

# The Euro-Mediterranean Community of Democratic States

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The recent 10th anniversary of the 1995 Barcelona Conference that launched the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP) was the backdrop to a series of assessments of the state of relations between the two sides of the Mediterranean. Considering the high ambitions set by partner governments in 1995, most of the assessments seemed to converge on the idea that so far the EMP has neither been able to fulfil its objectives, nor to gain a strong visibility outside governmental and diplomatic circles.

However, part of the assessments have also concluded that no better framework for addressing demands of the public north and south has been created since and, therefore, the EMP should be reviewed in light of the changes that have occurred at the regional and international level since 1995 and be given a stronger impetus. In other words, the partners need to clarify the purpose of their common endeavour and justify its relevance, while at the same time stating new and ambitious objectives.

The EuroMeSCo network of Euro-Mediterranean foreign policy institutes published in April 2005 its own report (*Barcelona Plus: Towards a Euro-Mediterranean Community of Democratic States*, April 2005) assessing the Partnership ten years after its inception and putting forward a number of proposals for its reform. The drafting of the report aimed to reflect the nature of EuroMeSCo and in that sense resulted of a number of contributions from experts

north and south of the Mediterranean. The various experts were asked to prepare short papers with an assessment and proposals for their respective area of expertise, while the final text was drafted by a team at the Institute for Strategic and International Studies in Lisbon, headed by Álvaro de Vasconcelos.

The key proposal that emerges from the EuroMeSCo Report is that of the *Euro-Mediterranean Community of Democratic States*. This article presents the various aspects related with the concept, as well as its implications for a renewed EMP. The basic argument is that not only is the proposal for a Community of Democratic States helpful in clarifying the central aims of the Partnership, it is also crucial for providing the latter with a concrete objective that will ensure its relevance in the future.

## The Principles of a Euro-Mediterranean Community

The starting point for forging a Euro-Mediterranean Community of Democratic States can be found in the Barcelona Declaration agreed by Euro-Mediterranean Partners 10 years ago. In spite of important changes in and around the region – the deterioration of the situation in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the 11th September 2001 terrorist attacks, the US-led war on Iraq, but also the launching of the European Neighbourhood Policy initiative – the core principles of the Declaration are still valid today and should in fact be seen as the basis for the Community of Democratic States.

The Declaration set a clear objective of creating a regional group, mainly through the establishment by 2010 of a free tra-

de area. The latter, however, is a means to an end: the expansion to the south of the integration model developed in Europe over the past 50 years, which basically consists of a system of interdependence that promotes peace and security through economic integration. The European integration model is visible in various aspects of the Declaration: its structure of three, mutually reinforcing baskets that provides the holistic approach of the Partnership; the direct reference to a security culture which rejects power-politics in inter-state relations and hence the resolution of conflicts through the use of force or the promotion of diversity by recognising the role of civil societies in multilateral issues. Most importantly, however, is the fact that in Barcelona the parties committed to 'develop the rule of law and democracy in their political systems'. A superficial assessment of the political development in the Mediterranean over the past 10 years shows that progress towards democracy has fallen short of expectations. In any case, the existence of such a commitment in the founding document of the EMP reveals its democratic and integrative nature.

At the same time, the commitment to democracy, as well as to the rule of law and the respect for fundamental rights and liberties, correspond to what the EuroMeSCo report described as the *potential acquis* of the EMP. It is an *acquis* because it includes a body of rights and obligations, but it is still only a potential one, because contrary to the *acquis communautaire* that candidates to EU membership need to fulfil prior to accession, the conditions for its full realisation are not yet in place. The creation of the Euro-Mediterranean Community of Democratic States

would, therefore, be the practical expression of a collective will to transform the *potential acquis* into a concrete one.

### The Five Pillars of the Euro-Mediterranean Community

If the Euro-Mediterranean Community is supposed to be an affirmation of the Barcelona *acquis*, then governments must be very clear about *two key issues*:

*First*, the new and more complex focus on democracy must be strongly underlined, not just as the central element of the process, but also as the guarantor of the credibility of the project for both northern and southern publics. More concretely, this new emphasis on political reform and democracy should take advantage of an international environment that has brought these issues to the front of the agenda. Therefore, the EMP's ability to integrate such concerns in its own gradual and consensual approach to democratic inclusion would be one of the main features of the Euro-Mediterranean Community.

*Second*, when presenting the goal of the Community of Democratic States, governments must give very clear indications of what southern partners will gain from engaging in democratic reforms: a stake in the Single Market and its four freedoms, including the freedom of circulation. This clarification would also establish a clear link between the Barcelona Process and the objectives of the European Neighbourhood Policy. In other words, the EMP would incorporate the arrangements and methods of the Neighbourhood Policy and adapt them to its multilateral framework.

