



EuroMed Non-Governmental Platform
Plate-forme non gouvernementale EuroMed
منبر المنظمات غير الحكومية للمنتدى المدني الأورومتوسطي



FINAL DECLARATION & RESOLUTIONS FROM THE 2005 CIVIL FORUM

**LUXEMBOURG
1-3 APRIL**



Final Declaration of the Luxembourg Euromed Civil Forum

Towards a real involvement of Civil Society

In the context of the tenth anniversary of the Barcelona Process, the Luxembourg Euromed Civil Forum gathered 350 civil society representatives from 42 countries from 1 to 3 April 2005.

In a region which has seen profound geopolitical upheavals for the last four years, it is urgent that we as forces of civil society contribute through our analyses and recommendations to the strengthening of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership - the assessment of which calls for a revival and a restructuring of this Partnership at the political, economic, social, cultural and environmental levels.

This is why we have chosen to concentrate on the issues and proposals which appeared as priority during the local consultations when preparing our work in January and February 2005. We did not seek to add our own evaluation to the numerous assessments of the Process, which have already been elaborated. As a matter of fact, our evaluation would have expressed profound scepticism as to the real results of the Partnership in terms of progress in the areas of democratization, human rights, peace, development and the protection of the environment in the region.

However, we believe that even though the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership from now on relies largely on the European Union New Neighbourhood Policies and its bilateral action plans, the Partnership does not become any less of an indispensable multilateral framework. It must continue to work on political solutions to the flagrant contradictions of our time and to reduce the inequalities that remain in the exchanges between the Mediterranean countries.

This is why it is no longer acceptable to disregard the values that we defend, the concerns that are ours and the proposals which we bring.

It is precisely this common will to « contribute » and to « participate » which has emerged from the local consultations. It has resulted in our main proposal on **permanent consultation mechanisms** with civil society, which should be established as of now both in the context of the Partnership and the New Neighbourhood Policies.

In this context we sincerely welcome the constitution of the **Non Governmental Euromed Platform** on the occasion its General Assembly on 1 April. We claim its role, with all its constituting elements, as an integral part of the mechanisms that we propose.

Consequently, we invite the Heads of State and Government of the thirty-five Partnership member states to adopt an action plan to establish permanent consultation mechanisms.

At the same time we invite them to take the proposals and recommendations resulting from our work into consideration. The recommendations concentrate on the necessity of at last reducing the gap between the stated intentions and the implemented policies whether concerning human rights, equality between men and women, migrants' and asylum seekers' rights, respect for international law in the solution of [occupations](#) and conflicts, employment policies, the fight against poverty and AIDS, sustainable development, environment or cultural diversity.

We expect the member countries and the partnership institutions to engage themselves in an efficient implementation of the entirety of these recommendations.

I. Consultation Mechanisms

The participants of the Euromed Civil Forum in Luxembourg welcomed the conclusions of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs meeting in Dublin, May 2004, recognising the role of the EuroMed NGO Platform in organising the Civil Forums.

They welcomed the Paper of the EuroMed NGO Platform on *Proposals for the creation of a permanent consultation mechanism between civil society and public authorities in the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership* prepared for the Civil Forum.

They noted that the Barcelona Declaration recognises the important role of civil society for the development of the Partnership, but that no instruments for consultation between the officials of the Partnership and civil society have been established until this day.

Participants believe that the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership must have a coherent and consistent approach to the active involvement of civil society in all three baskets of the Barcelona Declaration.

They therefore propose that the European and the Barcelona Process institutions draw-up an action plan for permanent consultation in close cooperation with civil society representatives and present this plan at the planned Barcelona +10 meeting of the Head of States in November 2005.

The Plan should aim at strengthening civil society participation in the Barcelona process, making it a fully-fledged partner, and also contribute to developing the multilateral level of the process and the Action plans of the New Neighbourhood Policy. This entails:

- Allowing actual, timely and transparent access to relevant information and documentation for civil society stakeholders, and the negotiation of formal access to relevant information within the EMP.
- Ensuring the possibility for civil society to express its positions and proposals at all relevant stages of operation: programming, implementation and evaluation.
- Ensuring integration of the expertise of civil society stakeholders in policy planning.

