



**EUROMED SUMMIT
OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCILS
AND SIMILAR INSTITUTIONS**

Alexandria, 18–19 October 2009

FINAL DECLARATION

1. The representatives of the Economic and Social Councils (ESCs) and similar institutions, together with the representatives of civil society organisations in the Euro-Mediterranean partner countries which do not have an ESC or similar institution, meeting in accordance with the mandate conferred by the Barcelona Declaration of 1995 and extended under the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), warmly thank the Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Bibliotheca Alexandrina and the representatives of Egyptian civil society for their hospitality and their contribution to the success of the Summit.
2. During the summit, delegations from most UfM countries and the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) discussed issues relating to the participation of civil society in the UfM, the consequences of the economic and financial crisis, an economic and employment strategy founded on a knowledge society, climate change in the Mediterranean, demographic and cultural changes and the setting up of national economic and social councils in the Euromed partner countries.

The participants adopted the following recommendations:

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On the role and participation of civil society in the Union for the Mediterranean

3. call on governments to establish and consolidate, at the national level, mechanisms for structured dialogue, in order to ensure that civil society stakeholders are consulted, with a view to improving transparency in decision-making; welcome the commencement of work by the Jordanian Economic and Social Council, which was set up in 2007, and support the efforts made in Egypt and Morocco to establish their own economic and social councils; underline the positive

results of the TRESMED 3 project, which facilitates meetings between economic and social councils in the region and contributes to better understanding and to peace;

4. recall that there are already networks, projects and programmes in place, set up under the Barcelona Process, emphasising the vitality and richness that they represent and reiterating that the network of cooperation between Economic and Social Councils and Similar Institutions, established on the basis of the Barcelona Declaration, will continue its work and cooperate closely with the UfM bodies;
5. consider that the institutional profile of the Euromed network of cooperation between Economic and Social Councils and Similar Institutions should be reinforced and that it should be given consultative body status within the structure of the UfM, along the lines of what has been done at the parliamentary level and with local and regional authorities;
6. in this respect they will start working on how this proposal will be implemented and will establish a working group to this end;
7. consider that recognition of civil society representation within the UfM, would help to raise the profile of UfM initiatives amongst the public and boost participatory democracy in the Euromed region by involving all legitimate stakeholders, the social partners and other civil society actors;

On the consequences of the economic and financial crisis for the Euromed region

8. note that the economic and financial crisis affects growth, employment and people's wellbeing in all countries of the Euromed region, albeit to varying degrees;
9. call on governments to promote public and private investment and stimulate consumption, in particular of green and environmentally sound products, in order to boost growth, with a view to ensuring sustainable development and cleaner production methods, covering the economy, the environment and social development;
10. consider that recovery requires more active promotion of integration and regional cooperation, and call on governments and civil society actors to redouble their efforts in this area;
11. note that the effects of the economic and financial crisis come on top of the existing political, economic and social challenges in the partner countries, especially as regards the problem of employment, which particularly affects women and young people and leads to greater job instability and poverty;
12. underline the need to develop entrepreneurship by supporting small and medium sized enterprises and promoting cooperatives and other forms of social economy, in order to create jobs, especially for people who are vulnerable and in danger of social exclusion. It is particularly important to develop all forms of social economy during periods of economic crisis;

13. call for special attention to be given to the economic, social and juridical problems facing women;
14. urge the Ministers, who are to meet at the second Ministerial Meeting on the Istanbul Recommendations on "*Strengthening the role of women in society*" (Morocco, 11 and 12 November), organised by Union for the Mediterranean to take account of the integration and participation of women in addressing the future challenges arising from the recession;
15. call on governments to establish, in consultation with the social partners and representatives of civil society, employment and social protection policies that are consistent and effective, in order to mitigate the effects of the crisis;
16. emphasise the crucial importance of effectively sustainable social development in addressing socio-economic change in the region; call on the UfM to implement the decisions taken by the employment ministers at the Ministerial conference on employment held on 9 and 10 September 2008, to recognise the social partners and implement social dialogue. They support the ILO due to the important role it plays in securing decent work and professional equality, and promoting social dialogue. They urge the ILO to expand its efforts in the region, in particular through the implementation of the global pact for employment that was adopted unanimously in 2009;

On an economic and employment strategy based on a knowledge society in the Euromed region

17. note that the economic and financial crisis strengthens the demand for a sustainable and fair growth model, and consider that the knowledge-based economy (KBE) can contribute to this radical, comprehensive change;
18. accepts the validity of the five priorities identified by the World Bank to develop a KBE: continuing improvements in governance, gearing education and training systems to the needs of a sustainable economy, developing research, innovation and the information and communication technologies (ICT), promoting mediation as a method of conflict resolution, and the adoption by all social players of the values of sharing and cooperation;
19. wish to state that the economic and social councils, which embody the values of dialogue and cooperation, can provide an irreplaceable institutional framework for seeking the consensus needed to establish a knowledge-based economy;
20. declare themselves in favour of narrowing the digital divide, which emphasises inequalities in access to knowledge and highlights the differing levels of mastery of modern information and communication technologies between the Member States and partners in the Euromed region;