The priority areas for the Euro-Mediterranean Community of Democratic States correspond to those domains which the EuroMeSCo Report identified as having a stronger potential for promoting north-south, but also south-south integration. The so-called 'five pillars' of the Euro-Mediterranean Community are the following:

1. Democracy: The promotion of political reform with the participation of all

the relevant actors (including civil society) should be the main pillar of the Community, the pre-condition for progress in the other areas. To fulfil this objective, the EMP should make use of existing commitments to democracy, good governance, rule of law and human rights, already contained in the Neighbourhood Policy Action Plans or in the Association Agreements. Putting those commitments into practice is the logic consequence of the principles of the Barcelona Declaration and should, therefore, bring the debate on political reform in the Mediterranean and the Middle East squarely into the EMP agenda. Because of its centrality for the Euro-Mediterranean Community, the debate should be as wide as possible and address issues such as the relationship between good governance and freedom and the role of political Islam as a component of democratic governance. A refusal to address such issues, as well as to allow the participation in EMP initiatives of civil society actors or the systematic violation of human rights commitments would constitute serious obstacles for partners to move towards the Community goal.

2. Inclusion within diversity: The principle is an alternative to the much-disseminated concept of a 'dialogue of civilisations'. While promoting the ideals of tolerance and mutual understanding, the latter results from a *Weltanschauung* that establishes a fundamental religious divide between different civilisations. Instead, the Euro-Mediterranean Community should promote an approach that sees the 'other' as not intrinsically different but rather intrinsically similar. The notion of 'hospitality' transcends the civilisation boundaries and thus is more adequate for a project of a regional community based on the respect for cultural and religious diversity. To promote it, cultural pluralism should be put at the centre of cooperation within the Euro-Mediterranean Community. In practice, this means funding artistic initiatives based on their intrinsic artistic quality. It also implies providing more funding for cooperation in the field of higher education, for example

through the promotion of exchange programmes and the establishment of universities' networks. Facilitation of access to the internet and other information infrastructures would also provide an important impetus to mutual identification and knowledge amongst peoples.

3. Migration: The movement of people across the Mediterranean was always a central concern of the Partnership, as demonstrated by the Barcelona Declaration in 1995. At the time, the issue was approached essentially from a security perspective and reflected the widespread concern of northern governments with the consequences of migration pressures from the south. Since then, practical initiatives (outside the framework of the EMP) have shown the potential of migrants as contributors to the development of their countries of origin, but the general trend has been to view migration and refugee issues as security problems that indirectly legitimates anti-immigrant rhetoric in the EU.

A securitarian approach to migrations is incompatible with the notion of a Euro-Mediterranean Community, as well as with that of a single market where people circulate freely. A radical shift from the original Barcelona agenda is thus needed and the partners should start by recognising the importance of migrants as a driving force for integration, as well as for the promotion of democracy and social justice in their countries of origin. Practical steps that can be taken include the support to non-governmental immigrant associations or the improvement of visa regimes in Europe, especially for businessmen, students and tourists.

4. Citizen security: When evolving towards a Euro-Mediterranean Community, the EMP must be able to develop a concept of security that is compatible with its basic values. This implies avoiding a simplistic linkage between internal and external security or, even worse, expand the concept to a point that embraces every social question. At the same time, however, the Euro-Mediterranean Community of Democratic States should be able to deal with real secu-

riety problems that persist within and around the region. To avoid an all-embracing concept of security, governments should make sure that the protection of the individuals is the central concern of EMP security initiatives, since civilians are clearly the preferred target of violence in the Mediterranean. Promoting 'citizen security' requires a careful balance between security and justice and the reinforcement of the rule of law, which should continue to be supported by

specific programmes. It should also include the progressive convergence towards a common ground on security issues, through the involvement of southern partners in the existing European frameworks for security and defence issues, namely those of the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP). Finally, the identification of areas of mutual interest for practical cooperation can function as an effective confidence-building measure. Pilot initiatives have already

been developed in the field of civil protection and should be extended to areas such as humanitarian aid, mines clearance and maritime safety.

5. Social solidarity and cohesion: The objective set in 1995 of establishing by 2010 a Euro-Mediterranean Free Trade Area (FTA) has an enormous potential for economic growth, but it also carries significant dangers for social cohesion in southern countries. If the EMP aims to promote inclusion, then it cannot ignore the

## SECOND MEETING OF THE FORUM FOR THE FUTURE

Manama, capital of Bahrain, was the venue for the second meeting of the Forum for the Future which took place on 11th and 12th November, 2005. The initiative was born within the framework of "The Partnership for Progress and a Common Future with the Region of the Broader Middle East and North Africa (BMENA)" in June 2004 (summit of the G8 at Sea Island in the presence of the Heads of State of the aforesaid region) and in accordance with the document entitled "G8 Plan of Support for Reform". The Forum was conceived as a joint initiative between the member states of the G8 and of the BMENA region, to develop reforms at an economic, social and political level in the zone, in accordance with the principles of the Declarations of Alexandria (12th-14th March, 2004) and of Tunis (23rd May, 2004). It also represents an opportunity for government agents, civil society and the public sector to deal with fundamental issues such as the promotion of democracy or economic growth in the Middle East, following the plan proposed by President Bush for the Broader Middle East.

