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**The development of interparliamentary cooperation among  
the Mediterranean countries**

**REPORT**

submitted on behalf of the Committee for Parliamentary and Public Relations  
by Mrs Cortajarena Iturrioz, Rapporteur (Spain, Socialist Group)

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*The development of interparliamentary cooperation among the Mediterranean countries*

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*submitted on behalf of the Committee for Parliamentary and Public Relations<sup>2</sup>  
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<sup>1</sup> Adopted unanimously by the Committee on 8 November 2004.

<sup>2</sup> *Members of the Committee:* Mr Budin (Chairman); Mr Adam, Lord Russell-Johnston (Vice-Chairmen); MM Agramunt (Alternate: *Fernández Aguilar*), Banks (Alternate: *Mrs McCafferty*), Mrs Becerril Bustamante, Baroness Billingham, Mr Bockel, Mrs Bousakla, Mrs Brasseur, Mr Duivesteijn (Alternate: *Dees*), Mrs Eymer, Mrs Fernández Soriano (Alternate: *Mrs Cortajarena Iturrioz*), Mr Geveaux, Ms Jäger, Mrs Katseli (Alternate: *Mrs Papadimitriou*), MM Legendre, Loncle, Martins, Naro, Occhetto, Selva, Mrs Smith (Alternate: *Vis*), MM Stathakis, Vieira, van Winsen, Wodarg, N...

*Affiliate members:* MM Gawlowski, Kaminski (Alternate: *Szczygło*), Kelemen, Mrs Kosa Kovacs, Mr Lorenz, Mrs Maripuu, MM Murgas, Potrata, Turlais, Mrs Novakova, Mrs Roithova, Mr Vazbys.

*Associate members:* MM Gülçiçek, Gündüz İrfan, Gündüz Süleyman, Mrs Hlödversdottir, Mr Reikvam, N...

*Affiliate associate members:* Mr Chakarov, Mrs Lepadatu, Mr Vasilescu, N...

N.B. *The names of those taking part in the vote are printed in italics.*

## RESOLUTION 124<sup>1</sup>

### *on the development of interparliamentary cooperation among the Mediterranean countries*

The Assembly,

- (i) Welcoming the creation of the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly (EMPA) and wishing its President every success in the field of interparliamentary scrutiny, in the common interests of the Mediterranean rim countries;
- (ii) Aware of the need to give new impetus and support to all forms of cooperation among countries in that geographic area, which are interdependent in cultural, economic and political terms;
- (iii) Warmly welcoming the progress made by the Conference on Security and Cooperation in the Mediterranean (CSCM) towards reaching agreement on the statutes of a Parliamentary Assembly bringing together parliamentarians from all the Mediterranean rim countries and other countries of the region;
- (iv) Having the benefit of fifty years' experience of successful interparliamentary cooperation enabling parliamentarians of the European states to draw up common positions, in particular in the field of security and defence,

#### I. INVITES THE EURO-MEDITERRANEAN PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY TO:

1. Give new impetus to the interparliamentary scrutiny of intergovernmental policy by providing an attentive and well-informed forum able to propose solutions to the political problems affecting the Mediterranean region;
2. Participate in security and defence debates by regularly attending the WEU Assembly's plenary sessions as guest observers;
3. Allow the WEU Assembly in return to participate in its own sessions, in particular when sensitive issues concerning security in the Mediterranean region are on the agenda;
4. Maintain permanent contacts between the Secretariats of the two Assemblies in order to update dossiers and documents on subjects of mutual interest.

#### II. EXPRESSES THE WISH

5. To cooperate closely with the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean, as soon as it is created by the Conference on Security and Cooperation in the Mediterranean (CSCM).

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<sup>1</sup> Adopted by the Assembly on 1 December 2004 at the 9<sup>th</sup> sitting.

## EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM

*submitted by Mrs Cortajarena Iturrioz, Rapporteur (Spain, Socialist Group)*

### *I. Introduction*

1. As the European Union enlarges towards the East, there is a danger – at least in the short term – that the gap with the south will grow. The cold war divisions have been overcome, but those between the two shores of the Mediterranean remain. Since the early 1990s, the southern European countries have been expressing concern about the possible consequences of EU enlargement for relations with the countries on the opposite shore of the Mediterranean. The results of the EU's attempts these last ten years to redress the balance have not lived up to expectations, notwithstanding a considerable financial effort.

