

**Agreed Conclusions of the third Euro-Mediterranean Conference of**  
**Ministers of Culture**  
**Athens, 29 – 30 May 2008**

1. The Ministers of Culture of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership convene in Athens on 29 and 30 May 2008 under the Republic of Slovenia EuroMed Presidency. The conference is hosted by the Hellenic Republic, which will be co-chairing the meeting together with the Republic of Slovenia.
2. The present Conference is taking place in the framework of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership. It builds on the conclusions of the two previous meetings of the Euro-Mediterranean Ministers of Culture (Bologna 1996 and Rhodes 1998) and the meeting of the Euro-Mediterranean Ministers of Foreign Affairs (Crete 2003) devoted to the dialogue between cultures, and offers a good opportunity to exchange views on the cultural dimension of the Partnership and, in particular, on the importance of dialogue between cultures in this regard. The meeting takes place during the “2008 European Year of Intercultural Dialogue” and – following the decision of the Euro-Mediterranean Foreign Ministers in November 2007 – in the specific context of the "2008 Euro-Mediterranean year of dialogue between cultures"
3. Ministers reiterate their commitment to the main principles set out and adopted by the Barcelona Declaration of 27-28 November 1995, which provides an overall framework for the Euro-Mediterranean partnership.
4. Ministers recall the very significant contribution which, throughout history, peoples of the Mediterranean basin have made to the mutual enrichment of cultures and civilisations. They reaffirm the importance of promoting dialogue and cooperation between cultures and civilisations among all members of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, considering that the Mediterranean region is the birth place of several great civilisations of the history of the world and in which originated the three monotheistic religions.
5. Ministers understand that the Mediterranean basin is a place of memories as well as the cradle and crossroads of civilizations. The accelerating pace of political, economic and technological events that the world witnessed since the convening of the last Euro-Mediterranean meeting of Ministers of Culture in 1998, in Rhodes, has raised new challenges such as fundamentalism and racism, thus increasing difficulties in bridging cultural differences, separating both shores of the Mediterranean. These challenges need to be addressed by further promoting mutual understanding and dialogue.

6. In this regard dialogue between cultures may be seen as a key element in uniting the people of the region and, in parallel, spreading awareness of their differences and particularities. Ministers consider that dialogue between cultures and cultural cooperation are an essential tool for the promotion of mutual understanding, reconciliation and tolerance within the Euro-Mediterranean region.

7. Ministers confirm that the prevalence of peace and justice in the Mediterranean Region will affect in a positive manner the prospects of the Barcelona Declaration and will increase the chances of positive cultural co-operation among the Euro-Mediterranean countries.

8. Mutual knowledge and understanding are crucial to building bridges which will help overcome the prejudices and cultural barriers that, in turn, jeopardise the objective of achieving a common area of peace, stability and shared prosperity in the Euro-Mediterranean region.

9. Ministers recognise that culture and dialogue between cultures have enjoyed increasing importance in the Euro-Mediterranean partnership in recent years – a fact underlined by the many joint actions and cooperation programmes that have been approved and successfully implemented: the creation of the Anna Lindh Foundation, the EuroMed Audiovisual, the EuroMed Heritage, the Regional Information and Communication programmes, the EuroMed Youth programme and the EuroMed Gender programme. These programmes are clear indications for our joint aspirations and efforts in this area.

10. Ministers are pleased to note the EU's commitment to enhancing the cultural component of its external relations, in accordance with the European agenda for culture, adopted by the European Commission in May 2007, and endorsed by the EU's Education, Youth and Culture Council meeting, in November 2007, and by the European Council in December 2007.

11. Building on the positive results achieved and existing activities, Ministers underline that the objective of this Conference is to mark the starting point of a fully-fledged Euro-Mediterranean Strategy on Culture, encompassing cooperation in both the dialogue between cultures and cultural policy. This strategy should enhance the cultural dimension of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership in an innovative and concrete way.

12. This Euro-Mediterranean Cultural Strategy should build on the principles stated in the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions and the relevant international references, including the conclusions of the Stockholm Intergovernmental Conference on Cultural Policies for Development (1998).

## **1. First dimension: Dialogue between Cultures**

13. Ministers reaffirm the principles that should govern the dialogue as announced in the Action Programme for the Dialogue between Cultures and Civilisations, adopted by the Euro-Mediterranean Ministers of Foreign Affairs (Valencia, April 2002; Crete 2003).