This also entails

- A coherent and consistent approach to lifting legal and practical restrictions to civil society participation in the Barcelona process, as concerns freedom of association, assembly and expression and the freedom of movement.
- Developing flexible, transparent, accessible and relevant instruments for financial support to civil society activities.

The Civil Forum participants suggest developing instruments for carrying out consultation at the following levels:

1. Multilateral level:

- Regular exchanges with the European Commission and the Euromed Committee.
- Setting up of thematic working parties (human rights, environment, culture, migration, youth, women, development) gathering civil society and EMP officials meeting at least twice a year.

- Participation of civil society representatives in formal and informal working groups preparing Ministerial Summits, Euromed Committee meetings and sector-based Ministerial meetings; and participation as observers in the official events.
- An Annual Forum to discuss and consult with the Ambassadors responsible for the Partnership, EU institution delegates and civil society stakeholders.
- Regular meetings with the relevant committees, sub-committees and groups of the European Parliament

2. Bilateral level:

- Setting up of thematic working parties to meet at least twice a year
- Regular follow-up and evaluation meetings of the bi-lateral association agreements and 'Neighbourhood Action Plans'; civil society should have full access and participation in the thematic sub-committees under the association agreements.
- In close relation with the specific EU Delegation, annual consultation in each country on the bi-lateral association agreements and the Action Plans within the framework of the New Neighbourhood Policy
- In this process access to information and documents should be guaranteed at all national and regional levels

3. Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly

- Involvement in the activities of the Parliamentary Assembly and its thematic committees and attendance of civil society observers at the EMPA meetings.

It is essential to underline that participants in the consultation mechanisms should be representative of civil society and be independent of State and government interest¹. The Civil Forum recommends that the Euromed Non-Governmental Platform, its regional, sub-regional and local networks, become a main interlocutor of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership.

¹ Cf. Civil society definition by the EuroMed NGO Platform in the preamble to the statutes adopted at the 1st General Assembly, 1 April 2005.

II. Looking forward

Looking at the past 10 years' experience, the participants recalled the richness and diversity of recommendations of the past Civil Forum Declarations. These constitute a catalogue and testimony of the preoccupations of the people of the Euro-Mediterranean region and a solid ground for civil society work within the Barcelona process.

Participants recommend that the past declarations are fully exploited at a time when the Barcelona process is going through a series of reviews. They regret that almost none of these past recommendations – with some notable exceptions - have been integrated into the official policies of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership. This is in itself a testimony of the need to revise the Barcelona process and to bring it closer to the concerns of the people in the region.

We strongly urge that the EMP revision be ambitious and live up to the importance of the political, social, economic and cultural issues at stake in the region, and that it parts from the priority issues for the future which were agreed upon at the present Civil Forum.

In the framework of the revival of the Barcelona Process, we first and foremost insist on the necessity of effectively reducing the gap between the Partnership's stated intentions and the implemented policies and of taking into consideration the main priorities.

The participants thus propose the following key recommendations:

1. Equality between men and women and participation of women:

1a. recall that under the terms of the Treaty on the European Union (art.2 and 3(2)) and the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights (art.23) the EU is obligated to “*eliminate inequalities and promote equality between men and women in all its endeavours*” and that the fulfilment of these basic tenets is an indispensable element of the democratisation process as well as of the dialogue between cultures;

1b. urge the heads of state and heads of government of all 35 member countries of the Partnership to once again put as a priority the promotion of gender equality and the role of women in society, South, East and North of the Mediterranean, as well as their pivotal role in the Neighbourhood Policy, and to ratify the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women, lift any reservations to the Convention and ensure that it is incorporated in their domestic laws throughout the Euromed region;

1c. stress the need to establish within the framework of the Euromed civil forum a “gender equality” network focused on networking, cooperation and information, and call for the greater involvement of independent journalist associations who would, in particular, highlight gender issues.

