to this.

I.1 Definition, by the higher authorities of the Partnership, of the role that the civil society should play within the EMP; and demonstration through a strong act.

It is necessary that the higher bodies of the Partnership, and on the basis of a consensus, should define the role of civil society within the EMP. This position should be developed by a high-level working group (including the most representative NGOs or their coordination structures, the Economic and Social Councils and the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly); the results of this group should be documented in a report and its conclusions should be ratified at a summit and referred to in its final declaration. This position would have to define :

- what is meant by civil society (while taking account in particular of the autonomous initiatives taken by organized people: associations, networks, trade unions, social movements) ;
- the field of action of the civil society within the EMP (in view of the Euro-Mediterranean civil society's aspiration to take action within all three baskets of the EMP and not only in the third one) ;
- mechanisms and instruments so that this social participation be real (both in the definition of policies and in the participation in the programmes).

I.2 Establishing of procedures designed to enlarge the dialogue with civil society at the national level.

It is necessary to establish procedures that are likely to gradually extend practices of dialogue and consensus-building both at the regional level and at the national level, and thus contribute to strengthening the practice of social dialogue by local civil societies, and in a word contribute to the promotion of democracy.

Making the effort to generate such a definition is not an isolated fact; it is fully enshrined in a much wider debate, both in the EU and in the United Nations, with the aim of promoting the role of civil society and non-governmental agents in international action, development or conflict management. A significant part of civil societies is willing to engage in building consensus with the institutions and to contribute to the objectives of the Barcelona Process, although the two parties are short of practice in this game.

Some Mediterranean partner countries may show resistance, while the EU will tend to avoid making this issue become a serious bone of contention. Yet, political dialogue should introduce soft instruments to ease the gradual implication of non-governmental entities: presence of associations with an observer status at official meetings and in the consultative bodies of the institutions and programmes, support to legal reform which would facilitate the work of associations, joint implementation of programmes, etc.

The European Parliament, and perhaps later on the Euromed Parliamentary Assembly, may support this dynamics. It should be reminded that the European Parliament has clearly supported an active participation of civil society within the EMP, and that the actual major financial allowance was granted to NGOs at its own initiative (MEDA-Democracy in 1996, then EIDHR).

II. Recognition of the coordination structures of civil society.

By definition, civil society is plural; it takes specific forms in each country and it is active in so many different areas. This fragmentation and variety make it even more difficult to interact with the public authorities. In general, institutions accept to recognize that some social organizations do have some capacity of interaction, for they are representative of this sector or because they have been accepted and recognized thanks

to their effective action. Sometimes, institutions accept to grant them a consultative status or to associate them with the programmes in one way or another.

Within the framework of the EMP, civil society's action may be rendered difficult due to their large diversity, the big differences between the two shores, their quite recent articulation, and the will to act at the local, national, regional and Euro-Mediterranean levels. Moreover, their structuring, both in a vertical (thematic networks) and horizontal manner (territorial coordination), is yet very limited. Managing this diversity can only be carried out through intermediary bodies, such as those which have been developed in the last few years on the basis of common positions and interests and around specific issues; these networks are spaces of exchange with an inclination for working jointly (cooperation) and for complementing one another. These structures are the following :

a. Structures of coordination at the local level (national platforms). They include organizations which want to participate in the EMP, within the framework of a given country. In the Mediterranean partner countries, they represent the appropriate space for consolidating the local association fabric, or for lobbying with the government or public opinion over some specific issues. In addition, and in view of their domestic reality, they can significantly contribute to the other networks. In Europe, their function is basically directed towards public opinions and the EU through governments. National platforms are considered as spaces of meeting, coordination and work at the national level, but they also give an impetus to participation in the other networks; in addition, they can articulate and serve as a link between small informal groups.

b. Sub-regional networks. These are thematic networks (women's rights, development, environment, trade unions) but they also have a regional dimension (European, Maghrebian, Arab). Most of these networks already existed in 1995 and are the outcome of other dynamics; but with the advent of the Barcelona Process, they joined the Euromed civil dynamics. They make it possible to engage in the most immediate transnational consensus-building and coordination processes, and can contribute with views and ideas that are specific to a region.

c. Euromed regional thematic networks. These are international thematic networks, most of which were set up after 1995 and are

generally peopled by mature organizations fitted with resources. They have the capacity to contribute on specific issues (EMHRN for human rights, the ESF for economic and social rights, etc.)

The Euromed Non-Governmental Platform. It includes (national, sub-regional and regional) networks as well as institutes, foundations and other organizations which help articulate civil society in the region. Its objective is to strengthen the effective participation of civil society within the EMP and to help overcome the shortfalls and the one-off character of the Fora. Among its weaknesses, for example, it is basically association-wise and does not sufficiently incorporate economic and social agents, and participation from North Europeans is rather poor. Although it does not seek exclusiveness, the Platform, while it defines itself as one of the authentic components of the Mediterranean civil society, and as a structure of coordination, seems to be the appropriate counterpart for Mediterranean institutions.

Coordination structures (the networks and the Euromed Non-Governmental Platform in which they are grouped) must be established with Economic and Social Councils, the social counterparts for each space and in each area. National platforms must be associated to initiatives with the governments which involve their countries within the EMP. Regional and sub-regional networks must get involved into regional programmes and present among the Euromed institutions, in all regional activities. Furthermore, the Euromed Non-Governmental Platform must become a privileged counterpart of the Euromed institutions, since it represents a substantial and significant part of Euro-Mediterranean civil societies. The following measures could contribute to it :

II.1 Strengthening civil society in the Mediterranean Partner Countries.

Strengthening civil society in the Mediterranean Partner Countries requires an appropriate legal framework and the opening of spaces of freedom and the right of independent association. Governments often present para-governmental institutions as civil society groups, while harassing independent associations. The capacity of this civil society to exist and to be active, as well as its recognition is an essential basis.

Secondly, civil society will need resources in order to develop its activities. Its resources must first be local, and can be complemented with public and external resources.

At the Euromed level, strengthening civil society in a country consists, first and foremost, in facilitating its cross-border action, that is to say developing its internal and external interaction with other actors.

II.2 Strengthening networks of coordination with civil society.

