

EMS Network

Euro-Med Seminars Newsletter



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www.euromed-seminars.org.mt

■ The Hazy Concept of the Mediterranean Union

By Prof. Bichara KHADER

The first time the idea of a Mediterranean Union was floated, was in Toulon, on the 7th of February 2007, in a speech by the presidential candidate, Nicolas Sarkozy. Since his electoral victory, in May 2007, Sarkozy reiterated his unwavering will to push forward the idea of Union and get it off the ground, as a core issue of France's Foreign Policy. In a major speech in the Moroccan city of Tanger, in October 2007, President Sarkozy spelled out the nature of this "Union", seen as a "Union of projects" and invited the heads of state and government of countries around the Mediterranean to a summit scheduled to take place in July 2008 in Paris.

France's MU would concentrate on common projects carried out by the participating states. These projects are related to environment, energy, infrastructure, security, migration and other issues of common concern. The MU is seen as a bridge between Europe and Africa. It is supposed to set the framework for an enhanced political and cultural dialogue and to create a stable environment conducive to shared prosperity.

What spurred the French President to develop this idea of MU? Skipping through his speeches and the declarations of his close advisers, one can single out three main concerns:

1. **The marginalization of the Mediterranean space in the world economy:** Its share in total world trade does not exceed 4 %, it attracts low levels of Foreign Direct Investments (less than 3 %), it has the lowest rate of intra-regional trade (less than 1 %), it devotes scarce resources to Research and Development (less than 1% of GDP) and is afflicted by high percentage of illiteracy and poverty.
2. **The inadequacy of the EU's Mediterranean Policies:** the Barcelona Process, in spite of some achievements in terms of trade barriers' reduction and slow reforms has not been totally satisfactory: a Free trade Area (which was the objective set

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Prof. Bichara KHADER
Catholic University of Louvain
Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium

for 2012) is not within reach since human resources and agricultural products are not allowed to move freely in both directions. While the political and security dimension has remained dormant for lack of progress in solving the pending conflicts. As for the cultural dialogue, it largely suffered from Gulf wars and terrorist attacks.

The Neighbourhood Policy has done little to correct the imbalances to shore up regional integration, and to offer a common vision for the future.

3. **The relegation of France to the back stage:** its historical link to the Mediterranean has been diluted and its foreign policy eclipsed by European policies or by American activism in the region.

These concerns prompted the idea of the MU. Indeed they are real concerns. So, why then this idea of MU has provoked such uproar in many quarters?

— On the European side, the EU felt that it has not been consulted, that the project duplicates European initiatives, does not offer any added-value, that it casts some shadow on the efficiency and coherence of its own policies, that it adds confusion to the already existing initiatives (EMP, ENP, 5+5, Forum of the Mediterranean, Nato-Mediterranean dialogue, Istanbul Initiative etc.), and finally, that many issues to be dealt with in the framework of the MU relate to EU's "*domaine de competence*".

— On the Mediterranean side, feelings are mixed and oscillate between enthusiasm (Israel), reluctance (Mashreq countries), lip-service acceptance by the Maghreb countries, or outright opposition by Turkey. For Israel, it is seen as another opportunity to normalize relations before reconciliation. The Arab Mashreq would prefer European active diplomacy to assist in solving the protracted conflicts, because they believe that before sharing the dividends of regional integration, conflict resolution is a priority. For Turkey, the MU is looked upon as a trick to shelve Turkish application for membership and so for the Turks the MU is a no-starter.

In recent months, Sarkozy's special ambassador for the MU, Alain Le Roy has endeavoured to assuage the fears of the European Union, to appease the Turks and to answer the questions raised by the Arab states. More emphasis is therefore put on the necessity of "associating the European Union" thus avoiding to convey the impression that the MU is a substitute to EMP or ENP. A decoupling between Sarkozy's project and the Turkish application has been clearly indicated: the MU will not be a "prize of consolation" or an "*Ersatz*" to Turkish drive to membership while the MU should not be looked upon by the Arabs as a subterfuge to normalize relations with Israel before resolving the contentious issues of the conflict.

The coming months will witness intensive contacts in order to better explain the stakes and the objectives of what it going to be a new initiative? Will it

be a "Union of projects" or a "Project of Union"? Where will the financing come from? Who are the happy few who will take part? What will be the institutional architecture?

Many other questions should be addressed and clear answers should be given in order not to raise expectations to high levels without the capacity to fulfil promises and deliver.

What is certain is that something should be done. There is a widespread feeling in Southern Mediterranean societies that neither the EMP nor the ENP are adequate or sufficient instruments to extract the region from its economic and political apathy. Prosperity gap has not been bridged. Poverty has not been eradicated. Political Reforms proceed at too much slow pace while frustration and resentment are increasingly erecting invisible walls.