2. Obstacles to reform and democratisation in the region

2a. Participants to the civil forum note that internal obstacles such as violations of human rights and democratic values, the weight of cultural values and divisions within the elite regarding the definition of reform, impede the reform process. They also note the existence

of external obstacles to reform, such as the hegemonic reflexes of the superpowers who, preoccupied with security, envision reform as a way of stabilizing the rule of the dominant elites, the EU's double standards and its incapacity to forcefully assert itself before the United States, a simplistic perception of the relationship between cultures, the passivity of European countries in their dealings with authoritarian regimes of the region, even their collusion with those regimes, resulting in the marginalisation of the local actors of civil society;

2b. Declare that, in order to facilitate the reform process, the European Union should insist on the conditionality criteria of the association agreements and action plans be observed by establishing a linkage between the financial and economic aspects of these agreements, and political reform;

2c. Urge the development, in close partnership with the actors of civil society, of follow-up and evaluation criteria applying to the reform process;

2d. Call for the lifting of the state of emergency in those countries where it is in force, and the abolishment or suppression of emergency laws and tribunals that impede the democratisation process;

2c. Urge the governments of the region and in particular the Arab governments to immediately release all prisoners of conscience and to end all form of security harassment of the defenders of democracy and Human Rights;

2d. Solemnly reaffirm that open access to public media and information capabilities, the right to form and administer political parties, labour unions and NGOs, freedom of expression, in particular the right to freedom of assembly and association, and the right to creativity are indispensable prerequisites in any reform process;

2e. Affirm their full support to the action of the Lebanese civil society in favour of freedom, sovereignty and democracy.

3. Sustainable Development

3a. Provide strong support for the present drafting process of the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development, and calls on the 10th Anniversary of EMP in Barcelona in November, to endorse and mandate the implementation of the Mediterranean Sustainable Strategy Development as adopted by the Barcelona Convention Contracting Parties, in November 2005.

3b. Stress the need to fully implement the decisions adopted in Athens concerning the protection of the environment, and the need to prioritize environmental issues at all levels of the Partnership;

3c. Call for the establishment of a regional Euromed system of follow-up and evaluation on the impact of the EMP on employment and social conditions ;

3d. Call for the definition of Euro-Mediterranean Strategies on Employment and Poverty with jointly agreed goals, specification of actions plans and resources and coordination of the national employment and poverty policies;

3e. Reaffirm that cultural diversity is a prerequisite for sustainable development and call on the leadership of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership to urge the UNESCO expert committee to finalize the draft Convention on cultural diversity in order to ensure the adoption by UNESCO's General Assembly of this new legal instrument of protection of cultural diversity by the end of 2005.

4. Migrants and migration movements

4a. The participants to the forum stress that an EU approach exclusively based on security considerations leave aside the reality of migration issues today and that relying on the EMP members countries of the South to serve as a protective barrier against migration flows will be conducive to situations resulting in major human right violations and will reinforce the negative perception of migrants in both the South and the North;

4b. Insist on the immediate establishment of a regional policy of responsibility sharing in protecting the rights of asylum seekers and refugees within the framework of respect for the Geneva Convention rather than a EU policy of externalization of the duty to protect people at risk;

4c. Appeal to take measures to ratify the UN Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All migrant workers and members of their families, which has only been ratified by two southern countries of the Euro-Mediterranean region, and support the creation of a civil society network on Migration within the Barcelona process

5. Peace, security and regional integration

5a. Call for the development and the implementation of a consistent and coherent Euro-Mediterranean policy to ensure that the leadership of the Partnership fully engages in ensuring the respect for and enforcement of international law and the protection of human rights, and thus ensure their contribution to conflict resolution in the region;

5b. Urge the leadership of the Partnership to put an end to double standards as regards compliance with the United Nations resolutions, and to refuse to grant any international legitimacy to unilateral actions, particularly in the case of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict;

5c. Stress the importance of an approach on education and information that is based on international law, in order to bring about a change in prevailing perceptions and representations;

5d. Urge the leadership of the Partnership to review the evaluation mechanism of the existing agreements with a view to compliance with international law.