It is necessary to strengthen the (national, sub-regional and thematic) coordination networks of civil society, expand their base, while giving stability to their actions, and increase their political impact. Associations with religious inspiration, as well as economic and social agents, should also engage in networking as actors of social articulation, and lastly, organizations from Northern and Central Europe should get involved more effectively.

These networks must transform into points of reference for civil society in every field, and should be fully involved in the Partnership.

Thematic networks and a few national platforms do have their own resources, though limited and inadequate. Strengthening networks requires financial support. This also applies to the Platform which has been able to structure little by little thanks to the support of some European foundations and by drawing benefit from the preparations of Civil Fora. But this dynamics is getting out of breath. Operating a regional structure (with the heavy burden of communications and travels) and a plan of action that meets the requirements of its mandate, both require medium/long term external and stable financial support which should be provided through EMP instruments.

Regional thematic networks are more experienced and better prepared to formulate positions; their impact and work is much more considerable. They should be granted the necessary resources and support from the EMP to be able to carry on with their programmes. They are in the best position to help with the structuring of the Platform.

II.3 Strengthening the Euromed Non-Governmental Platform, and its recognition as one of the privileged counterparts of civil society within the EMP.

The tendency to reduce participation of civil society to the third basket of the EMP has generated battles for gaining the label of « civil society ». Several criteria justify the choice of the Platform as a counterpart and a partner : its representativeness (it includes a large number of entities and expresses various interests), its legitimacy (transparent and democratic operation) and its effectiveness (capacity of analysis and proposal formulation).

The Platform is under construction and needs to be improved. But it already includes the most significant and vibrant association networks and trade unions in the Euromed area. It offers a large potential of cooperation between the two shores and appropriate interaction with the public authorities.

Because of its multi-sectorial and Euro-Mediterranean structure, it represents a strategic challenge which can only be beneficial to civil society at the local and regional levels. To this end, networks and platforms must get involved even more deeply. Its operation requires substantial financial support and should be clearly separated from the organization of the Civil Fora; and its resources should be made available by a government.

The Platform has defined some internal practices which would, in its operation, take account of the plurality and diversity of its components.

Public authorities are requested to recognize the Platform as a privileged counterpart of civil society within the EMP for it is structured and inclusive, representative (regional networks, national platforms and significant organizations) and legitimate (capacity to formulate proposals).

Recognition of the Platform by the public authorities is not devoid of problems, however. If European institutions are familiar with practices of consensus-building with the civil society, difficulties may turn out to be much more serious in some Mediterranean partner countries where, in addition, autonomous associations are viewed as anti-governmental. The influential role that Euromed institutions can play may contribute to changing this situation.

II.4 Ensuring the mobility of civil actors within the Euromed space.

For example by reinitiating the proposal of a « Barcelona Visa » (already launched by EuroMeSCo and the European Parliament).

II.5 Maintaining Euromed Civil Fora in their renovated and participatory format, and holding them in the Mediterranean Partner Countries.

Fora are meeting spaces of undeniable usefulness, but they should lose their centrality as the case has been so far; the main axis around which civil society should be articulated within the EMP must be the networks and the Platform in view of its activities. The organization of Fora and other events should go to the Platform which is apt to ensure their continuation, give them representativeness and ensure participation. Fora must be organized with EMP resources, so as to avoid being dependent upon the will of the rotating Presidency of the EU. Fora must be more independent and meet civic priorities, both in terms of the agenda (they can be dissociated from the official summits) and in terms of the content (we can think of thematic Civil Fora); Civil Fora should be held alternately on the two shores of the Mediterranean. Fora should have more political impact and their outcome and declarations should be followed up.

However, one should consider strengthening the exposure of their activities as well as the stances of the networks and the Platform within the institutional framework (Euromed, national, European) and towards public opinion (through their members themselves and the media). The Platform should approach the institutions: to bring forward its analysis and proposals and to request its contribution in some events.

III. Financial means and access of civil society to public funding. In general, associations work with their own funds or with public funding from their governments or from supranational agencies. Transnational activities of civil society have a very high cost that smaller associations are not able to bear, which simply is an

obstacle to their participation. However, financial mechanisms accessible to civil society have excluded these small, local or poorly structured groups, while they are those which most need them. If their contribution is positive, the institutions (referred to in the EMP budget) and governments should provide funding for the activities of civil societies.

– The very nature of NGOs (small size, working at the micro-level) requires long-term, effective and sustainable financial support, especially for those active in the Mediterranean space. In addition to their own funds, they should be able to receive public resources, locally and from the EMP, for three main reasons :

a. to give more impact to civil society's specific actions

b. for the national platforms, sub-regional and regional thematic networks.

c. for a better general articulation of the Platform with the Euromed dimension.

– The Platform is in need of an operational structure (main office, equipment, current expenses) and adequate means to carry on its work plan. At the outset, EMP financial institutions should secure the necessary resources; contributions from national governments or local public authorities should only come as a supplement (the French Government has recently expressed its willingness to host and help the Platform).

– Networks and mechanisms for building consensus among civil societies of the two shores and with the institutions should have their own funding resources through the EMP. In the same way as EIDHR has funded the activities of several NGOs from the Mediterranean partner countries in the area of human rights and democracy, other associations should also be granted the necessary resources for their activities: support to women's associations to help them improve their status, support to trade unions for defending employment and social rights, etc. These resources should represent a substantial part of EMP resources.

– Solutions must be found to avoid the veto or circumvent the requirements imposed by some governments (for example MEDA-

Democracy has sought out a programme outside EMP for its management) (23).

- Access to finance should be eased both for advanced organizations and for the smaller local or poorly structured groups. One should take account of the fact that some NGOs in the Mediterranean partner countries do have the capacity to manage significant funds, so their systematic exclusion should be avoided. Likewise, it is necessary, for those less effectively structured groups, that mechanisms used take account of their specific size (micro-projects), cease to be one-off and not be granted on the basis of projects (pluri-annual solutions should be sought after); they should be accessible and their management simple (simplified processes, reduced administrative charge and support from the Delegations of the Commission).

- Funding of civil society structures and of its activities is in no way a huge budget section, but micro-projects are rather heavy to manage and the institutions are reluctant to finance them on a long-term basis.

This is why three measures, at least, have to be contemplated :

III.1 Establishing a financing instrument aimed at strengthening civil society in the Mediterranean Partner Countries.