The first meeting was held in Rabat in December 2004. Its main objective was the discussion of proposals presented by the countries of the region and the approval of certain initiatives for development in the following months. Among the questions discussed in the first meeting, which served as a take-off point for further work in 2005, were the following: Democracy Assistance Dialogue (DAD), which provides opportunities for communication between governments and civil society; the Literacy Plan, under which a meeting of Education Ministers was organized in 2005; international finance; an Enterprise Initiative to aid companies; micro-finance provided with the principal aim of making it possible to work jointly with the

Consultative Group to Assist the Poor (CGAP); and investment with the aim of creating an Investment Task Force to focus on investment and collaboration with governments of the region and the countries of the OECD.

### New developments arising from the 2005 Forum for the Future

The 2005 Forum opened on 12th November, three days after the terrorist attack in Amman, Jordan. During their speeches at the meeting, ministers and other participants did not fail to forcefully condemn all terrorism and to reaffirm their will to co-operate in promoting the true image of Islam and its message of tolerance. In the final document of the meeting, reference was made to other international events concerning the region in 2005, such as the disengagement from Gaza, whilst also encouraging the parties involved to respect international resolutions; the elections in Iraq in January 2005, without forgetting to emphasise the necessity of preserving its territorial integrity, independence and sovereignty; and finally, the tragedy of the earthquake in Pakistan, for which an appeal was launched to increase donations by planning an International Donors' Conference in Islamabad on 19 November.

As far as the direct mission of the Forum and its proposals were concerned, the brand new initiative for 2005 was the decision to pay greater attention to dialogue with civil society and its organisations, followed by the creation of two new institutions. This arose from the consideration that reforms in the region must follow the particular characteristics of each country. Above all, for this to be possible, these need to begin within the societies concerned. The 2005 Forum was also characterised by the setting up of specific targeted initiatives, relating to the Democracy Assistance Dialogue (DAD),

the Enterprise Initiative and the Literacy Plan. More precisely:

- **DAD:** the participants agreed to continue to work for the ratification and implementation of the UN Convention against Corruption and to promote transparency in public financial management in order to support the realisation of the Millennium Development Goals. Delegations also showed approval for working toward these objectives with groups from civil society in order to jointly choose a legal framework of action. Particular attention was given to the situation of women, with the proposal to monitor respect for the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in those countries which have ratified it. Within the DAD framework, the most targeted and concrete initiative was the creation of the Foundation for the Future\*, aimed at groups from civil society in general. This foundation, which will be probably based in Qatar from 2006 onwards, will be aimed at giving technical assistance to NGOs, academic institutions and professional associations working in the field of promotion of democratic reforms and civic awareness.
- **Literacy:** Whilst welcoming the decisions taken at the Summit of Education Ministers (Jordan, May 2005; the next being planned for Egypt in 2006) aimed at promoting access to education and improvement of teaching quality, the Forum decided upon the creation of an Education Task Force within the framework of the partnership, for the monitoring of initiatives and action concerning education. As well as this, Jordan, Japan, Egypt and Germany offered their support in the field of professional training.

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▪ **Enterprise Initiative:** Bahrain and Morocco made themselves available for the establishment of Regional Centres for Entrepreneurs, which aim to train 5,000 young people. But surely the most remarkable initiative in this area was the creation of a *Fund for the Future*<sup>\*\*</sup>, modelled on the fund established by the United States in the countries of central and eastern Europe in the 1990s. This Fund for the Future (with an initial capital of \$100 million) plans to give technical and financial assistance to Small and Medium Enterprises throughout the whole region to promote economic growth and to combat unemployment. The Fund will begin its activities in Morocco and Egypt (who contributed \$20 million each).

This year's proceedings, like those of last year, did not fail to arouse mistrust and scepticism,

mainly in the press and public opinion in the Arab world.

The Forum's participants finally decided to arrange the third meeting for 2006 in Jordan, during the Russian presidency of the G-8.

#### **Countries taking part in the Forum for the Future:**

Qatar invited the following countries:

**BMENA Region:** Afghanistan, Algeria, The Arab League, Morocco, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Oman, Pakistan, the Palestinian Authority, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates, Yemen and Sudan.

**G-8:** Canada, the European Commission, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, the United Kingdom, the United States.

**Partners:** The Netherlands, Turkey.

**Organisations:** Asian Development Bank,

International Finance Corporation, International Monetary Fund, World Bank.