2. Europe's enlargement to 25 only aggravates the dilemma: on the one hand it is imperative to allocate funds to the development of the central European countries in order to strengthen the Union's cohesion, but on the other hand it is also necessary to prevent the countries of the south from drifting further towards poverty and instability, leading to the insecurity, humiliation and despair that provide a breeding-ground for terrorism. The choice that was made clearly favoured the central European countries, for which the prospect of accession was a powerful stimulant for democratic and economic development. Conversely, the EU seems to be closing its doors to the countries to the south, afflicted by very different problems to which there appears to be no short-term solution. Generally speaking, enlargement could offer opportunities to the southern Mediterranean countries in the form of a larger single market for trade and exports. But the countries concerned must realise that their economic weaknesses – their strong dependence on northern know-how and technology, chronic trading deficit with the EU and insufficient investments – constitute as many handicaps.

3. In spite of the economic barriers, their strong common interests should be a powerful incentive for the countries on both shores of the Mediterranean to cooperate in the management of this geographic region that is a real cultural crossroads, in order to develop its resources, manage migration and combat terrorism. Great hopes of meeting those challenges were attached to the Euro-Mediterranean ministerial conference held in 1995 in Barcelona. However, the objective it set of creating a free trade area by 2010 is now looking very unrealistic. The only real achievement of the so-called Barcelona Process is the non-negligible budget (4.3 billion euros in donations and 4.8 billion euros in loans from 1995-1999, then, respectively, 5.35 and 7.4 billion euros from 2001-2006) that the EU has allocated to development projects in the southern Mediterranean. However, due to poor management, episodes of corruption, administrative red tape and too thinly spread resources, only part of those funds has been put to effective use.

4. Given that it was already difficult for the European Union at 15 to organise its relations with the southern Mediterranean countries, it is urgent to see where the Union of 25 can make improvements. But it is also desirable to see whether and in what way other entities – in particular the national parliaments, the European Parliament and interparliamentary assemblies, but above all the brand new Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean – can contribute to attaining the common objectives.

### *II. The Euro-Mediterranean partnership process*

5. Let us briefly recall the Euro-Mediterranean partnership process launched at Barcelona in November 1995. Its far-sighted and ambitious goals set it apart from previous EU Mediterranean policies which were geared more to cooperation and development than to a partnership on an equal footing.

6. The aims of that partnership were first and foremost to create a zone of peace and stability founded on the principles of respect for human rights and democracy. This would generate an area of shared prosperity through the gradual development of a free trade area between the European Union and its Mediterranean partners, and among those partners themselves, which would go hand in hand with considerable EU financial support in order to facilitate the economic transition and help the partners deal with the resulting socio-economic challenges. Finally, there would be greater mutual

understanding among the peoples of the region and free civil society would flourish thanks to cultural exchanges, the development of human resources and the support given to civil societies and social development.

7. Three main areas of activity were defined on the basis of those objectives: political and security partnership; economic and financial partnership and partnership in social, cultural and human affairs. Although the EU had been far from passive in this region in the past, the Barcelona Conference shaped its Mediterranean policy into an overall and coherent approach that maintained a certain balance between the different areas. Equally important was the strong multilateral dimension that was added to what had been an essentially bilateral approach in the past, and which turned the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership into a genuine regional policy.

8. Over the years all the Mediterranean countries have joined this initiative, except Libya, which currently has an observer status.

9. The Partnership has two instruments at its disposal: the possibility of negotiating with all Mediterranean countries association agreements containing binding trading rules for all members and an economic support programme (the MEDA programme) for the allocation of funds to the Mediterranean basin. The MEDA programme constitutes the major financial tool of this initiative and provides major funds for regional and bilateral cooperation in the three areas covered by the process. A total of 9 billion euros was allocated to the Mediterranean region between 1995 and 2000 (in the form of non-reimbursable community aid and of loans from the European Investment Bank). The funds allocated to the second five-year phase from 2001 to 2006 currently amount to almost 13 billion euros.

10. An intergovernmental conference is held each year to take stock of progress on the different projects and several mid-term meetings take place to review various fields of activity. The foreign affairs ministers last met on 5-6 May 2004 in Dublin in order to review the latest results.

11. According to the conclusions of the Irish Presidency:

“Ministers (...) confirmed their attachment and commitment to the Barcelona Process as the main framework for a coherent set of privileged relations within the Euro-Mediterranean neighbourhood. They acknowledged the solid and substantial range of cooperation activities which has been established in a spirit of partnership on issues ranging from political and security questions, including human rights, political reform and good governance, through trade liberalisation, economic reform and infrastructure networks to culture, education and the movement of people. They therefore firmly committed themselves to implementing the Naples agenda in order to reinvigorate the Barcelona Process while seeking ways of improving the sense of co-ownership of the process. (...)

Against this background, Ministers took stock of progress in implementing the Valencia Action Plan and the conclusions of the Ministerial meeting in Naples in December 2003. In the perspective of the Euro-Mediterranean Foreign Ministers meetings to be held under the Dutch and Luxembourg Presidencies as well as the 10th anniversary next year of the launching of the Barcelona Process, Ministers requested the Euro-Mediterranean Committee to draw up firm proposals and guidelines for moving forward. They acknowledged that progress on the implementation of the Valencia Action Plan had been insufficient and needed to be speeded up. There should be more focus on deliverable achievements rather than on process. Final decisions were taken on the Euro-Mediterranean Foundation for the Dialogue of Cultures which will ensure its establishment in line with the agreed timetable. (...)

