



## **IT IS NOT IN THE STARS TO HOLD OUR DESTINY...**

Jean Monnet, the father of European integration, closed his memoirs with the words: *"The community we have created is not an end in itself. The Community... is only a stage on the way to the organised world of tomorrow."*

His words have a particular resonance now for Europe and its Mediterranean partners as we meet in Naples for the final time before the EU's historic enlargement to discuss the future of our regional relationship. The Barcelona Process remains as crucial to our needs and aspirations as when it was launched in 1995. It remains our best chance to address instability and diversity in the Mediterranean at a multilateral level, bringing together at the same table countries that would otherwise not come together.

But it is true that EU Enlargement sets new demands upon us. There are fears amongst the Mediterranean countries that our expansion will create new dividing lines to the detriment of relations between us. On the contrary, we believe that enlargement will translate into a renewed European contribution to peace, stability and prosperity along our common borders. For the first time, the EU has decided to consider its Mediterranean partners on a par with our neighbours in Eastern Europe. The commitment to political and economic reform of each of our neighbours, Mediterranean and Eastern European alike, will determine on an individual basis how much each of our partners profits from the enhanced opportunities that EU enlargement will bring.

We are, however, under no illusions of the magnitude of the challenges before us. The crisis in Iraq, the stagnation in the Middle East Peace Process and the recent terrorist attacks in Istanbul – as in Saudi Arabia and Morocco – highlight the threats to stability in the region. The United Nations Report on Arab Human Development suggests that delayed democracies and stalled reforms have stunted real progress. We must equally make sure that fundamentalism and terrorism are not allowed to derail our efforts to bring the Mediterranean forward. The scale of these problems should help us focus our minds to strengthen the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, not to shy away from it.

In today's world, there is much talk of a 'clash of civilisations' and it is true that culture and identity often lie at the heart of the world's most intricate conflicts. But they can also serve as a solution to the problem. More than ever, we need to reassure people that we can use our different cultures as bridges that bring us closer together, not barriers that drive us apart. There is a need to increase the understanding of our cultures through dialogue. In Naples we hope to establish a Euro-Mediterranean Foundation for the Dialogue of Cultures, which will act as a catalyst for initiatives aimed at increasing dialogue and understanding throughout the Euro-Mediterranean region, providing a forum where the voices of the man and woman on the street can be heard.



I hope that the Foundation will receive full input from civil society in the Mediterranean countries, the weakness of which is so far slowing the pace of reform. A socially sustainable reform process must also encourage civil society to make a positive and spontaneous contribution. This must evolve from a home grown desire of governments to adapt to the new relationships between state, markets and society and to recognise that relationships with civil society need not be viewed as a zero-sum game. But this should be a faster process.

Dialogue between our peoples should be underpinned by both political and economic reforms. In Naples we also hope to agree on the establishment of a Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly, which will enable parliamentarians from both sides of the Mediterranean to exchange ideas on how a democratic system should function in a modern state, on how to fight terrorism and organised crime while respecting human rights and the rule of law, including an independent Judiciary. The Assembly will also provide a forum for Parliamentarians from countries like Morocco or Jordan to present their experiences of pursuing democratic reform within a system fully respectful of Islam.

Economic reforms are just as important. Our partners need to be able to offer an acceptable future to their population. In spite of our efforts so far, which include large volumes of economic and technical assistance plus substantial trade concessions, the prosperity gap between the EU and Southern Mediterranean countries is not diminishing. We already know that forty million jobs must be created in the next decade just to maintain employment levels at current rates. For our Mediterranean partners to be able to reap the full benefits of free trade and attract significant domestic and foreign investment, substantial regulatory and institutional reforms are essential. Such changes would also allow trade between our Mediterranean partners themselves to finally take off. This is why in Naples we will discuss the format that the European Investment Bank's lending operations in the area should take in order to have an even greater impact on private sector development.

We strongly believe that it is the duty of the European Union to support our Mediterranean neighbours. It is also in our enlightened self-interest to help spread the consolidation of democracy and economic prosperity throughout the Mediterranean, a region of geostrategic importance for the European Union if only because of its energy resources and migratory flows. We are encouraged that the United States and others are beginning to follow our strategy of supporting political and economic reforms. But ultimately it is the responsibility of the countries themselves to demonstrate their willingness and determination to bring their countries up to the 21<sup>st</sup> century standards of freedoms, civil liberties and open markets. As the UN report on Arab Human Development also noted 'lasting reform in the Arab world must come from within'. We can only try to help, we cannot be the driving force.

It is up to the Mediterranean countries to take tangible steps towards full democracy and a free market economy, to extend education to all – women particularly - and to further deepen respect for human rights. In exchange, our recently launched Wider Europe initiative has been designed to include our neighbouring partners into the new expanded European internal market as much as they are prepared to integrate. We are offering our neighbours – I repeat,



Mediterranean and Eastern European alike - parallel progress towards the EU's four fundamental freedoms: free movement of goods, services, capital and people. The factor that will define the pace of progress will be each neighbour's commitment to reform. It has been said that borders are the scars of history. Instead, we hope our Mediterranean neighbours will find our enlarged borders the gateways to their improved future.

These are not the easiest of times. We badly need a common approach that enables us to jointly bring forward the future of a region whose destiny all too often has depended mostly on decisions taken elsewhere. Like the European Union, the Barcelona Process is not an end in itself, rather, it offers us the means to live up to our responsibilities in the region, for which we must make the most of our meeting in Naples. As William Shakespeare wrote "*It is not in the stars to hold our destiny, but in ourselves*". And we cannot afford to fail.