Obviously the blame cannot be placed only on the EU since the southern countries themselves share a part of the responsibility in the current situation. I am not sure that the MU as envisaged by Nicolas Sarkozy will be the best cure for all the ills of the Mediterranean. But at least it has the merit of attracting the attention of the European Union on the urgency of renewed pro-active policy capable of transforming the European Union from a mere trading partner into a real engine of growth. Japan performed this role in Asia: the EU should do the same in its nearest zone of proximity, because as Sarkozy says "the very future of Europe is in the South".

Editorial: The Hazy Concept of the Mediterranean Union

Whether the MU would eventually re-launch and inject new dynamism in Euro-Mediterranean relations remains to be seen. But it is obvious that there should be a policy which is smaller than the EMP and smarter than the ENP. That's why I dare to give this advice: don't speak about "Union" since this denomination raises too many questions about its practicality, feasibility, and coherence. Let us call it:

"Privileged Regional Partnership" (PRP) or "Barcelona +", or "Mediterranean dimension".

But more than the denomination, what is important is the logic, the vision, and the adequate instruments to engineer a better future for our common space. 

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XXIII Euro-Med Seminar group photo of participants. Front row (middle group, L to R) Mr. Tom McGrath, Administrator, European Commission, External Relations DG (3rd from left); Amb. António Augusto Russo Dias, Ambassador of Portugal to Malta; one of participants; Prof. Stephen Calleya, MEDAC Director; Dr. Michael Frendo, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Malta; Amb. Nassif Hitti, League of Arab States.



Fish-eye view of the conference hall during the opening session of XXIII Euro-Med Seminar: Amb. António Augusto Russo Dias, Ambassador of Portugal to Malta and Prof. Stephen Calleya, MEDAC Director at the panel table.





B. García-Dobarco González



Maria Kechri



A. Pinna

EMS Alumni

Comments by Participants of the XXIII Euro-Med Information and Training Seminar for Diplomats



Barış Elmener



Ronald Sonnemans

Bruno García-Dobarco González, Spain

According to most diplomats, one of the main goals of a seminar is to wet your appetite for knowledge on a specific issue and to provide you with some food for thought on an area you might not be an expert in. In other words, the right seminar should leave on you a light taste of curiosity, along with a brief but precise amount of relevant information.

I must concede that this is very true, but I would like to recall that the aim of such a gathering should not be confined to the sharing of knowledge, since those precious pieces of information received during the seminar will inevitably be lost or somehow left aside with the course of events. The key element to make the seminar succeed and last in time is simply the people, for the mates, the colleagues found during those days of mutual exchanges will soon become the living memory of those enriching days. Moreover, they will help us collect all those lost pieces of information in the coming years, and will definitively be our most valuable source of knowledge and experiences. Therefore, the human factor should be as critical as the intellectual one.

As a Spanish diplomat I was very pleased to participate in the XXIII Seminar on Euromed that took place last October. Flying to Malta was a very rewarding experience for me, and I sincerely want to thank the staff that made it possible. I really enjoyed the seminar and, following what I mention before, I congratulate you for fulfilling the two conditions that made the seminar a total and complete success. Thank you very much.

Barış Elmener, Turkey

The EUROMED Seminar proved to be beyond a mere crash course about the Partnership and the dynamics that influence the Process. It provided an intellectually stimulating environment where participants could pick up on issues relating to the geopolitics, the bureaucratic culture and above all the political economy of the interaction between EU as an entity and the Mediterranean as a region in the making. But beyond this, the Seminar illustrated to us diplomats of various professional experience, that it is ultimately the human factor and the collective determination that drives the EUROMED endeavour forward in an ever competitive world.

Agostino Pinna, Italy

It was indeed a great pleasure for me to attend the XXIII Euro-Med Seminar organized in October 2007 in Malta by the Mediterranean Academy of Diplomatic Studies. I joined the Euro-Med desk of the Italian MFA in September 2007 at a right time, during the re-launching of the cooperation in the Mediterranean, and the Seminar in Malta was a perfect opportunity for me to get a lot of new information on the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and exchange fresh ideas with the colleagues of the Euro-Med countries. Being new in this field I was deeply enriched by the different presentations and I found extremely useful the simulation on the Euro-Med decision making process, which was one of the most successful parts of the Seminar.