Good progress has been made within the association process which lies at the core of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership. Association Agreements are now in force with Morocco, Tunisia, Israel and Jordan and on an interim basis with the Palestinian Authority. There are interim agreements in place with Egypt and Lebanon as well. The ratification of the agreement concluded with Egypt is now finalised and the first meeting of the EU-Egypt Association Council is scheduled for June 2004. The ratification processes of the agreements with Lebanon and Algeria are also well under way. All partners were again encouraged to expedite the

ratification process of those Association Agreements not yet in force. The EU is also encouraged by the progress made towards concluding an Association Agreement with Syria, and is hopeful that the few outstanding points will be resolved soon, allowing Syria to join the group of Euro-Mediterranean countries which have signed Association or Interim Agreements with the Union, thus completing the network of Euro-Mediterranean Association Agreements. These are important developments for the fulfilment of the objectives of the Barcelona Declaration and for the reinforcement of South-South cooperation.” And finally:

“The setting up of the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly in Athens on 22-23 March was welcomed as a means to improve co-operation on democratisation and to provide an input into all areas of the Partnership. The President of the Assembly addressed the meeting of Foreign Ministers. It was agreed that the views of the Assembly on the major issues of the partnership would be welcome. Ministers agreed that the appropriate articulation between the institutions should be established without setting up an over-burdensome formal consultation procedure”.

### ***III. The creation of the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly (EMPA)***

#### *(a) Historical background*

12. In 1995 the way forward for interparliamentary cooperation was paved by the Barcelona Declaration, which invited the European Parliament (in paragraph V), to launch an interparliamentary dialogue with the parliaments of the member countries with a view to setting up a forum to debate issues of common interest. The first meeting of this Euro-Mediterranean parliamentary forum took place on 28 and 29 October 1998 in Brussels. It was attended by 43 members of the European Parliament, 24 members of the national parliaments of the EU member states and 72 representatives of the signatory states to the Barcelona Agreement. In the ensuing declaration the parliamentarians recommended speeding up negotiations with countries that were not yet full members, reaffirmed their commitment to the Middle East peace process and called on the European governments to adopt a more open approach to trade in the region.

13. At the second meeting of the Forum in Brussels on 8 and 9 February 2001 it was decided that meetings would be held annually and that a permanent structure would be set up to ensure continuity of work between sessions. A working group was set up to draw up its statutes. A third emergency meeting of the Forum convened on 7 and 8 November 2001 following the 11 September terrorist attacks gave rise to a declaration in which the parliamentarians condemned terrorism and expressed their support for all international action aimed at combating this scourge, while recalling the need to relaunch the Middle East dialogue, strengthen intercultural and inter-religious contacts and to organise programmes for training young people and for assisting the socio-economic integration of women in the countries of the Mediterranean region.

14. On 11 April 2002 the European Parliament took the initiative to strengthen action by the interparliamentary Forum, by adopting a resolution proposing its transformation into a Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly. That proposal was approved by the foreign affairs ministers of the Mediterranean countries meeting in Valencia on 22 and 23 April 2002 and adopted at the fourth meeting of the Forum in Bari on 17 and 18 June 2002. A working group was set up to determine the membership of this new Assembly.

15. A particularly important resolution on migration adopted at Bari called on the EU and the member states to implement policies for the integration of immigrants residing legally on their territory, and calling on the latter to respect the community of values of their host country. Furthermore it advocated incorporating in the association agreements a section on the joint management of migratory flows and co-responsibility for combating clandestine immigration and establishing a strong link between that issue and policy in the area of cooperation and development aid.

16. The fifth and last Forum met in Naples on 2 and 3 December 2003. The parliamentarians approved the working group’s recommendation on the creation of a Euro-Mediterranean

Parliamentary Assembly (EMPA), which was also endorsed by the foreign affairs ministers meeting in parallel in Naples. The Forum approved the Assembly's rules of procedure (number of representatives, presidencies, procedures for the adoption of resolutions of a consultative nature) and discussion areas (security policy, human rights, economic and financial questions, social and education issues, promoting the quality of life, human and cultural exchanges) and agreed on the possibility of setting up *ad hoc* committees to deal with the most sensitive issues.

