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**COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE COUNCIL AND THE
EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT**

**on the preparation of the Lisbon Euro-Mediterranean Foreign Affairs Conference
(5-6 November 2007)**

**The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership: Advancing Regional Cooperation to support
peace, progress and inter-cultural dialogue**

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The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership: Advancing Regional Cooperation to support peace, progress and inter-cultural dialogue

1. Despite the enduring conflict in the Middle East, the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership has evolved steadily and overseen considerable achievements since 1995. After almost twelve years the Barcelona Process has developed into a comprehensive and encompassing regional partnership. Common institutions and networks like the Anna Lindh Foundation for the dialogue between cultures, the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly, the FEMISE (network of economic research institutes) and EuroMesco (network of political science institutes) constitute significant assets of a partnership of 37 partner countries with more than 700 million citizens. However, in the political and security dialogue, regional conflicts still remain an impediment to comprehensive progress in multilateral cooperation.
2. On its establishment, the Euro-Mediterranean Free Trade Area will be one of the world's largest free trade areas. The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership is a key feature in the European Union's external relations with neighbouring countries. All Mediterranean Partners consider the Barcelona Process to be the cornerstone of their collective relations with the EU. (Annex II summarises some of the more significant achievements of the Barcelona Process since its inception).
3. In November 2005 the Barcelona Summit reaffirmed the objectives of the 1995 Barcelona Declaration and adopted a 5-year work programme and a code of conduct on countering terrorism. In November 2006, at the Euro-Mediterranean Conference of Ministers of Foreign Affairs held in Tampere, Euro-Mediterranean partners agreed a document of common conclusions and adopted a work programme for 2007. This was very much based on the proposals put forward in the Commission communication issued on 25 October 2006. The objective of the present communication is to prepare the next ministerial meeting under the Portuguese Presidency, review the progress made in the implementation of the work programme agreed in Tampere, and put forward proposals for 2008.
4. The Commission welcomes recent initiatives on reinforcing relations with our Mediterranean Partners. Proposals concerning the creation of a Mediterranean Union have the potential to mobilise renewed political will in Europe and in the South of the Mediterranean for a stronger partnership between Europe and the Southern Mediterranean. The next Euro-Mediterranean Foreign Affairs Conference will be an excellent opportunity to discuss how this initiative can be articulated and work in synergy with the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and the European Neighbourhood Policy. For the Commission it is essential that the European Union and the European institutions are fully involved in this collective effort.

5. 2007 has been an active year in the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership. The work done in the three chapters (political dialogue, economic cooperation and the cultural and human dimension) of cooperation has been remarkable. At the Tampere Ministerial Meeting partners agreed on 21 concrete initiatives (see Annex III), most of which have already been implemented or will be carried out before the end of 2007. Since the adoption of the Tampere conclusions, the bilateral policy dialogue conducted within the framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy has continued to contribute to fostering progress towards regional cooperation in many areas. Annex I summarizes the activities of the Partnership since the last Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial conference held in Tampere and the work done in the main areas of the Euro-Mediterranean cooperation.

PROPOSALS AND OBJECTIVES FOR 2008

6. 2008 will be an important year for the implementation of the priorities established at the Barcelona Summit. Substantial progress is expected in the implementation of a number of initiatives adopted in previous years, especially the implementation of 'Horizon 2020' initiative on the de-pollution of the Mediterranean, as well as further actions in the programme adopted at the ministerial meeting on the role of women in society. Also in 2008, Euro-Med partners will launch five major initiatives to strengthen the partnership and to extend it to other areas. These initiatives are:
- The holding of a Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Meeting on culture;
 - The holding of the first Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Meeting on employment and social affairs;
 - The first Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Meeting on tourism.
 - The Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Meeting on health.
 - The launching of a partnership between the Commission and Mediterranean country administrations to foster secondment and exchange of officials and trainees.
7. In addition to these initiatives, the partnership will continue its work in other areas of relevance, such as
- information society, with the holding of the second Euro-Med Ministers Conference in this field,
 - the holding of the annual FEMIP conference,
 - the 4th Euro-Mediterranean ECOFIN Ministerial conference
 - the Trade Ministers meetings, and
 - the conference on Industrial cooperation.

- towards the end of 2008 there will take place the meeting of Foreign Affairs Ministers.