14. Ministers affirm that Culture is the main arena in which real instruments for the purpose of anticipating, defusing, averting, and resolving conflicts can be provided. Dialogue between cultures should be a *modus operandi* for managing diversity and progressing towards a common future in a shared area.

15. Ministers highlight the importance of cooperation regarding the dialogue between cultures with and within the Euro-Mediterranean region as the main instrument to foster democracy, human rights and fundamental freedoms, and as a conflict prevention mechanism.

16. Ministers recognise that dialogue between cultures is an essential tool for promoting mutual understanding, tolerance and reconciliation, as well as fighting against discrimination, racism, xenophobia and extremism, and is a valuable tool of conflict prevention.

17. Ministers welcome all Euro-Mediterranean governmental and non-governmental efforts and initiatives in the field of dialogue between cultures and stress the essential role of the Anna Lindh Foundation for the Dialogue between Cultures. The Foundation is a clear testimony of the importance that the Euro-Mediterranean family attaches to dialogue between cultures. The Ministers endorse the appointment of the new President, Mr André Azoulay, and of the new Executive Director, Mr. Andreu Claret as well as of the new Advisory Council.

18. In this respect, Ministers recall that the main objective of the Foundation is to promote a dialogue between cultures and welcome its new role as observatory and also the publication of an annual report, in coordination with Euro-Mediterranean Partner Countries. The Foundation should continue to fulfil its role, in particular through its national networks (i.e through the involvement of civil society): their reinforcement will increase the efficiency and visibility of the Foundation.

19. In addition, Ministers welcome the events and initiatives taking place under the "Euro-Mediterranean year of dialogue between cultures", mainly the Anna Lindh Foundation's programme "1001 Actions for Dialogue", emphasising the need to define

a long-term, sustainable strategy on dialogue between cultures in the Euro-Mediterranean region.

20. Ministers agree on the importance of equipping future generations with intercultural competences and advocate the spread of new technologies to the widest possible social spectrum.

21. Ministers acknowledge that multilingualism represents a key element in dialogue between cultures.

22. Ministers underline that translation, as it relates languages and cultures and provides wide access to works of art and ideas, is an essential tool for dialogue between cultures, and should be subject to a joint effort from the partner countries as well as relevant EU institutions.

23. Ministers acknowledge that the mobility of artists, intellectuals, academicians and cultural workers and trainers, works of art, knowledge, and creativity, including under the framework of cultural exchange, significantly contributes to dialogue between cultures, and further emphasise that they are committed to encouraging it. In this context, Ministers stress the need for simplification of visa procedures for artists.

24. Ministers stress that particular attention should be paid to the specific cultural, linguistic and educational needs of minorities, in accordance with national legislations and international obligations of the countries concerned, while appreciating the Euro-Mediterranean concept of identity, as a result of cosmopolitan interpenetrations, which is also a way of preventing the fragmentation of identity in our societies.

25. Ministers recognise the importance of enhancing women's participation in cultural exchanges and dialogue between cultures, as underlined in the Conclusions of the Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on Strengthening the Role of Women in Society (Istanbul, November 2006).

26. Ministers welcome the first meeting of the Euro-Mediterranean Youth Parliament in Berlin (26 May – 3 June 2007) as an example of dialogue between young people from both sides of the Mediterranean, and support its continuation. They further welcome that Morocco has offered to host the second Euro-Mediterranean Youth Parliament during 2008.

27. Ministers recognize that sporting events, on international or regional level, have contributed to the promotion of contacts between peoples and dialogue between cultures. They have essentially contributed to tolerance and better understanding of different cultures in the Euro-Mediterranean region. In this context, Ministers welcome the 16<sup>th</sup> Mediterranean Games, which will be held in Pescara in Italy from 26<sup>th</sup> June to 5<sup>th</sup> July 2009 and the 17<sup>th</sup> Mediterranean Games, which will be hosted in Volos and

Larissa in Greece from 24<sup>th</sup> June to 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2013.

28. Ministers acknowledge the Slovenian initiative for the establishment of a Euro-Mediterranean University in Piran as an important step forward through a cooperation network of existing universities.