I feel that the Mediterranean is now very much in the diplomatic agenda of the countries of the region and the growing debate about the possible creation of a Mediterranean Union is a sign of the need we all have to strengthen the Partnership and to make sure that the Mediterranean Partner countries will more and more share common values and a common destiny. I could not imagine a better place to discuss the current Mediterranean trends than Malta, right in the heart of our beautiful sea.

I really enjoyed my stay in the island, which was a pleasant surprise for me, admiring the Caravaggios of Valletta, the geometric churches of Mdina and the amazing nightlife of St. Julians.

Irena Mulerova and Sylva Pavlasova
Czech Republic

The XXIII Euro-Med Seminar was, thanks to the accomplished lecturers and keen participants, a mind opening experience as well as a useful exercise. What we have appreciated the most is the idea that one does not have to be an erudite expert on the Euro-Med agenda to be involved and to contribute. The Seminar brought together a number of specialists on various topics pertinent to the Mediterranean region, and to the EU, with the specialists more concerned with the practical implementation.

Throughout the seminar the exchange of information and views enhanced our understanding in a comprehensive context, which is not easy to grasp when you have to do it on your own.

We also appreciated that the Seminar recognizes the importance of dialogue among cultures, religions and different interests, and provides their representatives with a constructive forum to discuss issues of mutual concern. And beautiful Malta is just the right place to convene it.

We would like to extend our sincere thanks to the Mediterranean Academy of Diplomatic Studies, its Director Dr. Calleya, the speakers, and all the participants for this unique and inspiring experience. We would also like to express our respect and gratitude to the staff for excellent organization and, above all, for their friendliness and hospitality.

Ronald Sonnemans, The Netherlands

The Euromed seminar was absolutely more interesting than I expected beforehand. I had been working on the Euromed file for over two years as an assistant to the Netherlands Senior Official when I participated in the seminar. Despite the two years of experience I had, the seminar was an absolute eye-opener for me. I especially appreciated the choice of subjects, e.g. energy politics and migration. Most subjects do not relate directly to my daily work, but then again they do underline the importance of Euromed and the importance of mutual understanding between the North and the South.

The seminar also provided a strong basis for a network of colleagues from the South and the North. Seeing colleagues that are working on the same files as I do, discussing mutual challenges for the EU and its southern neighbours and spending free time together gave me the possibility of getting to know my Euromed colleagues better. The frank and open discussion with other colleagues on Euromed has especially broadened my view on the whole process. I am sure that these contacts will last and will help me throughout my work on the Euromed file.

Maria Kechri, Greece

I would like to congratulate MEDAC for taking the initiative to organize this series of very interesting and constructive seminars. They have already become an institution and their high educational and training value offers one more good reason for young diplomats to visit the beautiful island of Malta.

I would also like to express my respect to Prof. Stephen Calleya who was the heart of the seminar. A big "thank you" for his excellent coordination of speeches and discussions and for keeping the informal and friendly atmosphere that helped us be interactive and feel at ease.

As a young diplomat, coming from a Mediterranean country, I found it really constructive to attend this seminar at the beginning of my career. During these four days I learned a lot regarding the activities, achievements and prospects of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and this knowledge has added a new, very useful dimension to my thinking.

I also had the chance to meet people from both sides of the Mediterranean, share their views and try to understand their way of thinking, their needs and expectations. I believe that getting together is the most appropriate way to approach each other, make our messages clear and find a common path. In fact, this is the first step towards understanding and cooperation between neighbours and partners.

EMP is something we should all work for. It is a field of common efforts that can bring our neighbourhood closer to stability and prosperity. This opportunity should not be missed and we, as young diplomats, are the future of it. 

Summary of the XXIII Euro-Mediterranean Information and Training Seminar



26th – 29th October 2007

The Twenty-third Euro-Mediterranean Information and Training Seminar took place in Malta between 26th – 29th October 2007. The four days of proceedings focused on recent developments in the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, particularly the progress registered in implementation of the Euro-Mediterranean Five Year work programme and developments that have taken place during the Portuguese Presidency of the European Union during the second half of 2007.

This Euro-Mediterranean Seminar brought together diplomats from the majority of the twenty-seven European Union member states and the ten Mediterranean Partner countries that are currently members of this multilateral initiative. The seminar is organized by the Mediterranean Academy of Diplomatic Studies of the University of Malta under the auspices of the European Commission who assist in coordinating this Euro-Mediterranean confidence building initiative.

Throughout the four-day seminar academic specialists and other professionals from Europe and the Mediterranean

presented a series of lectures on developments within each of the three chapters of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, namely the political and security, economic and financial, and the cultural and human resources chapters. Particular attention was dedicated to topics that include: The Euro-Med Partnership and the Portuguese EU Presidency, Perspectives of the Euro-Med Partnership and the Neighbourhood Policy, the Euro-Med partnership and the Media, and Energy Security in the Euro-Med region. The topics of Protecting the Global Climate in the Euro-Med area and the EU's Global Approach to Migration in the Mediterranean were also be discussed.