A regional programme or a micro-project line (MEDA-NGO or MEDA-CIVIL SOCIETY) designed to strengthen local civil society associations in the Mediterranean Partner Countries has to be established and could become a financial instrument for the neighbourhood policy (2007-2013).

(23) The European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) was established at the initiative of the European Parliament in 1994. It basically aims to promote human rights and democratisation in third countries, namely through financing of local and international NGO activities. It is meant to supplement bilateral aid programmes of the Commission. Whereas activities under the MEDA programme are negotiated with the partner governments, and the institutional aspects of this cooperation are to a large extent addressed through the channel of governmental and public institutions, EIDHR, for its part, allows for the direct allocation of funds to civil society actors. Actions financed under EIDHR are not subject to prior negotiations with the governments of Mediterranean partner countries. Thus, when bilateral funds are allocated to the reform of the judiciary, EIDHR may contribute to building the capacity of civil society to help it conduct lobbying actions and engage in this process.

III.2 Simplifying access of financial resources to smaller associations

Legitimacy of social organizations is not only based upon their representativeness, but on the effectiveness of their activities. Their involvement in the partnership concerns every issue related to the participation of people and democracy. The nature and technical competence of some associations places great difficulty for their access to partnership financing. It is therefore necessary to simplify the procedures and to put in place appropriate mechanisms.

III.3 Developing mechanisms of joint financial accountability at the national level.

Mechanisms of joint financial accountability at the national level should be considered in order to encourage the combination of local and EMP resources. For example, governments which receive funds from the EU should contribute with an amount in local currency to co-finance civil society activities of this country and in the country or the region.

IV. Participation of civil society in information and consultation mechanisms. Interaction of civil society with the Euromed institutions and public authorities has been very limited and has mostly consisted of informal procedures and one-off communications. For example, in some ministerial summits (Crete, May 2003), civil society actors were able to expose their stances and the Declaration of the ECF ; representatives from EMHRN were invited to speak at EMP high officials' meetings. But, in general, there is no dialogue, no consultations, and no structured consensus-building. Local consultative bodies have not even been consulted before the signing of the agreements or the National Plans. When this shortfall has been mentioned, the European Parliament suggested that the members of the Euromed Non-Governmental Platform be invited to express their viewpoints within the EMP.

The Platform and its members are generally considered as necessary, but not exclusive, counterparts of the institutions both at bilateral and multilateral level, and tend to establish a policy of dialogue. One of the objectives of the Platform is to « promote recognition and active participation of civil society as a counterpart

in the different Mediterranean partner countries and within the EMP and the new European Neighbourhood Policy ». The purpose behind building consensus between the institutions and civil society (through its most representative structures) is to contribute to the objectives of the EMP at local, sub-regional and Euro-Mediterranean levels. It is also meant to strengthen civil societies in the different countries.

In building consensus, one has to keep in mind the experience of NGOs in advocating for the environment. This experience is itself based on a previous experience led within the framework of the Mediterranean Action Plan (MAP) established by the European Commission and the Mediterranean countries under the auspices of UNEP. The consultative body of MAP, the Mediterranean Commission for Sustainable Development (MCSD) holds regular meetings. It is composed of the signatory states (21) and 15 civil society representatives (5 NGOs, 5 representatives of economic and social sectors and 5 representatives of local authorities). For EMP, the specific chapter relating to the environment is the SMAP (Short and Medium-term priority Environment Action Programme) of 1997. This chapter has also established practices for building consensus with civil society (the Mediterranean Environmental NGOs Steering Committee) which ensures (monitoring) of the programme and examines possible reforms.

Lastly, this consensus-building process is not meant to replace but to supplement other initiatives, such as the Euro-Mediterranean Economic and Social Committees.

For civil society to be able to participate in the EMP it must be recognized by the actors; in addition, structures must be provided for dialogue, consultation and consensus-building.

1. Recognition. The first requirement is political, institutional and effective recognition of civil society as a counterpart and as a full-fledged member, in its diversity and both at the bilateral level (national) and at the regional level (Euromed institutions).

2. Dialogue. Civil society and the institutions should establish mechanisms of thematic permanent and structured dialogue which would allow sharing viewpoints and information, as a basis for consultation and consensus-building.

3. Consultations. Civil society must be able to express its opinion on actual policies (for example, under the form of viewpoints) and to

have the authority to make proposals at all levels (planning, implementation and evaluation). These consultations should be designed in such a manner as to integrate them effectively within the policy formulation (policy level) and decision-making processes and should not be considered as a mere exercise without practical effect.

4. Consensus-building. A framework for effective consensus-building should be defined: associations should be involved in programme formulation, development and implementation and their know-how should be put to use.

Institutions should make sure that the implication of civil society actors in the mechanisms of dialogue, consultation and consensus-building shall not lead to a reduction in their political and social rights.

This scope of action is increasingly viewed as a necessity. The Euromed Parliamentary Assembly has recently insisted on implicating civil society within the partnership and expressed its willingness to invite civil society to its works and commissions, by granting a specific status to its representatives (24). The Civil Forum of Luxemburg (2005) has reaffirmed the will of the civil society to contribute and participate up to the point of articulating its central proposal on consensus-building and consultation mechanisms within the framework of the Partnership and the new European Neighbourhood Policy (25). The European Commission is also contemplating the possibility engaging in consultations with the civil society and holding thematic conferences with the participation of governments and civil society (26).

In this regard, several measures need to be contemplated :

(24) Points 16 and 43 of the Resolution of the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly (March 2005), *op.cit.*

(25) Final Declaration of the Euromed Civil Forum of Luxemburg. Towards a Real Involvement of Civil Society. Consultation Mechanisms

(http://www.euromedforum.org/rubrique.php?id_rubrique=76&lang=fr).

(26) Point 2.9 of the Communication by the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament. Tenth Anniversary of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership : A Work Programme to Meet the Challenges of the Next Five Years. Brussels, April 12, 2005 (COM(2005)139 final ;

http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/euromed/barcelona_10/docs/10th_comm_en.pdf).

IV.1 National dialogue between civil society structures and governments.

Establish annual consultations to discuss association agreements, meetings for monitoring and evaluation of the agreements and action plans ; set up thematic committees; hold meetings between the civil society and the National Parliaments.

IV.2 Multilateral dialogue between the regional structures of civil society and Euromed institutions and other initiatives.

