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EURO-MEDITERRANEAN CONFERENCE OF MINISTERS FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS

(Brussels, 5 and 6 November 2001)

PRESIDENCY CONCLUSIONS

1. The Euro-Mediterranean Conference of Ministers for Foreign Affairs held in Brussels on 5 and 6 November 2001 showed in the new international context the attachment of all the partners to the Barcelona Process as a vital and preferred framework for dialogue and cooperation between the European Union and the countries of the southern and eastern shores of the Mediterranean.
2. The Ministers reiterated their utter condemnation of the terrorist attacks committed in the United States on 11 September 2001. In this connection they expressed their total condemnation of terrorism everywhere in the world and their solidarity with the peoples who are the victims thereof. They regard these acts as an attack against the entire international community, against all its members, all religions and all cultures together. The Ministers formally rejected as both dangerous and unfounded any equating of terrorism with the Arab and Muslim world. In this connection the importance of the Barcelona Process as a relevant and recognised instrument for promoting a dialogue of equals between cultures and civilisations was emphasised by all. The Ministers agreed to work on deepening the existing dialogue between cultures and civilisations, focusing on youth, education and the media.
3. The Ministers examined together the present international situation, including its economic effects, which represents both a challenge and an opportunity. They reaffirmed their determination to play their full part in a coordinated manner in the coalition against terrorism under the aegis of the United Nations. They considered that terrorism constitutes a threat and a scourge which they condemn in every shape and form and against which they declared themselves firmly resolved to fight in unison. Terrorism as a global phenomenon must be combated in a spirit of solidarity. The need to address the underlying causes of terrorism was emphasised.

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4. The Ministers welcomed the adoption of Resolution 1373 (2001) of the United Nations Security Council aimed at eliminating all forms of support for terrorists and pledged rapidly to take the measures needed to implement it. Furthermore, they undertook to do everything possible, both bilaterally and multilaterally, to press ahead with the signing, ratification and implementation by their Member States of all the United Nations Conventions, in particular that of December 1999 for the suppression of the financing of terrorism. They also pledged to work together in all the relevant international fora to expand this global framework. The Ministers encouraged efforts to speed up the negotiations in the United Nations with the aim of drafting a general Convention against terrorism which should lead to a universal reference framework for the numerous international legal instruments.
5. Pointing out that the integration of all countries into a fair global system of prosperity and development should help to strengthen the stability of the international community, the Euro-Mediterranean partners reiterated their attachment to the objectives spelt out in the three chapters of the Barcelona Declaration and to a balanced treatment of those three chapters. In this context they noted with interest the conclusions of the Mediterranean Forum which took place in Agadir (Morocco) on 25 and 26 October 2001.

Contribution of the Partnership to stability in the Mediterranean region

6. The Ministers discussed the latest developments in the Middle East. They expressed their deep concern at the continually worsening situation which involves serious risks for regional stability. They deplore the loss of human lives and the suffering inflicted on the civilian populations by the violence.
7. Wanting to go beyond declarations, the Ministers strongly urge all the parties concerned to resume immediately, without any prerequisites or conditions, negotiations with a view to applying the recommendations contained in the MITCHELL Report and the TENET Plan and to satisfying the legitimate rights and expectations of the peoples of the region for a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East, which must be achieved on the basis of a faithful application of United Nations Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338, of the principles of the Madrid Conference - including the principle of land for peace – and of the agreements concluded in Oslo and thereafter, agreements which had previously made it possible to register tangible results on the ground and substantial progress in the earlier negotiations.
8. The Ministers stressed that negotiations should lead:
 - for the Palestinians, to the establishment of an independent, viable and democratic state and an end to the occupation of their territories;
 - for the Israelis, to live in peace and safety within internationally recognised borders.

The quest for peace must include all aspects, and in particular a just solution to the matter of refugees.

9. The Presidency noted the generally favourable reception of the idea put forward by Ministers of a third party monitoring mechanism agreed by both sides that would help them to overcome their differences and the obstacles they are encountering in their efforts to achieve reconciliation.
10. In conclusion of the debate, the Presidency calls upon the Israeli authorities to complete immediately withdrawal of their forces from areas under exclusive Palestinian administration (referred to as areas A). It calls upon the Palestinian Authority to arrest and bring to justice those responsible for acts of violence against Israel. It urges both sides to bring an end to violence.
11. The Ministers also said they were very conscious of the fact that the search for a comprehensive and lasting peace in the region assumes that discussions will be restarted at the earliest opportunity on the Israeli-Syrian and Israeli-Lebanese tracks, the resolution of which should be based on the principles set out earlier.