17. The President of the European Parliament, Pat Cox, who presented the recommendations drawn up by the parliamentarians of the two groups of countries to the Euromed foreign affairs ministers, described the creation of the Assembly as a "major event in the history of the Mediterranean". However, not all national parliaments were as enthusiastic about the creation of this new structure; those of northern Europe in particular appear, for both cultural and geopolitical reasons, to remain sceptical. The representatives of several countries failed to attend the meetings of the working groups and of the Forum itself a number of times, sending civil servants instead as observers. This is why, in the recommendation adopted at Naples, the Forum urged "those Parliaments which are still reticent as to possible participation, to involve themselves in the Assembly's activities" and expressed the wish to work together "on the basis of the fundamental principles of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, namely equality, co-responsibility and solidarity amongst all the representatives involved".

18. The formal meeting transforming the Forum into an Assembly took place on 22 and 23 March 2004 in Athens. The inaugural session, jointly chaired by Pat Cox and Abdelwahed Radi, President of the Moroccan Chamber of Representatives, was devoted almost entirely to adopting the rules of procedure and appointing the four Bureau members who would each hold the presidency for one year. Fathi Souror, President of the People's Assembly of Egypt, will hold the presidency of the Euromed Assembly until March 2005. The other Bureau members are the Presidents of the European Parliament, the Tunisian Chamber of Deputies and the Greek Parliament.

*(b) Membership and modus operandi.*

19. The EMPA is composed of 240 members. The distribution of the 120 seats allocated to the European group was the result of a compromise between the European Parliament and the various member countries, who finally agreed on 75 seats for the national parliaments of the enlarged EU and 45 for members of the European Parliament. Three parliamentary committees were set up: it was agreed that the Committee on Political Affairs, Security and Human Rights would be chaired by the EP assisted by three vice-chairmen from Israel, Palestine and Spain, the Committee on Economic and Financial Affairs, Social Affairs and Education by Jordan, assisted by vice-chairmen from Ireland, Turkey and the EP, and the Committee on Improving Quality of Life, Exchanges between Civil Societies and Culture by Italy, assisted by vice-chairmen from Morocco, Algeria and one of the new EU member states. Each Committee is composed of 80 members, 40 from the EU's Mediterranean partners and 40 Europeans (of which 25 from the national parliaments and 15 from the EP). It was agreed that the membership of any working groups and drafting committees set up by the Assembly to prepare reports, resolutions, recommendations or opinions would also be equally divided between the two groups of countries.

20. The Rules of Procedure stipulate that the Assembly "may adopt positions on all aspects of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership. It shall monitor the application of Euro-Mediterranean association agreements and adopt resolutions or make recommendations to the Ministerial Conference with a view to achieving the objectives of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership. When asked to do so by the Ministerial Conference, it shall issue opinions proposing, where appropriate, the adoption of relevant measures for each of the three aspects of the Barcelona Process".

21. Rule 3 stipulates that "the deliberations of the Assembly shall not be legally binding". Several discussions took place on the question of the voting majority, with a view to ensuring equal treatment of the two groups of countries and preventing blocking minorities defending specific interests from forming within each group. It was finally agreed in Rule 9 that "The Assembly shall act by consensus and in the presence of half of the delegations plus one within each of the two component parts of the Assembly, namely, the European component and that of the partner countries". Furthermore, "When it is not possible to reach a consensus, the Assembly shall adopt its decisions by a qualified majority of

at least four-fifths of the votes of the representatives from each of the two parties of the European component and of at least four-fifths of the votes of the representatives from the partner countries". Finally, "Each delegation shall have a number of votes equal to the number allocated to it and, during the vote, shall have the right to express reservations and/or to abstain constructively".

22. The new Assembly tackled a practical problem which is a sensitive issue for a number of international organisations these days: the language regime. The Rules of Procedure stipulate that the Assembly's "official languages" are the 18 EU languages plus Arabic, Hebrew and Turkish, and that its official documents will be translated into all those languages. All official languages can be spoken at sessions, but active interpretation will be provided into the "working languages" – French, English and Arabic – only, without prejudice however to the possibility of other active languages being supplied when Assembly meetings are organised by the European Parliament. Instead of a fixed secretariat it was decided that "the Bureau and the other bodies of the Assembly shall be assisted in the preparation, proper conduct and follow-up of the Assembly's work, by a small-scale Secretariat composed of staff from each of the parliaments represented in the Bureau and coordinated by the staff member from the parliament whose representative in the Bureau holds the Presidency at the time" and that "the salaries and other expenses of the staff of the Secretariat shall be borne by their respective parliaments". Furthermore, "The parliament which is hosting a session of the Assembly or a meeting of one of its committees shall provide assistance with the organisation of these meetings".