6. Culture and the Anna Lindh Foundation

6a. Call upon the European Commission to adapt the procedures on access to the EU programmes to local political conditions within each partner countries and simplify those procedures in order to make the programmes more accessible to small operators;

6b. Support the convening of a meeting of the Culture ministers of the EMP (the last one took place in 1998) that would be preceded by a civil forum on culture and that would make proposals to upgrade the cultural instruments of the Partnership. It has been proposed to set up a follow-up group on cultural issues within the framework of the consultation mechanism put forth by the civil forum;

6c. Urge the establishment of a monitoring mechanism that would address the uncontrolled commercialisation of public cultural property affecting in particular the man-made heritage and favour an increase in grants to promote South-South exchanges involving artists and cultural operators, as well as the strengthening of regional training programmes in cultural management;

6d. Insist on the disclosure of transparent information on the financing and operation mechanisms of the Anna Lindh Foundation for the Dialogue between Cultures and insist that the Euro-Mediterranean Non-Governmental Platform be represented in the same way as the national networks of the Foundation or within them.

7. Youth

7a. Insist on the reinforcement of the role and place of youth in the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership by mainstreaming youth as a priority and cross-cutting issue

7b. Urges strong support for the emergence of youth representation independent of governments and representatives of civil society in all countries as an integral part of reinforcing democratic processes, and insist on the creation of a representation of youth at the EuroMed level

7c. Urge the inclusion of youth structures of civil society in the South Mediterranean countries in the decision-making on the identification, implementation and evaluation of the EMP youth programmes.

8. Agriculture

8a. Given the absolute importance of agriculture in the region, and in line with the long EU tradition of solidarity both within the EU and towards Mediterranean partner's countries, urge the EuroMed process to adopt and put into operation the principle of non-reciprocity or differential treatment for Mediterranean partner countries. Otherwise it results in an asymmetrical liberalisation, which leaves little place to the South Mediterranean countries.

8b. Remind of the importance of minimising any negative impact on the traditional flexibility to use tariffs and safeguards to protect their food security and rural development needs

8c. Underline the necessity of consulting all stakeholders (including local actors) in a timely and transparent manner in the preparation of the roadmap and terms of reference (ToR) for agricultural negotiations and of taking full account of the preliminary findings of the Sustainability Impact Assessment of the Euro-Med Free Trade Area.

9.HIV/AIDS

9a. Recall that the AIDS pandemic – still largely a taboo within both societies and governments – has created major challenges and threatens all countries of the Mediterranean region;

9b. Recognizing that, despite all the efforts made at the country, regional and international level, the HIV/AIDS pandemic that appeared over 25 years ago is still gaining ground each year, launch an appeal for the prevention of HIV and the protection of all human rights of people living with the virus in the Euro-Mediterranean area; by which they reaffirm their collective commitment to impeding the propagation of the pandemic by ensuring that their organisations give these concerns a high level of priority;

9c. Declare that they are committed to work for an environment that protects people infected with or affected by HIV/AIDS and to combat all forms of discrimination against those people.

10 Support

10a. Concerned by the numerous cases of violations of individual and collective basic rights and freedoms, the participants affirm their full support to victims of such violations and call upon the public to put pressure on public authorities of the countries in the region to release all prisoners of conscience and to ensure that all of their rights are vindicated;

10b. Urge the European Union to fully integrate in their bilateral relations the respect of minority rights in the region, and recommend in particular the development of an accessible tool for civil society that enables monitoring and reporting on the situation of minorities;

10c. The civil forum extends its full support to the forthcoming decentralized world social forum that will take place in Morocco in July 2006.