Political and security chapter

12. The Ministers noted the efforts made since the Marseilles Conference to pursue and deepen, without waiting for the adoption of the Euro-Mediterranean Charter for Peace and Stability, the political dialogue with the aim of deepening the Partnership. The dialogue covered the specific areas of common interest such as the fight against terrorism, migration and human exchanges, conflict prevention and human rights. They also noted the exchanges of information that have taken place on regional developments relating to security. With regard to the Charter, the Ministers repeated the particular importance they attach to this project, which should play a very useful role in accompanying the confidence-building and reinforcing stability in the region, notably with a view to the post-peace process. They confirmed the mandate given in Marseilles to the Senior Officials to continue and complete their work on the adoption of the Charter for Peace and Stability as soon as the situation allows.
13. The Ministers expressed their satisfaction with the holding, on 22 October, of a further meeting of Senior Officials on migration and human exchanges preceded by two meetings of experts on 13 June. They instructed the Senior Officials to continue and deepen the dialogue on this sensitive topic which should, moreover, also form an integral part of a regional programme in the third chapter to be agreed by the 27 partners.
14. The Ministers welcomed the continuation of the political dialogue, especially with regard to human rights, by means of national and regional presentations making it possible to improve awareness and hence mutual understanding of partners' reference systems. They regarded this exercise as a first stage and undertook to deepen the dialogue on this sensitive subject with a view to increasing its effectiveness.

15. The Ministers confirmed the instructions to the Senior Officials to identify Partnership measures gradually, while consolidating those already in force, with the aim of strengthening good-neighbourly relations on a regional or sub-regional basis. They recommended to the Senior Officials to continue their efforts to extend the dialogue to other topics, such as regional trends as regards security, disarmament and the process of consolidating the rule of law, and any other topic that might prove useful in the new international context. The Ministers welcomed in particular the progress made within the Partnership with regard to a system for preventing, alleviating the effects of and managing disasters. They invited the Senior Officials to examine ways of better structuring their political dialogue in a spirit of Partnership.
16. The Ministers asked the Senior Officials to continue their dialogue on terrorism matters by organising a third ad hoc meeting which should be held as quickly as possible.

Economic and financial Partnership

17. The Ministers took note that, in accordance with the conclusions adopted in Marseilles, the Euro-Mediterranean Committee held a first meeting on a strengthened economic dialogue on 19 October 2001 when it was possible to identify macro-economic issues of common interest. They decided to discuss the link between growth and employment as a matter of priority at the level of Senior Officials responsible for such policies. A meeting will accordingly be held in the first half of 2002. The other questions identified included public finances, fiscal and administrative reform and the functioning of markets. The Ministers agreed that, as part of the reinforced economic dialogue, an assessment should be made of the possible economic consequences of the events of 11 September.
18. The Ministers referred to the importance of private foreign investment to guarantee in particular stable growth in the region. In this connection they welcomed the launching of a regional programme for a network of national agencies responsible for promoting investment with a view to promoting and upgrading investments in the Mediterranean partner countries. They noted that the European Investment Bank is also in the process of implementing with the financial backing of the MEDA programme a regional programme to support venture capital. They called for an examination of any new initiatives which could be taken to improve the attractiveness of the region for foreign direct investment with a view to the next ministerial conference in Valencia in April 2002.
19. The Ministers took note with satisfaction of the first Euro-Mediterranean meeting of the Ministers for Trade in Brussels on 29 May 2001. At that meeting two working groups were set up: one, which has already met twice, deals with rules of origin and is responsible for examining the procedures to be implemented to integrate the Mediterranean countries into the pan-European cumulation system. The other group deals with services and the right of establishment with a view to achieving a higher degree of liberalisation and will meet in December. A second meeting of the Ministers for Trade will take place in Toledo on 19 March 2002.

20. On the subject of the environment, the Ministers welcomed the fact that the second Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on the Environment was to be organised in Athens in July 2002. This Conference will provide an opportunity to give a fresh impetus to the framework programme of short - and medium - term priority actions on the environment adopted in Helsinki in November 1997. There will also be an opportunity to develop a strategy for better integration of environmental protection into national policies and to organise more efficient coordination and consistency between the various international environmental fora.