The XXIII Euro-Mediterranean Information and Training meeting, or **Malta Seminar** as the meetings have become more commonly known, were opened on Friday, 26th October 2007 by the Hon. Dr. Michael Frendo, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Malta who delivered the keynote opening address.

Further information on the Euro-Mediterranean Seminars can be found at:

www.euromed-seminars.org.mt



Panel at the Opening session of XXIII EMS (L to R): Hon Dr. Michael Frendo, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Malta, Prof. Stephen Calleya, Director, MEDAC, Amb. Nassif Hitti, League of Arab States, Amb. António Augusto Russo Dias, Ambassador of Portugal to Malta

Slovenian Presidency and Euro-Med



**EuroMed Senior Officials and
EuroMed Committee Meetings
Portorož, Slovenia, 09/06 – 10/06/2008**

EuroMed senior officials will meet in the Mediterranean in the picturesque Adriatic town Portorož for the event which comprises three separate meetings within the framework of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership of currently 39 countries – the 27 EU Member States and 12 partners (Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Mauritania, Morocco, Palestinian Authority, Syria, Tunisia, Albania, Israel and Turkey): the 76th EuroMed Senior Officials Meeting, the 76th EuroMed Committee Meeting, and the meeting of the Board of Governors of the Anna Lindh Euro-Mediterranean Foundation for Dialogue between Cultures. The meetings will feature an exchange of views on the political situation in the region, information on recent EuroMed events as well as an assessment on the state of future event preparations. A special emphasis will be a focus of the EuroMed Ministerial Conference on Culture and Intercultural Dialogue (planned for 29th – 30th May 2008 in Greece) and the Foundation's activities to promote the Euro-Mediterranean Year of Dialogue between Cultures.

The above-mentioned meetings will coincide with the **inauguration of the Euro-Mediterranean University, with its seat in Piran** on the Adriatic coast of Slovenia, an event to be attended by high representatives from the region and the Prime Minister of Slovenia, Janez Janša.

**MEETINGS DURING
SLOVENIAN PRESIDENCY OF THE COUNCIL OF EU
in the first half of 2008
related to Barcelona Process and Euro-Med**

Date	Meeting	Venue
26/02 - 27/02	EUROMED Ministerial Conference on the Information Society "Building an Enabling Environment for the EUROMED Information Society"	Cairo, Egypt
03/04	1 st Euro-Mediterranean meeting of ministers responsible for tourism	Fez, Morocco
09/06 - 10/06	EuroMed Senior Officials and EuroMed Committee Meetings	Portorož, Slovenia

Information about Slovenian Presidency of the Council of EU can be found on its website: www.eu2008.si/en/ and in French: www.eu2008.si/en/ in addition to Slovenian: www.eu2008.si

Changes in the Schengen Area

Of the EU-15 countries (before recent enlargements) only the UK and Ireland were not part of Schengen area, while 2 countries of the EEA (European Economic Area) Norway and Iceland were adjoined to the Schengen agreement. The latest changes in the Schengen area include 9 countries of 2004 enlargement (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Slovenia and Malta) as of 21st December 2007 for land and sea-borders and 30th March 2008 for air borders.

Cyprus, Romania and Bulgaria are not in the wave of Member States which joined the Schengen Area in December 2007. These member states still have to go through the Schengen evaluation before being able to join, and exact timing of joining cannot be predicted at this stage.

In the Press Release of 7/3/2008 the Slovenian Presidency informs that Slovenian experts will lead the team of experts from the EU and EEC Member States which will evaluate Switzerland's preparedness for joining the Schengen Area that is envisaged for the end of 2008.

How the assessment is made to allow for the lifting of internal border control?

Experts from the Member States carried out the so-called "Schengen evaluation" of the new member States during the last two years. Although experts from the Commission also participated, the responsibility for it remains with the Council. The evaluation is carried out in the field of external border control, visa, data protection, police cooperation and the Schengen Information System.

The impact of the Schengen enlargement for citizens is that all persons who enter the Schengen area are legally allowed to cross internal borders with, and between, the new Schengen Member States without border checks. It should be noted that the abolition of internal border checks does not affect the exercise of police powers even within internal border zones. The visa regime and movement for the third country nationals remain the same in the enlarged Schengen area.



