



Union for the Mediterranean
Union pour la Méditerranée
الإتحاد من أجل المتوسط



European Economic and Social Committee

EUROMED SUMMIT OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCILS AND SIMILAR INSTITUTIONS

Barcelona, 11-12 November 2013

FINAL DECLARATION

1. The representatives of the Economic and Social Councils and similar institutions, together with economic and social players of the Euro-Mediterranean partner countries which do not have an ESC or similar institution, and representatives of certain associations and NGOs from the Euro-Mediterranean region, meeting in accordance with the mandate conferred by the Barcelona Declaration of 1995 and extended under the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), held their 2013 meeting at the Secretariat of the Union for the Mediterranean in Barcelona. The participants warmly thank the Secretariat of the Union for the Mediterranean and the Economic and Social Council of Spain for their hospitality and contribution to the success of the Summit.

On the political context:

The participants:

2. **condemn all forms of violence taking place in the Euro-Mediterranean region**, be they in the form of overt or covert state repression of civil society, religiously or ideologically motivated bloodshed, inter-ethnic and inter-tribal fighting or of outright military violence, and with regard to the latter strongly deplore the violence taking place in Syria of which the main victims are innocent civilians, including very often children, and urge the belligerents to commence transition talks;
3. commend the work being carried out by civil society and humanitarian organisations, as well as the media, in Syria and in neighbouring countries in the face of difficult circumstances, and in this regard urge the international community to support and provide further financial and material support to countries hosting Syrian refugees;
4. condemn the use of chemical weapons both against civilians and military objects, and demand full compliance with the decisions of the international community;

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5. **note with growing concern the infringement of basic rights in a growing number of countries in the region** and insist that all human rights violations in the region, which mostly target women must stop, and urge governments to implement full democratic transitions and to acknowledge the inalienability and indivisibility of the rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, including the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights set out in the related protocols and the regional protocols;
6. urge the political authorities and the international community to take all necessary actions to reach a just and lasting solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict on the basis of the relevant United Nations Resolutions.

On the opportunities and challenges facing civil society organisations in the Euro-Mediterranean region and the responsibilities of the political authorities in this regard:

The participants:

7. **note with satisfaction that new and independent civil society organisations continue to emerge and develop** in spite of difficult circumstances in many countries of the region, and support civil society's current own-initiative efforts to promote national dialogue with their governments and to consolidate political transitions;
8. **deplore the failure of certain governments to guarantee basic freedoms**, including freedom of assembly, association and expression, as well as their attempts to obstruct the work of independent civil society organisations, including socio-professional organisations such as trade unions and employers' organisations; call upon governments to promote social dialogue as a tool for good governance in public policies;
9. believe that the EU needs to be more vigorous in requiring the implementation of clauses on the protection of fundamental freedoms and individual rights;
10. **recognise the key role that Economic and Social Councils and similar organisations can play in establishing dialogue and seeking consensus** amongst civil society organisations and in society in general and call on the governments of the countries of the south to set up and recognise official ESCs or similar organisations;
11. emphasise the importance of capacity-building for civil society players and developing cooperation between them and the political authorities.

On the state of play and perspectives for the creation of Economic and Social Councils:

The participants:

12. **draw attention to the *Charter for Euromed Economic and Social Councils adopted at the 2012 Euromed Summit of ESCs and similar institutions*** in Amman, which is the main reference for the creation and consolidation of ESCs in the Euro-Mediterranean region;
13. take note of the inclusion of environmental questions in the remit of the Economic, Social and Environmental Council of Morocco, and take note of the work accomplished at the request of the King on the new model of development for the southern provinces;
14. welcome the proposal to set up a Palestinian ESC and insist that the future ESC should include all major Palestinian civil society stakeholders;
15. take note of the work of the Israeli Economic and Social Council and call on the Israeli authorities to formally recognise its consultative status within the state;
16. take note of the activities of the National Economic and Social Council of Algeria and in particular its work in giving a hearing to civil society, as requested by the President of the Republic, and of the creation of an Institute for Sustainable Development linked to the United Nations University and responsible for implementing the academic aspects of the post-2015 Agenda objectives;
17. take note of the ESC of Mauritania's activities and fully support its efforts to enhance its consultative role vis-à-vis the government;
18. take note of the work of the Jordanian ESC throughout last year, to which they give their full support;
19. encourage Egypt to create an ESC and call for the revival of the ESC of Lebanon and the reactivation of the ESC of Tunisia.