#### **Further information:**

- Alexandria Declaration: [www.arabreformforum.org/en/Files/Document.pdf](http://www.arabreformforum.org/en/Files/Document.pdf)
- Tunis Declaration: [www.arabsummit.tn/fr/declaration\\_tunis.htm](http://www.arabsummit.tn/fr/declaration_tunis.htm)
- Partnership for Progress and a Common Future with the Region of the Broader Middle East and North Africa (BMENA) (U.S Department of State): [www.bmena.state.gov](http://www.bmena.state.gov), [www.usinfo.state.gov/mena/Archive/2005/Jul/20-955247.html](http://www.usinfo.state.gov/mena/Archive/2005/Jul/20-955247.html)
- Site of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Bahrain, Forum for the Future 2005: [www.mofa.gov.bh/FutureForum/e/index.asp](http://www.mofa.gov.bh/FutureForum/e/index.asp)
- Site of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Kingdom of Morocco, Forum for the Future 2004: [www.maec.gov.ma/future/en/index.htm](http://www.maec.gov.ma/future/en/index.htm)

\* The countries which support the Foundation financially are: Bahrain, Denmark, the European Commission, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Morocco, Jordan, The Netherlands, Spain, Switzerland, Turkey, Qatar, Yemen, the United Kingdom and the United States.

\*\* The countries which support the Fund financially are: Egypt, Morocco, Denmark, the United States and Bahrain.

negative effects of the implementation of the FTA. To counter such effects, funds should be allocated for the mitigation of adjustment costs, on the basis of progress with political reform. Moreover, the Partnership's holistic approach must guarantee that economic, social and political reform are handled in a coherent manner, which implies the rejection of the notion that economic development necessarily leads to political and administrative reform. Assessments of the political and economic situation of southern partners in the past ten years show that the link does not exist and that economic change can actually heighten social disparities.

### **Making the Euro-Mediterranean Community Work**

The success of the Euro-Mediterranean Community of Democratic States depends to a large extent on the partner's capacity to stick to commitments made and having the necessary tools to ensure that those commitments are met.

The EuroMeSCo Report identifies three aspects which may prove crucial if the

Community is adopted as the overarching goal of the EMP.

*First*, the project must be based on a 'fixed dates' model that has been used in the past in the European Union, for instance in the case of the Single Market or the Single Currency. Fixing a date for the beginning of the Community – for instance 2015, five years after the date set for the Free Trade Area – not only makes the end result more palpable, it helps in setting the pace for reforms that partner states will have to undergo. Such a clear-cut schedule must be accompanied by the regular monitoring of progress, with indicators and benchmarks defined and assessed annually by the Euro-Mediterranean ministerial conference. In a certain way, this is already the logic of the Neighbourhood Policy and of the 2002 Valencia Action Plan, but now integrated in a single process and with a stronger emphasis on the fact that goals and benchmarks are jointly defined.

*Second*, the issue of ownership and co-responsibility must be seriously addressed by the partners. This issue has been repeatedly raised over the past 10 years by the southern part-

ners who accuse the EU of setting the agenda according to the national interests of its member states. Attempts to address this structural asymmetry have stopped short of satisfactory solutions, even if in the past few years the sense of appropriation of the Barcelona Process by southern partners has become stronger.

Therefore, for the Euro-Mediterranean Community to work, a restructuring of the EMP institutional mechanisms that allows southern partners to be more actively engaged in the administration of the process must be undertaken.

The EuroMeSCo report does not propose the creation of a Euro-Mediterranean Secretariat (as it would represent an extra bureaucratic burden and add to the already existing institutional complexity), but suggests the set up of a *Pro-Med Unit* with individuals from the southern partners working alongside the Commission and the Council Secretariat on Euro-Mediterranean issues.

As for the co-ordination of the Community of Democratic States, a co-presidency system could be envisaged, ensuring an equitable representation of all partners. Decision-making should also be arranged in a way that avoids

constant blockades, either through the establishment of a system of reinforced qualified majority voting or via the adoption of a 'consensus-minus-one' principle (whereby one country cannot stop remaining partners from reacting when it breaches certain obligations).

*Third*, partners must reassess current visibility strategies to ensure that Euro-Mediterranean integration is known outside political and diplomatic circles.

However, this goal is not attainable through the allocation of more funds for disseminating information about what the EMP does, but rather by ensuring that the latter's agenda addresses the real concerns and needs of the people of the Euro-Mediterranean region, as well as by the consistent involvement of the public more directly. It requires a two-step approach to the management of the Partnership: first, identifying the issues; second, making sure that infor-

mation reaches all of those directly and indirectly engaged by the EMP.

In summary, initiatives that stem from the Partnership should in the future be clearly branded as such; specific programmes should not be implemented exclusively by the bureaucracies; and the activities of EMP-related networks should be put to better use, for instance through the establishment of a 'network of networks'.