Benita Ferrero-Waldner

European Commissioner for External Relations and European Neighbourhood Policy
I Forum for the Alliance of Civilizations, Madrid 15th January 2008

It is a happy coincidence that the first Forum of the Alliance of Civilizations takes place in these early days of 2008, the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue – just one of many illustrations of how the EU and Alliance of Civilizations work towards similar goals, based on their commitment to the universal values of respect for human rights, rule of law and democratic governance.

Respect for cultural diversity is part of the European way of life and lies at the heart of many internal EU policies. It is underpinned first and foremost by long-standing measures to develop social cohesion and economic solidarity and to guarantee equal opportunities and non-discrimination. It is nourished by large scale exchange programmes in the fields of higher education, youth and culture, as well as our more recent efforts to address the challenges of migration and integration. All such activities may not have been carried out under the label of “intercultural dialogue”, but they have certainly contributed to this goal and to furthering pluralism, tolerance and mutual respect. To respond to the request of President Sampaio we are naturally ready to share experiences and best practices.

Promotion of intercultural understanding is also an important element in our relations with our partners, be it through our political dialogues, through specific initiatives such as interfaith dialogues (as with ASEM, the Asia-Europe meetings) or actions integrated (“mainstreamed”) into our development cooperation at national level.

President Sampaio has submitted for our consideration four proposals for joint initiatives to consolidate the Alliance during 2008. Allow me to single out one of them: to make the Mediterranean region one of the main strands for the Alliance.

2008 Euro-Mediterranean Year of Intercultural Dialogue

As you are well aware, the European Union being also part of the Mediterranean region has a strategic relation with our southern Mediterranean neighbors. The Euro-Mediterranean partnership is a central part of our European Neighborhood Policy. Right from the beginning in 1995, the main objective was the establishment of an area of peace, prosperity, security and stability and one of the main pillars is a partnership in the social, cultural and human domain: developing human resources, strengthening mutual understanding between cultures and fostering civil society exchanges.

Our work until now has allowed us to develop useful experiences in several areas which are now also given prominence by the Alliance of Civilizations. The Anna Lindh Foundation is a major institution to foster dialogue between cultures, a unique body supported by the 38 Euro-Mediterranean partners, with the objective to contribute to mutual understanding through its national networks bringing people closer together from both sides of the Mediterranean, with a special focus on youth.

The European Commission has other programmes to foster dialogue: The Euromed Heritage, the Euromed youth programme including the Youth Parliament, the civil society programme, gender action, and “Euromed and the Media” are all good examples.

The Euro-Med partnership has mainly allowed civil society to come together and has, in addition to the co-financed projects, resulted in numerous Euro-Med networks of NGOs, human rights bodies, research institutes, universities, etc. which are functioning independently of our cooperation programmes.

We have designated 2008 not only as the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue but also as the Euro-Mediterranean Year of Intercultural Dialogue and we intend to multiply our efforts in this matter. In that context, the Anna Lindh Foundation has drawn a very



interesting and ambitious programme for the celebration of 2008: “1001 actions for Dialogue” which will be in line with activities for the European Year.

We can only support the Alliance’s initiative of including the Mediterranean as a major focus and underline our readiness to cooperate with you in this matter.

Some observations

Open societies are central to an effective intercultural dialogue. We support Alliance of Civilizations activities exploring innovative uses of mass media to promote cross-cultural understanding – but these will achieve their objective only when there is effective freedom of expression and information.

A main objective of the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue is mobilization of civil society. This is based on our belief that civil society has an essential role to play in promoting intercultural understanding. It must be allowed to do so. How else can we build bridges between communities and people?

National strategies for intercultural dialogue called for by the HR should have several dimensions. One aspect that should not be forgotten is strengthening human rights education so as to foster a spirit of tolerance and mutual respect and, ultimately, a culture of peace.

Last but not least, I find the gender perspective somewhat lacking in our discussions – not least since the role of women has frequently been a highly divisive cultural issue in some communities. I trust that we can all agree here, not only on the fundamental principle of gender equality and but also on the need for the Alliance to nurture respect for women’s rights and to ensure their many voices are heard loud and clear in these various intercultural dialogues.

Internet resources

UNO The Alliance of Civilizations (AoC):
www.unaoc.org
ALLIANCE OF CIVILIZATIONS FIRST FORUM:
www.madridaocforum.org
The European Year of Intercultural Dialogue (EYID) 2008:
www.interculturaldialogue2008.eu
Anna Lindh Euro-Mediterranean Foundation for the Dialogue between Cultures:
www.euromedalex.org
Council of Europe on Alliance Of Civilizations:
www.coe.int/t/dc/press/news/20080117_sg_madrid_en.asp