On the UfM and its involvement of civil society:

20. **welcome the UfM's willingness to involve the ESCs and economic and social players more closely in its activities.** These actors are encouraged, with the support of the UfM, to participate more actively in identifying, implementing and monitoring UfM projects with a view to ensuring their success and fostering a feeling of ownership among the general public. The possibility of a more structured and regular contribution by the ESCs to ministerial conferences is also sought;
21. underline the full willingness of the Euromed network of Economic and Social Councils and Similar Institutions to facilitate this process and to cooperate closely with the UfM secretariat.

On the macroeconomic policy and the youth employment challenge in the north and south of the Euro-Mediterranean region:

The participants:

22. underline that macro-economic development is a priority for the north and south of the Mediterranean region. Such development must include the social and environmental dimensions, and depends foremost on sound political and economic governance that necessarily involves all relevant economic and social stakeholders of civil society;
23. emphasise that trade agreements between the EU and the south must contribute to sustainable development and job creation; they must be geared to both sides' real, current interests and include mechanisms for the civil society monitoring and involvement; civil society must also be kept informed and able to contribute to the process of negotiating these agreements;
24. **stress that efforts on trade agreements need to be coupled with the fostering of a culture of creativity**, including support for R&D in innovative technologies and the development of ICT-related infrastructure, as well as larger flows of direct inward investment than exist currently;
25. **stress that the cornerstone of the economic partnership must be the creation of jobs for large numbers of young people on both sides of the Mediterranean**. In the southern countries around 58% of the population is under the age of 30 and 18 million new jobs need to be created within the next 10 years;
26. underline, in view of the fact that in most economies 90% of businesses are SMEs and they provide the bulk of new jobs, that **entrepreneurship and SME support programmes should form a key plank** of the employment strategy; underline that trade agreements between the EU and the countries of the south must be flanked by specific provisions supporting SMEs;
27. emphasise that the promotion of entrepreneurship should aim to remove the obstacles in the path of business development, particularly access to finance and information;
28. welcome existing resources for Mediterranean cooperation such as the Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs Programme but insist that these programmes should be drawn into a more comprehensive entrepreneurial strategy under the guidance of the UfM, and that one of the first steps of a new strategy should be to adapt the Euro-Mediterranean Charter for Enterprise to take account of the Small Business Act of 2008;
29. draw attention to the fact that particularly in rural areas and regions that are less attractive to inward investment, **the social economy can also provide ways of developing entrepreneurship and generating productive activity, while facilitating social cohesion**;

30. note, however, that promoting entrepreneurship and self-employment, whilst a key component of the economic partnership, is not a panacea for the regions' economic woes and that **workers' skills must be better matched with the needs of the labour market** through the combined efforts of the government, the private sector and trade unions. From this point of view, lifelong learning needs to be encouraged;
31. emphasise that these key players need to ensure that their skill-matching and labour market entry strategies combine preventive and corrective measures, particularly with respect to early school leaving, improve the funding resources earmarked for training and its quality, adapt the training available to economic needs, promote career guidance services, provide job placement schemes for young people and ensure on-the-job training and skills development. They support the work of the European Training Foundation (ETF) in this regard and call for greater support for the reform of vocational training and vocational education policies;
32. welcome the UfM's regional 'MED4JOBS' initiative which aims to increase the employability of young people and women, close the gap between labour demand and supply, and foster a culture of entrepreneurship and private sector development.