23. There were no in-depth debates at this inaugural session devoted essentially to the adoption of the Rules of Procedure and the election of the Assembly bodies. The final declaration used the prepared text, despite some objections about the definition of terrorism. Participants declared themselves "convinced that the creation of the EMPA constitutes a decisive step forward towards the institutionalisation and strengthening of the parliamentary dimension of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership", which they see "as the tangible expression of their common interest in strengthening security and stability in the region, promoting and materialising political, social and economic reforms and prevention of terrorism, extremism and organised crime from hampering progress in this direction". Furthermore, they "signal their joint determination to combat the barbarism of all forms of terrorism and particularly those manifested recently in Casablanca, Istanbul and most recently in Madrid. These attacks constitute the negation of universal values and are to be considered as crimes against humanity". They call for "the highest level of cooperation against terrorism and the adoption of measures which may lead to the capture and condemnation of all those responsible for these terrorist crimes". Furthermore, they "stress the desirability of following up the European Council's launch of the EU Strategic Partnership with the Mediterranean and the Middle East", recognising that "the Mediterranean is a region with great potential, where a large number of cultures, languages, religions and traditions coexist". Finally they highlight the importance of managing migratory flows which "should be addressed within the framework of solidarity and respecting human rights".

24. On 21 and 22 September in Brussels the EMPA members set about creating the three committees defined by the Rules of Procedure. The former French minister Tokia Saïfi was elected Chairman of the Committee on Political Affairs, Security and Human Rights with a one-year mandate. She immediately announced her intention to develop within her committee a "genuine partnership between the two shores of the Mediterranean". The Mediterranean basin, she said, should become an area of "common democratic values in which human rights would be respected", an area of "co-development". While political dialogue had been strengthened and broadened to include such areas as good governance, the fight against terrorism, organised crime and illegal immigration, she regretted the lack of progress on the Euro-Mediterranean Charter for Peace and Stability and of cooperation on these questions, for in her view it was not possible to develop economic and trade cooperation in the Mediterranean region without first creating the dynamics of peace. The reference to peace came as no surprise given that the Middle East conflict weighs heavily on the Euromed process. Indeed it cast a shadow over the inaugural meeting of the Committee on Political Affairs, Security and Human Rights, when the Lebanese and Syrian delegates contested the system for the annual rotation of the posts of vice-chairmen allocated to Israel, Spain and Palestine. There was disappointment among both the Arab and European members of the Committee at its failure to find any solution other than to refer the matter to the Assembly Bureau.

25. The other two Committees, unlike the Political Committee, were able to successfully conclude their inaugural meetings with the election of their officers. The Jordanian Hashem Abbas was appointed Chairman of the Committee on Economic and Financial Affairs, Social Affairs and Education and the Italian Mario Greco was elected Chairman of the Committee on Improving Quality of Life and Exchanges between Civil Societies. Mr Dabbas pointed out, when presenting his programme, that the best way of combating terrorism was to “help our countries develop”. During the exchange of views on the assessment of the Barcelona Process, attention was drawn to the southern countries’ fears that EU investments in the region would be reduced following enlargement in favour of the new central European members, as well as to the need to boost cultural and technological exchanges while bearing in mind the inevitable link between the economy and the political situation.

26. Mr Greco for his part highlighted the need for cooperation in combating illegal migration, while a delegate from the Maghreb expressed the hope that any measures adopted would not hamper the movements within the EU of intellectuals, journalists and other members of civil society to whom visas were often granted in what he described as “humiliating conditions”. Mr Greco proposed that the Committee monitor the activities of the Annah Lindt Foundation that had recently been created in Alexandria. He also launched the idea of creating a Euromed University, and called for the exchanges hitherto reserved for professors and students be broadened to include scientists, specialists, technicians and industrialists.

27. It was agreed that all these proposals would be streamlined and presented to the Assembly’s next session to be held at the end of February 2005. Cairo has been proposed as the venue, but concerns have been expressed that there could be further incidents involving countries opposed to the presence of Israeli delegates in an Arab country. Indeed, the Dutch Presidency of the EU Council was obliged for the same reason to abandon the idea of holding the next inter-ministerial conference in Egypt and to opt for The Hague on 29 November instead.

#### ***IV. Other forms of interparliamentary cooperation***

##### *(a) Conference of Speakers of the parliaments of the Mediterranean region*

28. The Conference of Speakers of the parliaments of the Mediterranean region can doubtless be credited with having made the most substantial contribution to the development of the parliamentary dimension within the Barcelona Process. Its first meeting in Palermo on 8 and 9 November 1996 was restricted to representatives from Mediterranean rim countries in the strict sense of the term and included only five EU countries. At the initiative of the Speaker of the Italian Chamber of Deputies, the meeting focused on the common problems facing the countries of the region. However, the desire to incorporate that dialogue within the Barcelona Process led to a series of preparatory conferences and meetings, culminating with the Palma de Majorca conference in March 1999, at which it was decided to broaden participation to include all EU parliaments and the European Parliament.