New initiatives

Enhancing the Anna Lindh Foundation and promoting intercultural dialogue

8. A Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Meeting on culture and cultural dialogue in 2008 will be an important event that is intended to allow partners to set out political guidelines for the future activities of the Foundation. The Commission proposes to give particular visibility to this meeting with events in Euro-Mediterranean partner countries to promote intercultural dialogue and diversity and to raise the profile of the Anna Lindh Foundation as a bridge between Euro-Mediterranean cultures, religions and beliefs. A Euro-Mediterranean ministerial meeting on cultural dialogue will be in line with the objectives of the decision by the European Parliament and the European Council to designate 2008 as the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue (Decision of 18 December 2006). In synergy with this, the Commission proposes that Ministers in Lisbon declare 2008 as the Euro-Mediterranean year of Inter-cultural dialogue.
9. The Anna Lindh Foundation for the dialogue between cultures was officially inaugurated in April 2005 in Alexandria. After an initial period of work during which the Foundation has established itself as the common Euro-Mediterranean institution dedicated to cultural dialogue, partners will consolidate the institution by approving new statutes and appointing a new leadership to be in place from April 2008.
10. Audiovisual, Cinema as well as promotion of the cultural heritage are excellent vehicles for intercultural dialogue between the Mediterranean countries and Europe. On the basis of the results of the Euromed Audiovisual programmes and with the help of European and Mediterranean experts, a new strategy to enhance the Mediterranean audiovisual sector will be proposed at the Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial meeting on Culture in 2008. In addition, a new Heritage Programme will be launched which is centred on the appropriation of the cultural heritage by the local population as well as on access to knowledge of the cultural heritage.

A new partnership on tourism

11. Tourism is one of the major economic sectors in the Mediterranean. In 2005, more than 50 million tourist arrivals were registered in Mediterranean partner countries, and, in most countries, between 50% and 80% of the arrivals were from EU Member States. The EU and Mediterranean partner countries agreed to hold a ministerial meeting to be held in Morocco in response to the initiative from Morocco, Portugal and Slovenia. The Commission fully supports this initiative.

Developing a more systematic approach to cooperation in the field of employment

12. Employment creation and the modernisation of labour markets are among the most pressing challenges for the Euro-Mediterranean partner countries. Despite considerable national differences, all partners need to adapt to globalisation and to a rapidly changing economic environment. The Euro-Med meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs at Tampere "welcomed the proposal to hold in 2007 a Euro-Med

workshop on employment policy and on practical measures to enhance employability of job seekers and create decent employment opportunities". The workshop will "pave the way for a Euro-Med Ministerial Conference on Employment to be held in 2008", and will bring together government representatives, social partners, and international organizations.

13. The preparatory workshop for the Euro-Med Employment Ministerial Conference should contribute to: (a) Better understanding of the challenges for labour markets and employment policies in the context of globalisation and demographic change, and (b) Taking advantage of the opportunities offered by the exchange of experiences and best practices among the 37 partners. The Ministerial Conference on Employment to be held in the second half of 2008 should envisage concrete initiatives and proposals to promote employment creation, the modernization of labour markets, and decent work. The gender dimension of employment policies should be a horizontal thematic priority of the Ministerial Conference and of its preparatory workshop. The objective would be to develop the social dimension of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership through a more systematic approach to cooperation, in line with the Barcelona Summit objectives. Social partners in the Euro-Mediterranean region should be involved in the preparation of the conference, possibly through the seminar on economic employment and economic change in spring 2008.

Towards enhanced cooperation on health issues

14. The conclusions of the Tampere Euro-Med Foreign Affairs Ministers Conference invited competent authorities to hold a Euro-Med workshop in 2007 on surveillance and control of communicable diseases. The workshop will lead to a senior officials meeting as a further preparatory step towards a Euro-Med Ministers Conference on Health.

Enhancing the partnership building measures

15. Euro-Med partners, in a document that aims at improving the working methods of the Euro-Med Partnership, are considering the possibility of inviting seconded officials from the Med partners to support the work of the Council Secretariat. The European Commission has a long experience of exchanging officials with EU Member States and with other institutions. National seconded officials from EU Member States make a positive contribution to the human resources expertise of the Commission. As a complementary partnership building measure, the Commission is offering to establish a partnership between the Commission and Mediterranean partner country administrations in the exchange of professional experience. The offer from the Commission would include the secondment and exchange of officials and trainees.

CONTINUATION AND CONSOLIDATION OF EXISTING AREAS OF WORK

Political and security dialogue

16. The Commission is a strong supporter of political dialogue at Euro-Med regional level. The Euro-Mediterranean partnership is the only forum within which all

Mediterranean partners exchange views and engage in a constructive dialogue in spite of the persisting conflict in the Middle East and in other parts of the region. Political dialogue has become a regular item on the agenda of the Euro-Med senior officials meetings. The Commission welcomes the proposal made in relation to the improvement of working methods that, whenever necessary, the senior officials shall act as an early response mechanism to propose the holding of ad hoc Foreign Ministers conferences in response to developments in the region. For its part, the Council has decided to offer the Mediterranean (ENP) partners the possibility of aligning themselves, on a case-by-case basis, with EU declarations, and positions on CFSP issues.