Participation of representative civil society structures as guest-observers in the official meetings: such as ministerial summits, Euromed Committee meetings and sectorial ministerial conferences. Holding of regular meetings with the Ambassadors in Brussels in charge of the EMP or with high officials from the European Commission.

Participation in the capacity as guest-observers in other regional initiatives: such as Euromed Parliamentary Assembly meetings and Economic and Social Councils meetings.

IV.3 Creating mechanisms for permanent consultation and participation of civil society.

It is necessary that consensus-building mechanisms be established in connection with EMP programmes and institutions. Civil society organizations and other structures representing economic and social actors should be able to participate in these consultative structures entrusted with monitoring policies. These consultations should be imperative in the negotiation of agreements and action plans.

IV.4 Gradual consensus-building with civil society structures in some activities of the EMP.

Involvement of civil society organizations in some activities of the EMP should be contemplated and is even desirable in the short and medium term, for example in the process of evaluation of Euromed programmes, together with the Euromed Foundation for dialogue among cultures and civilizations, or in the visualization of the EMP.

Ways and Conditions for the Participation of the Civil Society of Religious Inspiration in the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership

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Introduction : What is a Civil Society of Religious Inspiration?

The very formulation of the title of this contribution requires a preliminary clarification: What do we mean by “civil society of religious inspiration?”

Put in a Euro-Mediterranean (1) context, this title inevitably evokes the central and complex issue of Islam, its socio-political manifestation in the societies of the region, its direct and indirect impact on the Partnership itself, with all the implications contained in the term “Islam” during the past few decades, especially since September 11, 2001, and the series of terrorist attacks which have since bloodstained several countries in the region. Without claiming to be exhaustive, we should remember that the Islamic religious dimension has emerged, overlaps or has been manipulated in several regional conflicts (namely in the Middle-East and the Balkans). It also constitutes an acute problem in different other countries (for example in Algeria since 1988 and Egypt since a long time ago), and raises passionate debates among the European public opinion as the opening of negotiations for the adhesion of Turkey to the EU is nearing. From a purely international issue, this question has come to be increasingly viewed as a central and endogenous political problem in almost all European societies that

* Original contribution in French.

(1) We will use interchangeably the expressions : « Euro-Mediterranean Partnership », “Partnership” or EMP.

are now massively aware that the immigrant populations of Islamic culture or descent (2) will inevitably definitely settle in Europe.

It is in this – most often polemic – context that we shall use the title “civil society of religious inspiration” to refer to all the social stakeholders (associations, the media, trade unions, professional organizations, or even individuals sometimes), present in the North or in the South of the Mediterranean, and who refer – explicitly or implicitly – to a religious faith to act peacefully, at the national or transnational levels, to advocate and promote one or several universal human rights values” (3). This pragmatic definition which is designed to facilitate understanding as much as action is largely derived from the definition put forward by the participants to the Seminar on “Human Rights and Civil Society in the Mediterranean”, held in parallel with the Stuttgart Civil Forum (4). However, in the context of this contribution, this definition poses at least two difficulties, each of a different nature. It is important to underline them at this stage, with the idea of further elaborating on them at a later stage. The first difficulty lies in the fact that a number of civil society of religious inspiration stakeholders may totally disregard in both their action and discourse the universal heritage to which we refer, and may even state

(2) With the impact of 9/11 helping, the European institutions did not remain without reaction in response to the escalation of problems, as demonstrated by the appointment by M. Romano Prodi on January 23, 2003 of the “High Level Advisory Group on Dialogue between Peoples and Cultures” (cf. Final Report: http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/euomed/publication/euomed_report6_8_en.pdf) or the organization of numerous conferences on “Islamophobia” (February 6, 2003) or “Islam and Europe” (January 9-10, 2004), always with the active participation of the European Commission.

(3) It is worth mentioning that this universalistic reference framework is essentially defined in our view by the whole set of instruments, pacts and international covenants, which constitute the international humanitarian law, and international Human Rights law, as developed and adopted since the end of World War II.

(4) “... the participants would like to indicate that they see civil society as the collection of those authorities, associations, persons and the media who have the authority to guarantee or protect, outside of all state institutions, the proper execution, by peaceful means, of public liberties and to favour the emergence and independent affirmation of a collective pluralist identity based on the universal values of human rights, and the promotion of a citizens culture” (excerpts from the recommendations formulated by the Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network, and the Mediterranean Citizens Forum at the conference organized by Friedrich Ebert Foundation, Stuttgart, April 15-16, 1999).

their opposition to certain of its provisions and adopt instead a religious reference framework as an exclusive basis for action. The second difficulty is related to the political situation prevailing in several countries in the region which still refuse any possible legal existence to this type of actors, although many of them have publicly and repeatedly expressed their complete rejection of political violence and their readiness to integrate the legal political sphere.

Lastly, it should be made clear that although the present contribution is mainly about Islamic civil society of religious inspiration, we deem it necessary to also include in our thinking other social actors who refer to other creeds, especially Christian non-governmental organizations of the North, which are very active on both sides of the Mediterranean, in addition to the panoply of informal associations and groups in the South which share the same faith and live in more or less difficult conditions as minorities in countries such as Egypt, Syria or Lebanon (Copts, Maronites, Assyro-Chaldeans, etc.).

I. SOCIO-POLITICAL DYNAMICS AND NEW ACTORS

I.1. Civil Society within the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership : A Double Dynamics

Regardless of what we think of the Partnership and the evaluation of the involvement of civil society since the Barcelona Conference, we have to note that several dynamics have developed since November 1995, namely the creation of several networks (human rights, environment, trade unions, culture, youth, etc.), the holding of eight Civil Fora, the emergence of a civil-society Platform, the organizing of a large number of regional conferences, and implementation of all kinds of cooperation programs.

It is also indisputable that these various actions have either deliberately or accidentally ignored or disregarded the social actors with which we are concerned here, as much as the latter themselves, except a few (5), seemed not so much interested so far in this emerging field of regional cooperation and interaction.

(5) We obviously think of some big development and /or community service NGOs from the North, such as CCFD (France), OXFAM (United Kingdom), ...