29. The Palma de Majorca Declaration made provision for institutionalising permanent relations among the Speakers of the different parliaments, starting with the creation of a Coordination Group composed of representatives from the parliaments of Egypt, Tunisia, Italy and Spain, as well as representatives of the European Parliament and Arab Interparliamentary League. The aim of this initiative was to more rapidly implement the Barcelona objectives and promote interparliamentary dialogue by facilitating contacts and exchanges at all levels. The Declaration, which made provision in particular for the creation of a Forum for women parliamentarians and a Forum for young parliamentarians, gave priority to the development of programmes for the future aimed at promoting equal rights and development.

30. The Speakers met in May 2000 in Alexandria, Egypt, and in 2002 in Athens. The repeated tabling on the agenda of the issue of parliamentary institutions and their role in the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership showed the importance attached by the Conference to pooling political and parliamentary experience in order to promote the democratic development of the region.

*(b) The Euro-Mediterranean Forum for women parliamentarians*

31. The Euro-Mediterranean Forum for women parliamentarians brings women parliamentarians together on a regular basis in the framework of the Euro-Mediterranean cooperation process. This initiative sets out to provide a network of permanent relations between women parliamentarians, with the aim of enhancing women's role and participation in the decision-making processes in the region, particularly in areas relating to civil society, political stability, cultural dialogue and development.

32. The Forum, whose creation was provided for in the 1999 Palma de Majorca Declaration, held its first meeting in Naples on 7 and 8 March 2000. It is divided into three working groups dealing with the participation of women in political life, in particular in the framework of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, the defence of human rights and migratory phenomena. That first meeting led to the adoption of a "Charter of Intent of Women Parliamentarians" announcing the following aims: monitoring implementation of international agreements and action plans in the area of women's rights; promoting genuine equality of opportunity between the sexes in national legislation; supporting the social objectives of the Barcelona Process; actively contributing to development and employment policies and combating the trafficking and exploitation of young women.

33. The Charter also established a Coordination Committee to organise future activities. The first task of that Committee was to draw up rules of procedure which were adopted at the Malta meeting on 2 and 3 March 2001. The Forum, composed of delegations of four women parliamentarians from each of the signatory states to the Barcelona Declaration plus the European Parliament, meets once a year under the chairmanship of the host country. Meeting venues alternate between the EU member states and partner countries and the Forum works by consensus.

34. The Malta Conference dealt, among other themes, with the question of globalisation and its effects on the condition of women. Participants expressed concern at the growing inequalities afflicting the weaker members of developing societies, women in particular, as a result of the economic pressures caused by globalisation of production and trade. No final declaration was adopted, but there was a consensus on the need to strengthen commitment at national level to programmes designed to give women access to information and technological training tools.

35. The following conference in Madrid on 17 and 18 October 2002 dealt with the themes of "violence and trafficking in women" and "education and equality". At the Amman meeting from 19 to 23 October 2003, the themes were "women and armed conflicts" and "women and peace". It was not by chance that Amman was chosen as the venue for the fourth conference dealing with women and armed conflicts, because with the Iraq war and the deterioration of the situation in the Middle East, Jordan lies at the heart of a region that is crucial for the world's future and aspires to set an example for inter-cultural and inter-religious dialogue. There were lively, sometimes controversial debates of a general political nature, but the meeting focused above all on the condition of women and their role in political life and the decision-making process. The final declaration stated that equality in legislative terms was not enough, and that without representation in the executive bodies, women could not wield any influence in the decision-making process and improve their condition. The Rapporteur was the French senator Gisèle Gautier, who was not very optimistic. "We do not have enough political courage, efforts are watered down by political and financial parameters", she stated. The final declaration includes clear and precise proposals regarding the Middle East conflict, but above all it issues a warning to countries in which human rights – and women's rights in particular – are being violated and calls for EU sanctions against them. While those statements of intent may not have much practical impact, the Forum received considerable media coverage thanks to the efforts of Jordan and of Queen Ranja in particular.

36. The next meeting is due to be hosted by France, but has not yet been formally convened.

*(c) Interparliamentary Conference on Security and Cooperation in the Mediterranean (CSCM) organised by the Interparliamentary Union (IPU)*

37. In parallel to the development of parliamentary relations in the region, the Interparliamentary Union (IPU) was very active during the 1990s in creating an Interparliamentary Conference on Cooperation and Security in the Mediterranean (CSCM). At the first conference in June 1992 in

Malaga and the second in November 1995 in Valletta, even before the Barcelona Process was launched, the IPU analysed the main challenges in the Mediterranean region through a study of three wide-ranging areas: regional stability; co-development and partnership; dialogue of civilisations and human rights. During the two plenary conferences, supplemented from 1993 to 1999 by six mid-term meetings on specific themes, as well as 15 meetings held in parallel to its half-yearly statutory meetings, the IPU established a ground-breaking political consultation process for the region which enabled all Mediterranean rim states to work together on an equal footing to seek solutions to the region's problems in cooperation with the major players in the area.