On the situation of women in the Euro-Mediterranean region, in particular their economic and social situation:

The participants:

33. **express great concern about the deterioration of women's rights in several countries in the region**, including those that up until recently had comparatively high rights standards in the region, and deplore the failure or outright rejection of governments to ratify and implement in full the CEDAW protecting women and children against violence; support the various processes under way at the United Nations with the aim of promoting the status of women, in particular as part of the post-2015 process;
34. welcome the UfM Ministerial Conference on Women held in Paris on 12 September 2013 and endorse the Final Declaration of the Paris conference. They nevertheless point to the major inconsistency between the wording of the declaration and the policies conducted by certain governments in the region, and draw attention to the fact that, in spite of the increasing violations of women's rights and the deteriorating situation of women, national governments in the north and south have until now failed to take adequate action to support women and to implement the previous ministerial declarations of Istanbul and Marrakesh. International players such as the EU should step up their support for the implementation of these declarations and carry out the relevant monitoring;
35. believe that civil society monitoring of the situation of women remains an essential means to exert pressure on countries in the region;
36. **in this regard, commend the courage and consistency of efforts by women's civil society organisations** to safeguard their rights in the face of defamatory campaigns and legal moves

by some governments, and of pressures exerted by certain religious movements, that seek to block their activities and severely reduce women's participation in public life;

37. **draw attention to the fact that the level of involvement of women in economic life in the Euro-Mediterranean region is still the lowest across the globe** with less than 25% of women in work in 2009, mostly in the public sector, and likewise draw attention to the need to have reliable and up-to-date statistics on women's situation at national and regional level;
38. emphasise the importance of guaranteeing equal access to education for girls and women, of tackling the disparities between the skills women are taught and the skills they need in the work place and of significantly improving the access to education of girls and women in rural areas;
39. **call on governments, with the support of the ILO, to foster a safe and accommodating working environment for women by putting in place measures to tackle harassment and discrimination.** They also call for facilities for child care and other dependent persons to be put in place and for entitlement to maternity leave and a decent pension to be established. They also call on professional associations and other non-government organisations to promote women's membership of governing bodies;
40. draw particular attention to the difficulties women face in setting up viable businesses in their countries and call on the governments of the countries concerned and on the EU to promote women's entrepreneurship;
41. **fully support the UfM Secretariat in its efforts to promote projects in support of women,** in particular those that empower women economically and foster an integrated approach to gender issues, and call on the UfM Secretariat to use its March 2014 conference on the subject to communicate the solutions found to the above-mentioned problems and to involve civil society in it projects wherever possible.

On the need to manage water resources more sustainably for the future:

The participants:

42. **emphasise that water is a human right and call for urgent action to improve the population's access** to water;
43. draw attention to the fact that water is the key resource problem in the Euro-Mediterranean region, with 60% of the world's 'water poor' living in this region, and that the scale of the problem is growing rapidly;
44. **point out that water scarcity and the resulting political, social and economic tensions are likely to worsen** with further demographic growth in the southern and eastern parts of the Mediterranean, the development of tourism, industry, and agriculture and the unquestionable

impact of climate change, and insist therefore that a multi-disciplinary, cross-sector approach to water management is needed;