If we accept the outlined definition mentioned above, one could assume the co-existence of two dynamics in the Euro-Mediterranean region which ignore, and sometimes even oppose one another; on the one hand a lay-wise and secularised civil society, explicitly adopting the universal values of human rights, and integrated at different degrees – regardless of its criticism or reservations – in the Partnership; and on the other hand a civil society of religious inspiration. The latter is rejecting in most cases the universal reference framework, but is immersed in a process of secularisation (6), while staying outside of the Partnership. It should be specified here that by “secularisation” we mean the historical process of progressive regression of the social influence of religion, while “laicisation” refers to the measures and provisions adopted at the institutional level to reaffirm the separation between a deconfessionalised public sphere and a space of privacy (which is not limited to the sole domestic space) where faith can be legitimately expressed. From this standpoint, there is only a seeming contradiction between the emergence and strengthening of the political religious movements in the region (and all the social actors involved with them or associated to them) on the one hand, and the powerful trends of secularisation affecting all societies, including those of the South, on the other hand. However, these social dynamics do not mean that institutional laicisation is growing at the same pace in these countries. It’s rather the opposite that is happening.

The weak involvement of the civil society of religious inspiration in the Partnership is mainly due to the confusion created between these two levels. Since any reference to religion is considered as antagonistic to the universal values on which the Partnership is founded, and is almost immediately categorized as “intégriste” (in French) or “fundamentalist”,... without taking heed of the political and social dynamics in action, often unknown even by the actors themselves, and in spite of their discourse. Therefore, integration of the said civil society requires a change in perceptions, which is only possible through an understanding of the present dynamics over the long term, far from the often tragic jolts of day-to-day events.

(6) Provided, as we shall see later, that minimum national and international conditions are satisfied.

I.2. Political Religious Movements: Which Evolution ?

These jolts prevent us from seeing what seems to be the major evolution of political religious movements: the progressive renunciation of armed struggle as the principal political mode of action to the benefit of a strategy of peaceful integration into the political arena. However, the decline of the "Jihad strategy" is thus the major development in the past decade, and can be noticed in Egypt as well as in Algeria, Syria, the Gulf countries, Jordan, and Morocco, even if some countries may probably still be subject to occasional outbursts of violence instigated by Islamist armed networks, which are, and will remain in our view, deprived of any significant social base. This renunciation of violent action was at the origin of certain movements (in Tunisia, Jordan or in Morocco for example), or else, violence was publicly abandoned after a relatively long period of confrontation with the central authorities (Egypt, Algeria). With the exception of Sudan, where power was gained only through an alliance at the top between the Muslim Brothers and the high military officials, armed struggle conducted by other Islamist groups was finally defeated in all these countries. Failing to gain the support of the civilians who sometimes have directly or indirectly suffered from its effects (7), armed struggle had to grapple with the brutal military and police reaction from the authorities in power, with a high human, social and economic cost, and the loss of liberties which, though difficult to assess, remains significant still. Thus, and despite persistence of the military option in Palestine, which would require a separate analysis, and the rise of a new Islamist generation which, following in the wake of the obscure "Al Qaida" group, still advocates armed struggle, almost all political movements seem to have opted for a public, peaceful and progressive conquest of power, through implicit or explicit recognition of social and political pluralism, and elections as the principal instrument for measuring the status of forces in presence.

Broadly, governments of the region have addressed this heavy tendency in two different ways. In certain countries (in Jordan, Kuwait, or Morocco for example), public authorities have adopted a strategy

(7) Massacres of civilian populations in Algeria, or the impact of armed actions on tourism in Egypt, among other examples, are illustrative of these effects.

of gradual and controlled integration of religious political entities, allowing them to act within a partisan framework and to have access to parliamentary representation. In other cases (Tunisia and Libya are perfect illustrations of this), governments continue to hold a firm eradicating stand, refusing to allow any legal presence of the said movements, or to tolerate – as in Egypt – their existence, going as far as to conduct frequent campaigns of arrests and trials.

Integration at the national level of the political religious movements in a pluralist political peaceful and regulated arena seems therefore a necessary condition to strengthen their involvement in the regional framework offered by the EMP, which in turn cannot grow to meet its founding objectives while in many countries exclusion of a significant part of the population and of the actors who speak on their behalf continues on the political field, even when these actors have expressed their readiness to represent them peacefully.

I.3. “Lay” Radicalism

This attitude to refuse to take into consideration plurality in society does not come only from States which, under the pretext of combating extremism, reject any peaceful alternating government, but is also reinforced by a similar attitude from civil societies both in the North and the South of the region and from the European Partner Countries.

In front of the rise of the political religious movements during the last two decades, both within political parties and through associations, large sections of secularised civil society has violently opposed any dialogue with these movements and the associations and the personalities related to them. In the name of defending “laicism” at times, “republican principles”, or “universal principles of human rights” at other times, or sometimes the three arguments altogether, some people did not hesitate to back up the drastic policies adopted by some governments in the region with the view to eliminating actors related to any political religious movement from the political arena. In some extreme instances (Algeria), government stringent security measures have been explicitly requested. Taking advantage of the legitimate feeling of horror provoked by terrorist actions, some actors have taken ownership of the very notion of “civil society” to their sole benefit,

confining it to themselves alone, i.e. only to those who openly oppose so-called “obscurantism” and “backward movements,” etc.

In this respect, advocacy of “women’s rights” in the Southern shore constituted a central element of the argument, which was developed and which found a significant echo among Western public opinion, which are rightly sensitive to the multiple forms of discrimination to which women are subjected.

There will be no possibility of openness toward civil society of religious inspiration sectors, and even less so toward their possible involvement in regional initiatives, without a concerted effort to start a dialogue with the actors from the secularised civil society who have so far opposed the desired new dynamics. Women’s issues and the involvement of women’s rights associations may either constitute an enabling factor or a blocking factor for these dynamics.

Conclusions of Part I

At this stage of our thinking, we can sum up the outlined tracks as follows :

1. There is indeed a civil society of religious inspiration in the Euro-Mediterranean region, which cannot be reduced to mere religious claims, or analysed solely through a mere literal (first-degree) reading of the discourse developed by such actors.

2. We are dealing with social actors who are rooted in history and in the socio-economic realities of their respective societies and in the region, and who are therefore not immune from the heavy influences of their environment, among which there is a real, although not so visible, process of secularisation.

3. Despite the fact that these actors are claiming the right to participate peacefully in the social and political life of their countries, and possibly in the new Euro-Mediterranean space under construction, they are still being ignored or marginalized.

