Declaration by the regions and cities of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the signing of the Barcelona Declaration

Barcelona, 26 November 2005

We, the signatories to this declaration, representing the local and regional authorities of the countries of the European Union and the Mediterranean partner states, are met in Barcelona, ten years after the signing of the Barcelona Declaration, to make the voices of the local and regional authorities heard throughout the Euro-Mediterranean area. We believe that the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership must be founded on common strategies involving all levels of government.

Good governance should allow bottom-up information, from civil society to the institutions, and, by means of public policies, produce specific results for the people. Most of all, it must be rooted in a strong community of men and women with a common purpose: the emergence of a shared space of peace, stability, freedom and prosperity.

The people must become the true agents of this ambitious project. The local and regional authorities are the closest level of government to the people, a level whose existence and active role encourage transparency, allow for better governance and provide opportunities for direct democratic participation in the drafting of public policies. The strengthening of their participation and their democratisation in the Mediterranean partner countries is fundamental.

Social, economic and territorial cohesion must be at the heart of the Euro-Mediterranean project. The United Nations Millennium Development Goals, as well as the need to ensure sustainable economic growth to fight poverty and inequality, are the main challenges in a more strongly democratised environment. Only lasting peace and stability can guarantee respect for human rights.

OUR PROPOSALS

In the light of those considerations, we believe that the local and regional authorities have a crucial role to play in the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, and that they must take part in the definition of their future strategic orientations. The pursuit of the goals of the Barcelona Agenda requires support for the active participation of local and regional governments in the processes.

Therefore, we ask:
For action by the state governments, the European institutions and international players to be taken in full coordination and to support the democratic local and regional authorities, bearing in mind the principle of subsidiarity.

For the local and regional authorities, in the constitutional framework of each country and within the limits of their competences, to take part in defining plans of action and other Euro-Mediterranean agreements and programmes, including the new Neighbourhood Policy, as well as the programmes and financial plans of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership.

For a permanent Euro-Mediterranean forum of local and regional authorities to be set up, with the direct support and recognition of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership.

For the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership to provide support for national decentralisation and good governance processes.

For the regional and cohesion policies of the EU to serve as a model and adapt to the needs and realities of the Mediterranean partners. This methodology must be able to inspire certain pilot projects between cities and regions and be applied to different regions of the south Mediterranean countries. Cross-border and international cooperation must also be supported in all the territories on the shores of the Mediterranean, in particular in their North/South and South/South dimensions. A specific instrument should be created within the framework of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership to support the decentralised cooperation of the regions and local governments.

For the creation of a Euro-Mediterranean Development Bank coordinated by different international investors. The bank must guarantee that the local and regional governments have access to credit.

For the creation of an Observatory to study and coordinate decentralised cooperation in order to foster an exchange of good experiences in the Mediterranean.

Within the framework of the EU Neighbourhood Policy, for the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership to be the reference institutional structure for the Mediterranean. Bilateral agreements must be made in order to consolidate the global approach launched in Barcelona.

For measures to guarantee sustainable development to be strengthened, with particular attention to desertification and water management, the safety of sea transport and a sustainable exploitation of fishing.
• For the media, and in particular the public ones, to promote content that encourage multicultural and interreligious dialogue between the people of the Mediterranean.

OUR COMMITMENTS

The local and regional governments are prepared to become more involved in working towards the goals of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership in the framework of their constitutional competences. The signatories, and the regions and cities they represent, undertake to:

• Take part in decentralised cooperation projects between cities and regions throughout the Euro-Mediterranean space. That cooperation must strengthen the institutional capacities of their partners, encourage good governance and ensure the participation of the people.

• Encourage technological and trade cooperation between our socio-economic networks and support creative and innovatory initiatives for the growth of human capital, shared knowledge and most of all through the creation of new job opportunities over the years to come.

• Strengthen commitment to sustainable development in the Mediterranean zone, especially concerning water management.

• Ensure a transfer of know-how in the field of good governance and democracy through training, the mobility of political and technical representatives and an exchange of good practices.

• Redouble our efforts for cooperation in the fields of education and professional training in order to achieve three goals by the year 2015: the eradication of illiteracy in the region; the schooling of children for the whole of the primary cycle with no distinction of sex; and the elimination of gender disparity at all levels of education.

• Eradicate unhealthy habitats and guarantee access for the whole population to basic services: health services, drinking water and waste collection must be priorities in accordance with the United Nations Millennium Goals.

• Strengthen the internal cohesion between the Mediterranean partner countries through a rural development and trade liberalisation policy in the sphere of agriculture, a regional policy that takes account of the specific features of territories with a permanent natural handicap, as well as a policy for supporting socially balanced, sustainable urban development.
• Encourage and support direct dialogue between societies as the best way to ensure mutual understanding, and give social, cultural and human relations from region to region and city to city a horizontal dimension in all our projects.

• Substantially increase the funds earmarked for social cohesion and job creation so that no-one is forced to emigrate for economic reasons.

• Devote our resources to the improvement of living conditions and provide equal opportunities for immigrant populations by ensuring their conflict-free integration into the host societies, while helping them to remain in touch with their countries of origin.

• To support the struggle, in particular through civic education, against stereotypes, discrimination, racism and all forms of xenophobia, including anti-semitism and islamophobia, and prevent and condemn all public expressions of hate.