17. The Commission is convinced that the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly (EMPA) is a major asset of the Partnership. The EMPA allows political representatives to discuss their points of view on the regional situation, the evolution of the Barcelona Process and the prospects of the European Neighbourhood Policy as regards the Mediterranean. The Commission will lend its full support to Greece, as the next Presidency of the EMPA, for a successful Assembly in 2008. The Commission will also support the work of the EMPA committees in the run-up to the 2008 Euro-Med Parliamentary Assembly.
18. The Commission is confident that the useful discussions on the subject of elections at the Euro-Med senior officials meetings in 2007 can be continued at experts' level. The holding of a seminar at experts' level should enable partners to engage in a more technical exchange of views in order to envisage practical cooperation in this area between willing partners.

Code of Conduct on countering terrorism

19. The Commission believes it is of paramount importance to further deepen practical steps to implement the jointly agreed Code of Conduct on countering terrorism. It therefore proposes to concentrate efforts for 2008 on technical issues such as reinforcing the international co-operation in criminal matters and enhancing maritime security measures including cargo transport units. The Commission suggests the holding of a regional Euromed workshop on each of these topics with the participation of relevant international bodies, agencies and experts.

Towards a Euro-Mediterranean system of civil protection

20. The rising trend in vulnerability to natural and manmade disasters in many parts of the Mediterranean confirms the need for greater safety and security measures to be in place to the benefit of its citizens. The Commission has over the past years funded the EUROMED Pilot Project (1998-2003) and the EUROMED Bridge Programme for the Development of a Euromed system for the reduction, prevention and management of natural and man-made disasters (2005-2008) to strengthen and build up capacity of civil protection agencies in Mediterranean partner countries. The Commission will continue to support this highly pertinent initiative with a new phase (2008-2010, EUROMED Programme of Prevention, Reduction and management of natural and manmade Disasters) that should benefit from improved strategic approach and the recommendations put forward in the Mid-Term evaluation of the Bridge Programme.

Ongoing work in services and agricultural trade

21. Negotiations on services and the right of establishment have seen interest and commitment expressed by most negotiating partners. Following the Lisbon meeting of Trade Ministers on 22 October, where discussions at regional level are due to be finalised, the Commission will launch bilateral negotiations with a number of willing Mediterranean partners. These negotiations on bilateral services and investment will start at the beginning of 2008 and be concluded within a timeframe that should deliver substantial liberalisation of services and establishment by 2010.

Negotiations on trade liberalization in agriculture, processed agricultural products and fisheries are progressing between Egypt, Israel and Morocco. Tunisia undertook to open negotiations before the end of 2007. Negotiations were concluded between the Commission and Jordan in 2005 and resulted in a high level of mutual liberalization. Discussions are also being held on bilateral agreements on mutual recognition and protection of geographical indications for agricultural products.

Fisheries

22. Cooperation between the Community and Mediterranean partners for the sustainable management of fisheries resources in the Mediterranean will be intensified, in particular within the relevant regional bodies (General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean and International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas), in line with the Declaration of the Ministerial Conference for the Sustainable Development of Fishery in the Mediterranean held in Venice (November 2003).

Maritime policy

23. The European Commission adopted the Communication on an Integrated Maritime Policy for the European Union on 10 of October 2007. In this context, the Commission identifies the Mediterranean as a key region in respect of cooperation towards resource management and maritime governance on account of the common responsibility over the seas, which Europe shares with its closest neighbours. The European Neighbourhood Policy provides a framework where this cooperation can be effectively promoted to ensure coherence between EU action internally and action undertaken by our neighbours. Priority areas should be discussed with our Mediterranean partners, and the Commission will seek to launch this dialogue at Ministerial level (cf. under section 6).

Energy and transport

24. The conclusions of the Marrakech Ministerial conference as well as the Communication "Guidelines for transport in Wider Europe", recognises that the establishment of an integrated, safe and efficient transport system in the Mediterranean area is key for the development of stability of the region and an increase in interregional trade. To take forward the implementation of such a system, it is proposed to hold a high level conference (end of 2007 or beginning 2008) on transport which will focus on two main points: presentation of the Regional Transport Action Plan and steps towards implementation of its actions and the extension of the trans-European transport network to Mediterranean region.

25. The Experts' Group established within the Euromed Energy Forum will meet in Brussels on 16 October 2007 to have a discussion on the "Priority Action Programme for Euro-Mediterranean Energy Cooperation" for the forthcoming period. A Euromed Energy Ministerial meeting will take place in late 2007 or early 2008 to adopt this priority programme.