4. The authoritarian attitude of many governments, and resistance of the civil societies to take account of the civil society of religious

inspiration constitute a double obstacle to their integration in the ongoing regional initiatives. It is in these two directions that we need to target our action.

5. Integration of these actors at the regional level will not be possible without an initiative to integrate them at the domestic level in each respective country. In this respect, policies adopted by each government vary widely, ranging from a controlled integration in some countries, to an authoritarian rejection that is costly in terms of freedoms in other countries

At this stage of our reflection, we suggest to focus on two examples. Each one of these two examples deals with an attempt to involve faith-based social actors that explicitly claim to be considered as such. We have purposely selected an example from the South (even though the action has taken place in Europe, our objective was to tackle an example from the Southern shore), namely Algeria, and another example located in Europe, in France.

II. Good Practices and course of Action

II.1. Action for Peace: The example of “The Contract of Rome”

In January 1995, while the conflict between the Algerian security forces and the various Islamist armed groups was at its highest point, a conference in Rome, Italy, gathered the leaders of several Algerian parties: Hocine Aït Ahmed for the « Front des Forces Socialistes » (FFS), Abdelhamid Mehri for the « Front de Libération Nationale» (FLN), Rabah Kébir for the « Front Islamique du Salut-Délégation extérieure » (FIS), and Louisa Hannoune for the the “Parti des Travailleurs” (PT). This conference was being prepared for a long time by the San ‘Egiddio Community, a Catholic community which engaged in the peaceful resolution of conflicts, and which had previously successfully intervened in Angola, and was in the process of preparing a similar intervention in the Balkans. However, the Community was acting in the presence of and somewhat under the moral authority of Me Ali-Yahia Abdenour, President of the Algerian League for the Defense of Human Rights (LADDH), who had, since 1992, taken a clear stand against the serious violations of human rights exercised after the halting of the electoral process in 1992 and following the authoritarian dissolution of FIS and the arrest of its leaders and activists. The

declaration adopted by this conference, commonly known as “The Contract of Rome”, suggested to the Algerian public authorities a peaceful way to end the war that was then destroying the country, and presented in details the modalities proposed by the signatories for ending this war. This offer of negotiation was immediately and categorically rejected by the Government and numerous representatives of the Algerian “civil society” (8), and was countered by a serious media campaign, which was mainly deployed in France. During the months and years following this event, the armed conflict in Algeria went into a more tragic escalation, which casualties have just now started to be adequately assessed.

We can reasonably say that the rejection of the “Contract of Rome” did unnecessarily prolong the war, increasing the sufferings of the civilian populations, and aggravating the effects of the conflict on society and the state. We can also reasonably think that this conference was a failure, and an initiative without any real political results.

However, we would like to consider this example, because in our view it raises some questions of substance, and some methodology lessons.

Early intervention for the prevention of conflicts before they outbreak, as well as adequate action to resolve conflicts peacefully (especially in the cases of civil wars), are a vital necessity in the region. The (relative and temporary?) appeasement of the conflict in the Balkans, the reduction of armed hotbeds in Algeria (which however is not ended yet) (9), the pacified situation in Lebanon (10), the opening of negotiations for the accession of Turkey in the EU, and finally the perspective of resolving the Cyprus conflict, all of this may lead to think that the main sources

(8) It should be mentioned that the term ‘civil society’ in Algeria included at that time only those actors (journalists, women’s associations, intellectuals, ...) who had called in 1992 for the halting of the electoral process and who were in favour of resolving the crisis by the use of military force.

(9) Events in Kabylie, not yet resolved, are another illustration of a domestic conflict which might have led to a much more severe political crisis.

(10) Street mobs which followed the assassination of former Primer Minister, Mr. Hariri, also show that the Lebanese society remains deeply divided between strongly structured ethnic-religious groups with opposed views.

of tensions and political violence are behind us. We certainly hope so, but nothing allows us to believe that this truce is definitive: In fact, certain internal crises can surge again (as in Lebanon or Turkish Kurdistan), and other new spaces of tension may emerge (Syrian Kurdistan). The Euro-Mediterranean region will, for a long time yet, be in need of strategies for the prevention and/or peaceful resolution of internal crises, which are characterized by a confusion/articulation of ethnic-cultural dynamics and by a religious dimension. These strategies do not necessarily require the creation of new structures, but they do need 1) a capacity to anticipate conflicts; 2) the building of new alliances among diversified actors; 3) as needed, discrete and informal (non-public) modes of intervention at least at the beginning.

It was thanks to the concerted efforts of a confessional structure (San 'Egiddio Community), and a Human Rights NGO (LADDH) that the conference of Rome became possible. The conference was preceded by a discrete and a long and exacting exploratory effort to approach the stakeholders then to bring their points of view closer in order to reach a common vision. Despite its relative "failure", this initiative represents a symbolic precedent, and a serious attempt for a peaceful resolution of a serious crisis of political violence.

The reasons behind this « failure » are obviously multiple. The high military hierarchy has, from the very start, opposed the initiative, waged a serious media campaign against it both inside and outside the country, especially in France, and mobilized some spokespersons from the civil society to this end, especially well-known feminists or supposed victims of armed groups, for whom they organized campaign tours and conferences. Whereas barely any visas were granted to foreign journalists and to Human Rights NGOs, some European personalities were invited to visit Algeria and were quick to spread the same message upon their return to their respective countries. At the same time, the armed groups, probably manipulated by a section of them, increased their attacks mostly targeted to civil populations, destroying in this way any credibility to the perspective of a peaceful resolution of the conflict. However, the lack of international reaction, especially from Europe, did also play a significant role in this crisis. Despite the fact that the offer of political

resolution of the crisis through a national, peaceful and multi-partisan dialogue was in compliance with the principles and ideals advocated in theory by the European democracies, and were reaffirmed a few months later, in November 1995 at the Conference of Barcelona, diplomatic representatives of these countries confined themselves in deep silence, thus definitively removing any chance of success to this initiative.