21. recommend that a sustained, proactive action programme be drawn up and implemented, targeting the partner countries in particular, reflecting the spirit of the Lisbon Strategy by pooling the efforts of all public and private stakeholders;
22. note that, in order to change foreign direct investment flows, which currently favour other emerging countries, making the partner countries more attractive by fostering entrepreneurship, and by improving vocational training and the qualifications of the workforce, is crucial in the short and medium term;
23. call on Euro-Mediterranean governments, with the assistance of the European Institutions, to identify existing skills and develop education and training systems adapted to the learning of skills and the needs of the labour market, in particular for women and young people; there is a crucial need to identify the careers and skills of the future and to set up a mechanism to develop training programmes. There is also a need to establish a framework for the recognition of qualifications, in which workers can make full use of their titles and qualifications and to provide more resources for this purpose. In this regard, they take note of the role played by the European Training Foundation in the region;

On climate change and the Mediterranean: environmental and energy challenges

24. note that the Mediterranean region is particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change, due to water scarcity and increasing desertification. There is also a need to react immediately to the major food security problem, to ensure food sovereignty and to implement ambitious and coordinated policies to tackle this extremely serious situation;
25. consider that the issue of climate change must be incorporated into environmental, energy, agricultural, health and tourism policies and also addressed in relation to the issues of immigration and civil protection, in compliance with the principle of shared but differentiated responsibilities;
26. welcome the fact that implementing sustainable environmental policies has been set as one of the UfM's priorities and that some of the priority projects adopted involve developing cooperation in the field of renewable energies and sustainable development;
27. argue that investment in research and innovation in the field of renewable energy production will revive economic growth by ensuring global development in the whole Mediterranean region;
28. would point, however, to the inconsistency in environmental and sustainable development policies in the Mediterranean and propose that the countries of the UfM establish a common approach, with mutual goals and commitments, by setting up a "Mediterranean Alliance for the Climate and Sustainability" at an inter-state level;

29. welcome the fact that ministers at the Ministerial Conference held on 25 June 2009 on sustainable development projects emphasised the importance of the commitment of NGOs, civil society and research institutes in drawing up projects. They underline the importance of revisiting projects aiming to create a mechanism for monitoring Mediterranean Sea levels in order to mitigate the challenges of climate change;
30. hope that the forthcoming Copenhagen Summit will be successful and that its conclusions will have a positive impact on the Mediterranean region;

On demographic and cultural change in the Euromed region

31. emphasise that demographic and cultural changes have an impact on local, national and regional development in the Euro-Mediterranean region; they have a key impact on economies, the labour markets, the social fabric and cultural settings;
32. note that in the last fifty years, the partner countries have experienced a substantial rise in life expectancy; consequently call on governments and all other stakeholders to anticipate the serious problems likely to emerge in the future due to a major increase in the elderly population, in particular by setting up retirement and inter-generational solidarity schemes where they are lacking; point out, however, that equal account should be taken of the large proportion of young people in today's population, with a view to facilitating job creation on a massive scale as well as protecting them against all kind of exclusion;
33. state that civil society organisations and the social partners have a particularly important role to play in making the process of integrating immigrants into society more consistent and effective in order to ensure the respect of human rights. These organisations must also be involved in resolving problems arising from the return of migrant workers to their home countries;
34. note that convergence on the values of mutual respect that are part and parcel of the civilisations around the Mediterranean is needed to ensure closer cooperation between cultures, to achieve peace and stability, and to promote shared projects in the region;
35. consider that education and research are important instruments for strengthening intercultural dialogue and improving mutual understanding between cultures and countries in the Euromed region;
36. therefore support the UfM initiative to draw up a new Euro-Mediterranean strategy for culture, based on intercultural dialogue and cultural policy. In this respect, they welcome the setting up a group of experts in the cultural sphere, and suggest adding a group of civil society representatives;
37. support the activities of the Anna Lindh Foundation in the field of intercultural dialogue, and especially for young people;

On the 2010 work programme

38. decide that, for the 2010 Summit, the following themes will be addressed:

- a) Vocational training as a factor for competitiveness and job creation: priorities of the economic and social actors;
- b) Decent work and sustainable development around the Mediterranean focusing on fresh water, sea water and sanitation sectors;
- c) Follow up on the implementation of the recommendations of the Union for the Mediterranean Conference on strengthening the role of women in society.

39. decide that, for the 2011 Summit, the following themes will be addressed:

- d) Immigration and cooperation in the Euro-Mediterranean region (an interim report will be presented in 2010)
- e) Promotion of entrepreneurship, innovation and creativity in the Euromed region.

THE PARTICIPANTS OF THE EUROMED SUMMIT OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCILS AND SIMILAR INSTITUTIONS PROPOSE TO PRESENT THIS DECLARATION TO THE CONFERENCE OF FOREIGN MINISTERS, TO BE HELD IN ISTANBUL, TURKEY, ON 24 AND 25 NOVEMBER 2009.

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