38. The third CSCM held in April 2000 in Marseilles took stock of the activities and initiatives taken at all levels for the Mediterranean area. The report produced by the Conference notes that,

“The Conference considers that, ten years after the launching of the process of security and cooperation in the Mediterranean, the Inter-Parliamentary Union has every reason to be proud of the strong impetus it has given to an idea that has resulted in the burgeoning of initiatives and in preliminary steps towards the establishment of cooperation machinery and structures.

It notes, however, that the main initiatives – in the context of the Euro-Med process – have been taken by the European countries vis-à-vis the rest of the Mediterranean. While recognising the far-reaching and momentous character of these initiatives and the importance of the partnership – above all the economic ties – that they generate between the European countries and certain countries of the southern Mediterranean, the Conference considers that concurrent action should continue to be taken to establish an inter-parliamentary cooperation structure as advocated in the Final Document of the Second Inter-Parliamentary Conference on Security and Cooperation in the Mediterranean (Valletta, November 1995) with a view to creating, in the long run, a parliamentary assembly of the Mediterranean.

With regard to inter-parliamentary cooperation, the Conference stresses the complementarity of the CSCM process within the Inter-Parliamentary Union, the Conference of Presidents of the Parliaments of the Euro-Mediterranean Region and the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Forum.

The Conference notes that the CSCM process offers all the Mediterranean partners represented by national parliamentarians, who are often members of relevant committees, the opportunity to contribute on equal terms and on a pluralist political footing to the resolution of the concrete problems raised by cooperation and security in the Mediterranean.

The Conference therefore wishes to pursue this process within the Inter-Parliamentary Union. In that connection, it requests the Inter-Parliamentary Council to give favourable consideration to the recommendations regarding:

Practical steps for the continuation of the process on the basis of submissions made to it by the parties; and

The establishment of an ad hoc mechanism which would draw up proposals concerning future CSCM action with a view to the establishment in the long run of a parliamentary assembly of Mediterranean States and would submit its first report to the 104th Conference of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (Jakarta, October 2000).

The Conference considers that the CSCM process will gather further momentum and generate further practical achievements if the various actors involved proceed along complementary and, if possible, convergent lines so as to avoid any harmful dispersal of energy and resources. It trusts that any future action by the Inter-Parliamentary Union for the Mediterranean will be based on this principle of complementarity and convergence.”

39. Work has continued since then within a CSCM Coordination Committee composed of parliamentarians from Algeria, Egypt, France, Italy, Malta, Morocco, Slovenia, Spain, Syria and Tunisia together with a representative of the Forum for women parliamentarians. Together they defined the main parameters for the future Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean. In answer to a questionnaire on the CSCM's future sent out to all members in 2003, a majority pronounced

themselves in favour of transforming it into a permanent structure. At its last meeting in Nice in February 2004, the participants took note of the estimated budget for that new body in 2005 and agreed to hold a fourth and last CSCM in early 2005, in order to transform it into the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean. Finally, the Coordination Committee asked the Steering Board to request observer status for the CSCM within the new Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly.

40. On 1 October 2004, at its 175<sup>th</sup> session in Geneva, the IPU Governing Council took note of a set of draft statutes for the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean to be formally approved at the beginning of 2005. Since there was a consensus on this draft, we are presenting some main points in this report. Article 1 stipulates first of all that “The Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean (...) is the parliamentary institution that brings together the parliaments of all the countries of the Mediterranean basin on an equal footing”. This body differs from the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly in that it is based on the interests of a geographic area regardless of the whether or not the member states belong to a regional political organisation, which means that countries like Albania, Croatia, FYROM, Monaco and Serbia-Montenegro can participate. Article 5 states that “The parliaments of countries that are geographically situated near the Mediterranean or that have common interests with the region and inter-parliamentary organisations that are active in the Mediterranean region may, on request, be invited to participate in the work of the Assembly as Associate Members”. Article 23 makes provision for a separate Secretariat “that shall be located in a Mediterranean country whose parliament is a Member of the Assembly”.

41. This desire on the part of parliamentarians to establish an *ad hoc* body for the Mediterranean reflects their confidence in the capacity of parliamentary diplomacy to achieve progress on a number of issues which it has not yet been possible to resolve through official government policy. Already during this preparatory phase interim solutions have been found to allow the participation of the representatives of parliamentary bodies which are not officially recognised as state institutions in the legal sense of the term, such as the Legislative Council of the Palestinian Authority. It may be possible through interparliamentary cooperation to reach a common understanding based on an analysis of the common problems without upsetting official positions but seeking even the smallest opening that may lead to a solution.