Horizon 2020

26. Horizon 2020 relating to the de-pollution of the Mediterranean will continue to implement the measures agreed under the timetable of actions approved at the third Euro-Mediterranean meeting of Environment Ministers in Cairo and put forward by the first meeting of the Steering Committee in June 2007. The European Environment Agency will coordinate with relevant partners to design a coherent indicator process and a framework for regular indicator-based analyses, including a "scorecard" to compare and measure progress. Appropriate follow-up to the EIB work will be organised to identify bankable projects of regional significance.
27. During the 2008 French Presidency of the European Union, a Euro-Mediterranean ministerial meeting is to be held on the subject of water. This conference will be taking place almost ten years after the Euro-Mediterranean ministerial conference on local water management held in Turin in 1999 and five years after the launching of the Mediterranean component of the EU Water Initiative. It is due to address major policy issues related to water resources management, protection and services.

Industrial Cooperation

28. The next Euro-Mediterranean ministerial meeting on Industrial Cooperation is scheduled for October 2008. The meeting will take stock of progress achieved so far and define a work programme on industrial cooperation for 2009-2010.
29. As regards policies related to the Information Society, it is foreseen to focus on the promotion of an open and competitive digital economy through a regulatory environment for electronic communications that is conducive to innovation, investment and competition. The cooperation scheme would include the development of online services to improve social inclusion, public services such as education, health, transports and quality of life. Moreover the participation of Mediterranean countries to the ICT part of the 7th Framework Programme would be increased with projects of common interest. Recently two projects focusing on the mapping of ICT excellence in the Mediterranean Partner Countries have been launched (MED-IST and MAP-IT). It is also expected that EUMEDCONNECT, one of the EUMEDIS projects, could be extended in the near future. EUROMEDCONNECT has ensured the connection of research networks in the Mediterranean area and permitted to use it as research infrastructure for common Information Society projects of the EU Member States and the Mediterranean countries. All these new initiatives will be discussed during the Second Euromed Ministerial Conference on the Information Society organised in Egypt first part of year 2008.

Ongoing work on statistics cooperation

30. Reliable statistics are an important factor in decision making and technical assistance to the statistical services in the Mediterranean partner countries is being provided

through the MEDSTAT II programme. This is focused on improving statistics in a number of key areas: Agriculture, Energy, Environment, External Trade, Migration, National Accounts, Social (especially employment), Tourism and Transport, as well as general training in statistics. The programme will run until the end of 2008. In 2008, it will be necessary to explore available mechanisms to allow continued support for the development of the statistical capacity of the countries beyond that date, particularly in areas not treated so far, for example, services, health.

Migration

31. On 19 November 2007 Euro-Med partners will meet for the first time at ministerial level to hold a comprehensive, integrated and balanced discussion on the issues related to migration. The upcoming Euro-Med ministerial meeting on migration will be a good opportunity to underline the added value of the regional cooperation framework, while stressing the need for continued progress by all Partners to achieve the strategic goal of optimising the social and economic benefits of migration for countries of origin, transit and destination. New initiatives by the EU to facilitate the management of legal migration could be highly relevant for Mediterranean Partners, for example the focus on circular migration or the concept of mobility partnerships.

Towards a Euro-Mediterranean Higher Education and research Area

32. To take forward the objectives of the 2007 Cairo Ministerial Conference on Higher Education and Scientific Research, the work of the Monitoring Committee for Euro-Mediterranean Cooperation in RTD (MOCO) will be complemented with the creation of an expert group to cover higher education.. The Commission considers that the most relevant issues for the expert group are the introduction and implementation of structural reforms in Mediterranean Partner countries structured around the three main areas identified at the EU level, namely curricular changes including those foreseen by the Bologna process, governance and funding. The expert group will report to the Euromed Committee, not later than the second semester of 2008. The Commission suggests that the first reporting exercise should focus in particular on the contribution to the overall objective of approximation of the Euromed Higher Education systems with relevance to the Bologna process and the ECTS system.

The MOCO will be involved in the INCO-NET project activities foreseen in 2008 (in which all MOCO members are involved). INCO-NET type activities will be instrumental in deepening common and regional priorities, intensifying awareness, capacity building and the functioning of the MOCO

The action plan on the role of women in society

33. The Euro-Mediterranean Committee is due to convene a Euro-Med ad hoc meeting at senior expert level to review the implementation of the measures agreed at the Istanbul Ministerial meeting on the role of women in society in the three areas of work identified: women's political and civil rights; women's social and economic rights and sustainable development; and women's rights in the cultural sphere and the role of communications and the mass media.

Euro-Med and the Media initiative

34. Various activities in the media sector (training of young journalists, TV and radio programmes in local languages, press supplements, opinion research polling and surveys, etc...) will help to enhance the visibility of the Euromed Partnership in the Mediterranean region as well as will contribute to a mutual understanding of the people of the two shores of the Mediterranean, thanks to the Information and Communication programme.
35. The Euro-med and the Media Task Force will reconvene to explore ways of consolidating the media's voice and role in the Partnership. They will also advise on practical proposals to deal with the various problems raised during the different media conferences and seminars. There will be a follow-up to the Dublin conference on 'Reporting Terrorism', and a large regional conference will be held on regional media development.