45. stress that, at the political level, **an integrated water cooperation strategy under the auspices of the UfM is needed** in order to avoid 'beggar thy neighbour' policies and point out that **the Euro-Mediterranean region needs a common policy on water** that could help to establish a fair distribution strategy for water in the Mediterranean which could include economic and other sanctions to penalise breaches;
46. advocate dialogue between countries sharing borders in order to ensure fair access to water resources, in compliance with the provisions of the United Nations Security Council and in keeping with the fundamental right to this resource;
47. voice their support for and solidarity with the concerns of the countries bordering on Syria in terms of supporting and receiving refugees with regard to their access to water;
48. highlight that the increased demand in water cannot be met simply through increased supply from existing resources, and that therefore governments should prioritise **improved water efficiency**, with a 30% reduction in water wastage in the region as their target;
49. emphasise, at the same time, that efforts need to be made to boost supply from renewable resources, such as desalination, and **call for further funds to be made available for research into new water generating technologies**, including for application at local level;
50. call therefore on governments both nationally and regionally through the Union for the Mediterranean, to make improved water efficiency a priority policy objective, in particular in agriculture where there is weak irrigation efficiency and to make more funds available for research into new water generating technologies;
51. welcome the UfM approved initiative on 'Overcoming Governance challenges to the mobilization of financing for the Mediterranean water sector' and the recent efforts that have been made to harmonise the indicators which countries and regional institutions use to follow up policies and actions for more integrated water management across borders;
52. call for training and social and health protection to be put in place for personnel involved in carrying out public and private duties relating to the exercise of the fundamental right of access to water;
53. support cooperation between the countries around the Mediterranean basin on projects that reflect the concerns of civil society and entail its full involvement;
54. **emphasise that full civil society and local authority involvement in all efforts in the water management and conservation domain is essential** in order to make sure that regional and national water policies are implemented in the most efficient way and that they

meet all population groups' and local needs. Against this backdrop, they call upon the UfM to set up a structured dialogue with civil society on water issues.

On facilitating mobility and managing migration in the in the Euro-Mediterranean region

The participants:

55. **deplore all loss of life in and around the Mediterranean** resulting from migrants' desperate attempts to enter the EU, such as the recent tragedy at Lampedusa, condemn human traffickers' exploitation of migrants and expect them to be subject to severe penalties, and insist that trafficked migrants must be treated with the utmost respect for human rights;
56. **regret the EU Member States' failure to act decisively on the issue of immigration** and insist that due to the issues' transnational nature the adoption of an effective common EU immigration policy is needed and the pressure on front-line states must be relieved by means of a comprehensive approach to the issue, especially concerning the health and administrative aspects;
57. **underline that, as part of a renewed mandate, Frontex should have increased autonomy and funding** with a mandate to integrate, in a way that respects rights, the different aspects of EU maritime policy such as police, port surveillance, customs, trade, fishing in order to facilitate the coordination of joint European operations, but insist that Frontex should remain under the scrutiny of the European Parliament;
58. call for a coherent policy of south-south and north-south mobility across the region that involves civil society and takes into account all the political, economic, social and cultural factors relating to migration, including individual countries' needs and constraints, as well as respect for migrant workers' rights as defined by ILO conventions, Nos 97 and 143 in particular;
59. **urge the EU to flesh out its migration and mobility agreements with third countries.** A comprehensive cooperation framework with third countries is needed coupled with appropriate funding to tackle issues of security, organised crime and irregular migration;
60. stress the importance of boosting the social and economic development of many Mediterranean and African partner countries, which may in turn reduce the complexity and intensity of migration flows from countries of origin to southern EU countries and also towards certain southern partner countries;
61. insist that the future prosperity of Mediterranean region depends not only on the exchange of goods and services, but also on the free movement of people, skills and know-how, and that such exchanges need to be fostered more though enhanced mobility partnerships that benefit all parties;

62. **condemn, in this context, the rising intolerance, racism and xenophobia against immigrants in Europe** and call on EU governments and civil society organisations to act in support of better integration of migrants in the EU.

On the TRESMED 4 programme:

The participants:

63. highlight the positive results obtained by the TRESMED 4 project and urge the EU to renew the project, ensuring closer involvement of partner ESCs in designing and developing the project.

On the 2014 work programme:

The participants:

64. have confirmed that at the 2014 Summit the following theme, adopted in 2012, will be addressed:
- a) Fighting poverty and social exclusion in the Euromed region.
65. underline that additional themes to be addressed at the 2014 summit will be decided before the end of 2013.
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