*(d) Initiatives by the parliamentary assemblies of WEU, NATO, the Council of Europe and the OSCE*

42. The Mediterranean region and its problems have also been the focus of a number of political and parliamentary initiatives within a number of interparliamentary assemblies concerned with this region. It would take too long to present all of these in detail, but it is useful to mention the approved texts which can then be consulted on the relevant websites for further information.

43. The various committees of the WEU Assembly have studied Mediterranean issues in accordance with their particular remit. Our own committee submitted a report on “Sub-regional organisations in Europe and their parliamentary dimension”. The report presented by Mrs Agudo Cadarso and Mr Akgönc and adopted together with Resolution 104 on 7 December 2000 called for the creation of an interparliamentary assembly to strengthen regional cooperation. It pointed to the need for the active involvement of the national parliaments which should also make particular efforts to inform their citizens. The WEU Assembly as a whole organised a seminar on 7 and 8 October 2002 in Lisbon to which it invited representatives of the southern Mediterranean parliaments to discuss common security issues in the western Mediterranean. The discussions tackled both political and military aspects and gave rise to Recommendation 718 adopted on 4 December 2002 in plenary.

44. The NATO Parliamentary Assembly has set up a Mediterranean Special Group which holds annual meetings on specific subjects pertaining to the region. After producing a series of reports on security issues, first of all in north Africa (1999) and then the Middle East (2000), the Group broadened its activities to include economic and geopolitical aspects as causes of instability and conflict. In 2002 it produced a first report on “water resources in the Mediterranean” and in 2003 a report on “energy and the environment in the Mediterranean region”.

45. Although the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe has not created a specific *ad hoc* committee, the problems of the Mediterranean region have for a long time figured on the agenda of various committees and sub-committees dealing with political, economic, development and socio-

cultural issues. A particular mention should be made of Recommendation 1359 on the sustainable development of the Mediterranean and Black Sea basins, adopted in 1998, and Recommendation 1449 on clandestine immigration from the south of the Mediterranean into Europe, adopted in 2000.

46. Finally, the OSCE Assembly focused on various problems of the region at a first meeting of its parliamentary forum on the Mediterranean held in Rome on 11 October 2003. It was divided into two sessions, one on strengthening security in the Mediterranean, the other on developing the Mediterranean dimension of the OSCE.

47. Thus we see that there is a plethora of initiatives, each tailored to the specific objectives of the organisation concerned. The creation of a specific parliamentary assembly for the Mediterranean should not be an obstacle to monitoring what is done within the other parliamentary bodies, which should develop their own cooperation with that Assembly, essentially by attending each other's sessions.

## **V. Conclusions**

48. All the initiatives we have reviewed reflect the desire to establish interparliamentary links focused on the problems of the Mediterranean region, which with its unresolved conflicts and differences remains an unstable geopolitical area. Governments have taken measures in the area of cooperation, but a lot remains to be done at parliamentary level, either to define common ground with a view to harmonising legislation, or to engage in parliamentary diplomacy, in order to achieve gradual progress through a step-by-step policy.

49. If we wish to see results we must keep giving impetus to Mediterranean policy, which may otherwise be relegated to second place as a result of enlargement and the more "northern" focus of the new Europe. The creation of new interparliamentary assemblies for the Mediterranean region could offer the chance to launch new initiatives and to keep these issues in the public eye, provided that the national parliaments, at least of the Mediterranean rim countries, are prepared to invest efforts in them. It is too soon to say whether these new assemblies will live up to expectations, but as of now it is important for the member parliamentarians to take a collective interest in their efforts and for other interparliamentary assemblies also to send representatives to their sessions in order to promote mutual understanding and exchanges, in order to multiply the results.

50. In the resolution contained in this report it is proposed that the WEU Assembly ask for observer status in these new interparliamentary assemblies – as it has done in other bodies, in particular those with common security issues on their agenda – in order to be able to participate in their sessions. In return these Mediterranean assemblies will receive an invitation to attend the sessions and other events organised by our Assembly. Thought should also be given to the possibility of organising joint seminars on specialised topics, as well as to reciprocal committee visits and exchanges of documents of mutual interest.

**APPENDIX*****The Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly (EMPA) and the  
Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean (former CSCM)******The Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly (EMPA)****Members:*

The parliaments of the 25 EU member states

The European Parliament

The parliaments of: Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, the Palestinian Authority, Syria, Tunisia, Turkey.

*Observers:*

The Arab Interparliamentary Union, the parliaments of Libya, Mauritania.

***The Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean (former CSCM)****Members:*

The parliaments of: Albania, Algeria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Cyprus, Egypt, France, Greece, Israel, Italy, Jordan, Lebanon, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Malta, Morocco, Portugal, Serbia and Montenegro, Slovenia, Spain, Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, Turkey.