21. The Ministers emphasised:

- the positive signal given by the signing of the Association Agreement with Egypt in Luxembourg on 26 June 2001,
- the prospect of being able to swiftly complete current negotiations with Lebanon and Algeria, if possible even before the end of the year, and the progress achieved in negotiations with Syria,
- the call to accelerate ratification procedures for the agreements already signed,
- the need to make progress in South-South trade and towards regional integration. On this point, the Agadir Declaration of May 2001 announcing the establishment of a free-trade area between Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt and Jordan was regarded as a very positive element and the European Union confirmed its political support for the process and its readiness to provide technical assistance based on its own experience for the implementation of this process,
- the launching of the programme for creating the Euro-Mediterranean economic area with a view to facilitating the approximation of the administrative and regulatory framework of Euro-Mediterranean markets on the basis of experience with the Single Market. In this context they welcomed the next meeting of the Euro-Mediterranean Ministers for Industry in Malaga on 9 and 10 April 2002,
- their satisfaction with implementation of the EUMEDIS programme on the information society,
- the importance of developing regional infrastructures, in particular with the establishing of networks and administrative and legislative frameworks in the fields of transport, energy and telecommunications and of the protection of the environment . The important role of the EIB in these areas, was emphasised.

22. Regarding financial cooperation, the Ministers expressed their satisfaction at the progress made this year in the new procedures for implementing MEDA. They encouraged all the parties concerned to continue these efforts. In 2000, allocations amounted to EUR 879 million in commitment appropriations and EUR 335 million in payment appropriations. With regard to the EIB, commitments reached close on EUR 1,3 billion. They noted several positive aspects of implementation of this financial cooperation: improved on-the-spot coordination thanks to new mechanisms between the EU and the Mediterranean countries and with the other international donors, creation of the EuropeAid Office, beginning of the deconcentrating of the implementation of assistance and a more concentrated and more strategic approach to financial assistance.

Social, cultural and human Partnership

23. The Ministers reiterated the importance and uniqueness of this chapter and the need to combat all forms of racism and any cultural or religious prejudices or stereotyping which may occur. The Ministers agreed to continue working on the "Dialogue of cultures and civilisations" in the Euro-Mediterranean Committee, focusing more especially on youth, education and the media.
24. The Ministers took note of the Greek initiative for a dialogue between religions and for the promotion of peace and mutual understanding through sport and the Olympic Truce.
25. The Ministers took note of a Presidency report on the progress of discussions by the Euro-Mediterranean Committee on migration, judicial co-operation and the fight against organised crime and terrorism. They stressed the importance of launching a regional programme on common problems, the resolution of which is so important in developing the fundamental values on which the Partnership is based. They considered that these discussions were encouraging since they enabled some progress to be made. The Ministers requested the Euro-Mediterranean Committee to already reach agreement in a spirit of Partnership and within a global approach on a framework document, if possible for the Barcelona V meeting.
26. The Ministers heard a report from the Belgian Deputy Prime Minister and Employment Minister, Mrs Onkelinx, on the work of the "Forum on the role of women in economic development" (Brussels, 14 July 2001). They endorsed the conclusions of that Forum, which highlighted the need to promote the role of women in economic life in a way consistent with religious and cultural values. More specifically, action should be taken to improve the access and participation of women in the labour market and in business (e.g. by facilitating their access to financial instruments). Moreover, it was recommended that the principles of equal opportunities for men and women should be taken into account in all aspects of the Partnership. The Ministers confirmed that national programmes should take account of the social impact of economic transition. Although the social dimension is present in all chapters of the Partnership, the Ministers recommended implementing specific actions aimed at the least favoured and most vulnerable groups. In this context and given the high percentage of the population which is young, the Ministers recommended the preparation of a regional cooperation programme for education and vocational training, including the arrangements for setting up a Euro-Mediterranean Observatory on Employment and Training.
27. Regarding current programmes on cultural and social matters, the Ministers took note of the progress made and more especially the launching of the second phase of the Euromed Heritage programme at the beginning of 2001. The second phase of the Euromed Audiovisual programme will be carried out as soon as activities so far have been evaluated. Finally, concerning the Euromed Youth programme, the Ministers stressed its increased importance for combating prejudices and stereotypes and agreed to continue the programme for another three years.

28. In order to strengthen the visibility of the Partnership, the Ministers decided to launch a regional information and communication programme in 2002.

29. The Ministers stressed the input of civil society into all aspects of the Partnership. In particular, they noted the conclusions of the Civil Forum that took place on 19 and 20 October in Brussels where three topics were discussed: peace and conflict prevention, migration and movement of people and cultural exchanges. The Ministers urged the protagonists in civil society to organise themselves to respond better to the terms of reference of the regional programmes.

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