II.2. Cultural and Religious Diversity: The Example of the Islam-Laicism Commission in France

As a natural consequence of increased immigration toward the Western European countries, and the definitive settlement of immigrant populations there, it has become clear that the European cultural and religious landscape was undergoing an increasingly visible and fast-moving diversification. Hence, whatever their national political tradition, all these European societies are now facing the question of how to peacefully manage this diversity, which is notably marked by a growing visibility of Islam. This, however, does not mean that Islam is the only new element in this context. The downturn of the social influence of traditional confessions, the individualization of religious sentiment, the strengthening of oriental religions and the development of sects, also constitute elements of this new context, although the Diaspora Islam remains the most “disturbing”, and in many ways, the most visible and the most controversial factor of all.

It is in this framework that a commission called “Islam/Laicism” has been at work in Paris for many years now, bringing together Muslim community leaders, researchers, churchmen, as well as leaders of various secular organizations and schools of thought. Meeting once a month, the commission is basically a space for mutual exchange and debate on the issues of Islam in France and in Europe and on secular traditions both in France and its neighbouring countries. Despite the fact that the commission has been active in the public sphere through publications and the organization of seminars or meetings outside of the capital, it is not considered as an instance for taking public common stands on day-to-day issues, even though some of its members may happen to take joint public positions, without however engaging the commission as such. The commission was initially operating under the auspices of the French National League for teaching and people’s education (la Ligue française de l’enseignement et de l’éducation

populaire), an important secular institution which had been founded in the 19th century, and is now jointly sponsored by the French Human Rights League and "Le Monde Diplomatique" newspaper. This does not impede the commission members acting in their individual capacity.

After all these years of operation, the commission has contributed to achieve progress on several fronts.

Indeed, non-Muslims, regardless of their creed, have gradually enriched their knowledge of immigrant Muslim circles, while Muslim immigrants were exposed to the concept of French secularism. Most importantly, both sides learned that both sides ("the Muslims" and the "Lay") do not constitute two homogenous blocs, but that both were shaken by debates and views which are sometimes opposed to one another regarding one particular issue or another. Lastly, shared actions and views have started to emerge among certain members from one or the other of the two "groups" in presence, without necessarily involving all the members of the commission. These new initiatives have exceeded the restricted framework and initial theme of the commission (namely Islam vs. French Laicism) to tackle other social and/or political issues in a broader sense of the term. Thus, some animators from Muslim associations and members of the commission joined other groups to preparing for the European Social Fora (thus discovering new partners and trade union, political and association realities, all unknown to them until now), or held responsibilities in other associations such as parent teachers associations.

Here again, the idea is not just proposing any model, but to think over, and draw some practical lessons from this particular experience. From a substance point of view, it is necessary to encourage both sides to take into consideration religious pluralism. This stake is a real fact both in the North and in the South of the Mediterranean, though it is even more acute in developed countries. However, unlike the groups which are developing inter-religious dialogue programs, the idea is not merely of confronting religious dogma in order to reach a common ground among all monotheisms, but also of taking into consideration BOTH the religious dimension AND, gradually, the socio-economic and political dimensions. In fact, the religious dimension should neither be ignored nor over-estimated. Finally,

it is important not to silence differences and opposing stands which can sometimes be very polarized (we will further talk about this later). Let's also take note of the fact that the timeline of this initiative (many years in this case), and the diversity of the actors brought together, are key elements for the success of the initiative. One could even say that the "ambiguity" as to the status of members played an important role as well. Indeed, despite the fact that they sit in the commission as individuals, their position within their respective groups adds a significant weight to their contributions and is to some extent an extension of their thinking. This informal aspect is not negligible in our view.

Thus, the Muslim issue is not only a problem of international relations (of the EMP here), but it increasingly represents an endogenous European stake, which has to be viewed as such by all the other actors in the North: States, European institutions and civil society. Taking into consideration at all levels these new actors, i.e. the Muslim immigrants, is a key requirement for all democratic policies in the European societies, without which any Euro-Mediterranean ambition will lack coherence and be meaningless. Indeed, we cannot call for pluralism within the authoritarian and poor societies in the South, while neglecting the growing diversification of the democratic societies in the North, and remain blind at the specific claims of the Muslim Diaspora now definitively settled in Europe. These communities do in fact suffer from numerous handicaps : a disadvantaged socio-economic situation that they share with other immigrants and other poor social classes, political marginalization – which emphasizes their status of foreigners deprived of civil rights – and inequality de facto if not de jure, in terms of religious freedom and the free exercise of religious cults. It is true that regardless of the institutional provisions which govern the relationship between the State and the cults in each European country, all European citizens benefit from what has been called "cultural laicism" which guarantees notably the freedom of conscience and the free practice of cults. Nothing, in theory, prevents foreign residents, including Muslims, from enjoying these rights, but it remains that Muslim immigrants do not always enjoy these freedoms, and that they are not always able to claim their rights in this respect. In fact, in addition to an increasingly visible and offensive

“Islamophobia”, these communities suffer from inequality de facto, which is the result of the historical compromises negotiated between the States and the majoritarian historical confessions, which “naturally” benefit from the advantages accumulated over time (direct or indirect funding by the Government of worship edifices, social security and even salaries for clergymen, confessional private schools, organization of the teaching of catechism in all branches of education, ritual sacrifices, organization of religious rituals in hospitals, prisons, etc.). It seems therefore necessary to develop public policies and civil society initiatives likely to combat both the socio-political discriminations and the afore-mentioned inequalities. These measures should respond to the need for equality and also send a clear message to the societies in the South.

II.3. What Position for Secularised Civil Society Actors?

The commendable initiative which was at the origin of this study paper should be aware of not slipping into cultural relativism. A strategy for the integration of the civil society of religious inspiration cannot be based on a juxtaposition of values, which would be placed on the same level, under the pretext of promoting dialogue and joint initiatives. These strategies should be developed and implemented on the strong basis of a set of non-negotiable rights. Once again, let it be clear that what we mean by this strong basis is not a model of civilization or a political model to be “exported”, but simply, and that’s already much enough, the whole body of treaties and instruments for the protection of Human Rights, as they have been drafted since World War II, which are indivisible and binding for every one, and first and foremost for the governments of the North. These rights cannot be subject to any hierarchy (meaning that one category of rights would have priority over another), nor should they obey a double standards approach (meaning that one given set of obligations would apply to others but not to ourselves, or apply to certain “enemy” states and not to others). This common heritage of humanity, to use the expression of the French Jurist Mireille Delmas-Mary, transcends national political models, which are only specific historical constructions, and cannot be reduced to a rhetorical discourse on “freedom” or “democracy”. These rights are not the property of a given region and stand only against that which may breach human dignity – within a given cultural context or a given creed.

