

Common Strategy of the European Council on the Mediterranean Region*

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THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL,

Having regard to the Treaty on European Union, in particular Article 13(2) thereof,
HAS ADOPTED THIS COMMON STRATEGY:

PART I

VISION OF THE EU FOR THE MEDITERRANEAN REGION

1. The Mediterranean region is of strategic importance to the EU. A prosperous, democratic, stable and secure region, with an open perspective towards Europe, is in the best interests of the EU and Europe as a whole.

2. The Mediterranean region continues to be faced with political, economic, judicial, ecological and social challenges. If these complex and diverse challenges are to be overcome, the EU and the Mediterranean partners must work together with a common vision, sensitivity and mutual respect.

* Versão on line:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/euromed/common_strategy_med_en.pdf

3. The EU's Mediterranean policy is guided by the principle of partnership, a partnership which should be actively supported by both sides. The EU will work with its Mediterranean partners to: develop good neighbourly relations; improve prosperity; eliminate poverty; promote and protect all human rights and fundamental freedoms, democracy, good governance and the rule of law; promote cultural and religious tolerance, and develop cooperation with civil society, including NGOs. It will do so by supporting the efforts of the Mediterranean partners to attain the goals set out by the Euro-Mediterranean partnership, by using its bilateral relations to pursue these objectives, and by contributing to the creation of a peaceful environment in the Middle East.

4. This Common Strategy builds on the Euro-Mediterranean partnership established by the Barcelona Declaration and its subsequent *acquis*, the Berlin Declaration and the European Union's long-standing policy towards the Mediterranean with its bilateral and regional components.

5. The EU is convinced that the successful conclusion of the Middle East Peace Process on all its tracks, and the resolution of other conflicts in the region, are important prerequisites for peace and stability in the Mediterranean. Given its interests in the region and its close and long-standing ties with its constituent countries, the Union aspires to play its full part in bringing about stability and development in the Middle East. The cooperation that has already been initiated in the framework of the Barcelona Process is a determining factor in laying the foundations for after peace has been achieved. The Union will therefore support the efforts of the parties to implement the peace agreements. In this regard the adoption of the Euro-Mediterranean Charter for Peace and Stability, an objective which predates the adoption of this strategy, should be a deciding factor in the post-conflict process in the Mediterranean.

6. Bearing in mind the vital importance of the Mediterranean region to the EU, and with a view to further strengthening its Mediterranean dimension, the European Council adopts this Common Strategy. It covers all the EU's relations with all its partners in the Barcelona Process, and with Libya. But it does not include the EU's bilateral relations with those Mediterranean countries which are candidates for EU membership, since those relations are covered by the Accession Process. While the European Union will continue to play its full role in the Middle East Peace Process according to its *acquis* including the Berlin Declaration, this Common Strategy will cover the EU's contribution to the consolidation of peace in the Middle East once a comprehensive peace settlement has been achieved.

PART II
OBJECTIVES

7. The European Union has the following goals in its policy towards the Mediterranean region:

- to make significant and measurable progress towards achieving the objectives of the Barcelona Declaration and its subsequent *acquis*, i.e.:
- to establish a common area of peace and stability through a political and security partnership,
- to create an area of shared prosperity through an economic and financial partnership,
- to establish a partnership in social, cultural and human affairs: developing human resources, promoting understanding between cultures and exchanges between civil societies,
- to promote the core values embraced by the EU and its Member States, including human rights, democracy, good governance, transparency and the rule of law,
- to encourage and assist Mediterranean partners with the process of achieving free trade with the EU and among themselves in the terms of the Barcelona Declaration, economic transition and attracting increased investment to the region,
- to strengthen cooperation in the field of justice and home affairs, as outlined by the Tampere European Council,
- to pursue, in order to fight intolerance, racism and xenophobia, the dialogue between cultures and civilisations.

8. As far as security matters are concerned, the EU intends to make use of the evolving common European policy on security and defence to consider how to strengthen, together with its Mediterranean Partners, cooperative security in the region.

9. The Union has already played an active role in the past in the efforts to establish a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East and to bring about stability and development in the region. It regards the cooperation that has already been initiated in the framework of the Barcelona Process as a determining factor in providing a foundation on which to build once peace has been achieved. Within the framework of this Common Strategy, and taking its paragraph 6 into account, the European Union sets itself as objectives:

- to promote conditions which will help the parties implement agreements concluded among themselves,

- to develop the basis for normal good-neighbourly relations and encourage the parties to engage in regional cooperation,
- to contribute to the consolidation of peace in the region, including economic integration and mutual understanding between civil societies.

10. To increase the effectiveness, impact and visibility of EU actions and initiatives in the region, the following general objectives will be pursued:

- to enhance coordination, coherence and complementarity and ensure synergies between the different existing regional and subregional activities, instruments and interventions of the EU and its Member States,
- to ensure complementarity of the EU's Mediterranean policy with EU policies concerning other partners. (...)