While keeping from proclaiming in the face of potential partners an imperative universalism to “take it or leave it”, here and now, as a prerequisite to any joint initiative; we should also not hesitate, when addressing specific stakes, to underline the differences of opinion or fundamental divergences. Naturally, this will at the same time require extreme vigilance and rigor: in no case should the universalistic stand be found at fault, especially by adopting “a double standard policy”.

General Conclusion

Regardless of national specificities, political Islam is now a perennial and sustainable reality within the Euro-Mediterranean socio-political context. This new actor has to be considered in its diversity, and cannot be reduced to the sole “jihadist” movement which, despite its criminal nature and impact on public opinions, is in fact only an extremely marginal aspect of political Islam.

This epiphenomenon should in no way be used as a pretext to reject pluralism within South and North societies. The vast majority of the new faith-based actors are – often without being aware of it – in a process of secularisation on the one hand, and on the other hand – whenever it is possible – in a dynamic of integration within the legal political arena, which is mainly reflected in their explicit rejection of violence.

The Governments in the region, the Partnership institutions, and civil society actors who claim their adherence to democratic values and universal Human Rights principles, are now faced with this choice: to facilitate and support the efforts of integration of these new actors, and hence remain loyal to the ideals they proclaim, or – under the pretext of a disembodied universalism – to reject these groups and marginalize them. The experience of many countries in the region has shown that the cost of the latter option is extremely high, both in terms of liberties and in terms of socio-economic development.

This stake is to be considered from at least three levels of different nature :

First, in the South, the great development challenges cannot be addressed without pacifying the violent fratricide political confrontations, and without integration of a maximum of actors and the working out of lasting historical compromises based on a peaceful management of pluralism.

Secondly, in the North, societies transformed by the sedentary condition of the immigrant populations, cannot respect their social democratic pact, which characterizes them, without a vibrant policy of active struggle against discriminations and to acknowledge religious and cultural pluralism.

Lastly, the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership cannot achieve any progress, or even be reinvigorated while tolerating the persistence of authoritarian practices from partner States, and participating, even unintentionally in their exclusion and marginalizing policies.

At these three levels, two principles should preside over reflection and potential action. On the one hand, a strict and rigorous adherence to universalism, which means mainly avoiding the double trap of cultural relativism and selectivity among universal rights or the groups that should benefit from them, and on the other hand, a fair appreciation of the religious factor. In fact, taking into consideration this religious dimension by the different actors will in our view support the on-going secularisation processes. Unlike the ecumenical initiatives of inter-religious dialogue, which are ultimately fully legitimate, the objective is to develop national citizen initiatives with these actors based on common concerns.

With respect to methodology, these new strategies require, in our view, a capacity for organizational adaptation. In terms of the structures that eventually will need to be established, it is opportune, and even unavoidable, to develop new instruments (not necessarily perennial structures), which require unprecedented alliances among the actors, and/or renewed forms of action (a combination of public actions and other more discrete initiatives), and flexible initiatives combining dimensions of formal and informal character.

Preliminary Tracks for Action

In view of the particular nature of the issue raised in the present paper, and predicting the probable resistance, if not the hostility of the governments, EMP institutions as well as of certain actors of the secular civil society, against the theories presented in this paper, it is difficult to propose a set of specific recommendations in terms of content and implementation methodologies. One last, but not least, difficulty, is related to the availability of the civil society of religious

inspiration actors to immediately get involved in the initiatives suggested in this paper. For many of them, the relationship with Europe is still viewed from an angle of confrontation and opposition, in spite of the logic of secularisation which we assume is in action.

However, we took the risk of outlining a few tracks for action directed primarily at secular civil society actors, in order to give impetus to exchange and debate, and who knows, maybe the launching of some actions. The two tracks outlined below are easy to implement and, let's put it clearly, quite "realistic". They in fact do not require any major reform of the EMP, nor do they require any significant upheaval in the political situation in the South Mediterranean.

Encouraging the gradual involvement of civil society of religious inspiration actors within the main and outstanding EMP events

Based on the conviction that the recognition of pluralism, including political religious pluralism of the EMP member societies, is a sine qua none condition for a democratic development of the Partnership, all actors should encourage the gradual participation of the civil society of religious inspiration actors in the major events organized by the Partnership (inter-governmental meetings, seminars, academic colloquia, training sessions, exchange of visits among journalists, etc.).

While predicting the hostility of certain governments in the region, secular civil society actors should take the lead to promote such initiatives, especially by inviting civil society of religious inspiration actors to participate in activities they are promoting. Such initiatives could start with the Euro-Mediterranean Civil Fora, and some other initiatives related to the newly established Non-Governmental Platform or to one of its components.

For example, many networks of French youth associations of Muslim background have started to actively participate in the European social fora, thus discovering new partners and new social and international issues, which were often alien to them before. In addition, their participation has allowed the traditional participants of these forums (trade unions, women's movements, etc.) to broaden the panoply of their partners, and to engage in public debating with these new partners.

Articulating actions against different forms of discrimination aimed at immigrant populations in Europe, through opening spaces of dialogue about religious and cultural diversity in European societies

Settlement in Europe of immigrant populations of Muslim origin represents a double challenge. While suffering from social inequality, like all the other poor social classes, and from other special forms of discrimination (because of their actual or supposed origin), these populations aspire at the same time to enjoy better possibilities for social promotion, and the right to practice their creed and transmit it to the next generation. At the same time, generations of immigrants born in Europe are experiencing similar difficulties despite their socialization in Europe and their access to citizenship in the host countries, and despite their social and cultural dynamism.

The need for effective policies to ensure equality is no longer contested in theory, neither at the level of the European countries' public authorities nor at the level of European public opinion. However, these policies cannot remain blind in the face of otherness, and should also avoid the inclination to differentiation and "communitarian confinement".

The objective is therefore to encourage the emergence of spaces for dialogue on pluralism, while ensuring that these spaces remain always open unto the social, economic and political realities of the host countries. Here again, action by the secular civil society can be decisive. The example of the Islam/Laicism Commission in France can be considered in this respect not as a model, but as a source of inspiration, to be adapted, of course, according to the philosophical and juridical traditions of each country and the available partners and to issues at the centre of public debate within the society under consideration.