PART III

AREAS OF ACTION AND SPECIFIC INITIATIVES

(...) *Political and security aspects*

13. The EU will strengthen the political and security-related dialogue with its Mediterranean partners at all levels: bilaterally with individual Mediterranean partners; in the Barcelona framework, including the Euro-Mediterranean Charter for Peace and Stability after its entry into force; and in other multilateral contexts:

- to identify common ground on security issues aiming at establishing a common area of peace and stability,
- to elaborate partnership-building measures, notably by promoting regular consultations and exchanges of information with its Mediterranean partners,
- to provide timely and appropriate information on initiatives that could be of concern to other Mediterranean partners,
- to reinforce cooperation against global challenges to security, such as terrorism, organised crime and drug trafficking,
- to cooperate on possible arrangements for conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation including the encouragement of the peaceful settlement of conflicts and disputes, including by judicial means,
- to explore possibilities to address problems of antipersonnel landmines in the Mediterranean region through cooperation in mine action, including mine clearance,

mine awareness and victim assistance, with a view to promoting the objectives of the Ottawa Convention,

- to promote the signature and ratification by Mediterranean partners of all non-proliferation instruments, including the NPT, CWC, BWC and CTBT,
- to pursue a mutually and effectively verifiable Middle East zone free of weapons of mass-destruction, nuclear, chemical and biological, and their delivery systems. In this context, the EU will take into account further developments of the common European security and defence policy.

Democracy, human rights and the rule of law

14. In the framework of the Barcelona Process and in its bilateral relations with Mediterranean partners, the EU will:

- actively promote the strengthening of democratic institutions and the rule of law, in particular through political dialogue and support for judicial reform, institution building, and freedom of expression, notably through the strengthening of the independent media,
- support and encourage efforts to promote good governance,
- stress the importance of promoting and protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms for all including by support for governmental and nongovernmental actors in the region through human rights training monitoring, advocacy and awarenessraising,
- in the context of the UN Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, urge accession to international human rights instruments including full implementation of civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion,
- take measures to persuade all Mediterranean partners to abolish the death penalty in accordance with agreed EU guidelines.

Peace in the Middle East

15. The EU will, taking paragraph 6 of this Common Strategy into account,

- provide its expertise, submit ideas and make available its good offices and assistance to the core parties of the Peace Process in order to facilitate the conclusion of peace agreements and help prepare the 'post peace era' in the Middle East,

- actively promote progress on the multilateral track of the Peace Process drawing also on synergies with the Barcelona Process. With regard to central issues such as water and refugees, the EU will offer its expertise whenever requested,
- in the context of a comprehensive settlement, and on request by the core parties, give consideration to the participation of Member States in the implementation of security arrangements on the ground,
- contribute to the international commitment needed to implement and consolidate peace in the Middle East, notably through support to regional economic cooperation and integration and the expansion of trade flows,
- work towards strengthening stability in the Middle East by means of cooperative security through its contributions to the implementation of the Euro-Mediterranean Charter for Peace and Stability once it is adopted and has entered into force. (...)

(...) *Justice and home affairs*

22. Building on the *acquis* of the Barcelona Process and further to the conclusions of the European Council in Tampere, the EU will:

- act in accordance with the Geneva Refugee Convention and other relevant instruments, and promote full compliance by the Mediterranean partners,
- study the simplification and acceleration of visa issue procedures,
- promote the identification of correspondences between legal systems of different inspirations in order to resolve civil law problems relating to individuals laws of succession and family law, including divorce,
- promote transparency and greater predictability of legal systems in the partners in order to encourage foreign investment, and to encourage lawful migrants to pursue activities in favour of co-development with their countries of origin,
- ensure that the rules of transfer of profits are liberalised and find solutions avoiding double taxation, particularly for lawful migrants and those with dual nationality,
- develop effective cooperation mechanisms to fight against illegal immigration networks, including trafficking in human beings, *inter alia*, through the establishment of readmission arrangements relating to own and third country nationals as well as persons without nationality,
- enter into dialogues with a view to setting up modern and effective border control systems, offering, *inter alia*, access to training programmes and exchanges of officials,

- work with Mediterranean partners to address the question of migration, taking into full consideration the economic, social and cultural realities faced by partner countries. Such an approach would require combating poverty, improving living conditions and job opportunities, preventing conflicts, consolidating democratic states and ensuring respect for human rights,
- develop a common approach to ensure the integration into society of Mediterranean partners' nationals who have been lawfully resident in a Member State for a certain period of time and hold a long-term residence permit, aiming at approximating their legal status in that Member State to that enjoyed by EU citizens,
- exchange information and statistics with the Mediterranean partners on migration flows.

23. The EU will develop further its cooperation with Mediterranean partners to combat organised crime, including drug trafficking and money laundering, in particular through:

- assistance in training for members of the judiciary and law enforcement authorities with an emphasis on information on the Union's *acquis* in the field of organised crime,
- offering collaboration with Mediterranean partners to develop the necessary legal, institutional and judicial framework for the effective prosecution of these offences, and to develop cooperation mechanisms to combat cross-border crime.

The EU will continue to encourage Mediterranean partners to adhere to the UN's international conventions on terrorism, and to follow the principle that the fight against terrorism must be firmly based on the principles of international law and the respect for human rights.

(...)