29. Ministers recognise the pivotal role the media can play in the promotion of dialogue between cultures and understanding, taking into consideration that applying the principle of the freedom of speech should be exercised in a spirit of respect for "the Other" including its beliefs. The "EuroMed and the Media" Task Force, within the framework of the regional information and communication programme, studied at their meeting in Ljubljana in March 2008, the recommendations from '*The EuroMed Berlin conference of June 2007: 'The Media and Intercultural Understanding: Challenges and Responses'*', and prepared a series of proposals for consideration on, *inter alia*, training and skills exchange on intercultural matters; and networking projects between journalism schools.

30. Ministers take note of the recommendations of the group of EuroMed writers and other intellectuals who met in Barcelona on 23 May 2008. These include, *inter alia*, actions in the following areas: education, communication and audiovisual, and literary and artistic creation.

31. Ministers welcome the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations Initiative and its prospective contribution to deepening dialogue and mutual respect among cultures and peoples of the Euro-Mediterranean region.

32. Ministers welcome all Euro-Mediterranean partners' initiatives that have taken or will take place in the next months in this field. These actions are proof of the paramount importance the Euro-Mediterranean partners attach to the dialogue between cultures and are expected to provide a contribution to the elaboration of the future Euro-Mediterranean Strategy on Culture, *inter alia*:

- An International Conference, "Europe, world and humanity in the 21st century", which brought together international philosophers, as a contribution by Slovenia to the 2008 European Year of Intercultural Dialogue. The conference took place in Ljubljana from 10 to 12 April 2008.
- The EU Presidency Conference, "New Paradigms, New Models – Culture in the EU External Relations", that took place in Ljubljana on 13 and 14 May 2008, as an important step in building bridges with non-EU countries, in particular the EuroMed area.
- *Atelier Culturel de la Méditerranée: "Les Etats généraux des acteurs du*

*changement en Méditerranée*" – an event organised by the forthcoming French Presidency, concerning dialogue among people and cultures in the Mediterranean. This gathering will take place in Marseilles from 4 to 6 November 2008.

33. Ministers agree that the following areas for action should be given consideration and further explored:

- assessment of the impact of dialogue between cultures as a contribution to conflict prevention;
- declaration of a week of dialogue between cultures all around the Euro-Mediterranean region.

## **2. Second dimension: Cultural policy**

34. Besides art and heritage, cultural policies should be linked to other domains of life (social policy, education, cultural industries, etc.) and be conceived as trans-sectoral development activities. In that sense, Ministers acknowledge that a Euro-Mediterranean Strategy on Culture has the potential to contribute to fulfilling the objectives of the three pillars of the Barcelona Declaration.

35. Along with the principles stated in the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expression (Paris, 2005), this new Euro-Mediterranean Strategy on Culture should give particular attention to strengthening the capacity of partner countries in the field of cultural expression and to promoting access to culture. Euro-Mediterranean partners should be encouraged to further develop coherent national cultural policies, taking into account the needs of the cultural sector and the relevant international references, including the Conclusions of the Stockholm Intergovernmental Conference on "Cultural Policies for Development" (1998).

36. The Euro-Mediterranean Strategy on Culture should also aim at establishing more balanced cultural exchanges. All dimensions of cooperation should be enhanced (EU - partner countries, regional, bilateral), including direct cooperation between individual EuroMed partners, with a view to empowering cultural operators.

37. Ministers agree that all joint action in the cultural domain would have the following priorities: the development of human resources, the transfer of know-how, training in culture-related skills, the establishment of joint systems of information and communication, the use of new technologies and the promotion of sustainable economic development through culture.

38. Ministers consider the exchange of people, in particular young people, ideas and cultural activities as a common denominator for future projects, especially through networking between cultural actors at the Euro-Mediterranean level which is a major

factor in promoting exchange of experience, transfer of know-how and the emergence of joint projects.

39. Ministers stress the importance of the identification, protection and presentation of cultural heritage which is of significance for the Euro-Mediterranean countries.

40. Ministers adamantly condemn trafficking and trade in cultural property and treasures that have been illicitly acquired through illegal excavations and the pillaging of monuments, and invite the partners to exchange experiences in ways to fight such illegal practices, particularly in the light of the UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property (1970).

41. Ministers take note of the Greek proposal on the establishment of a network for recording and documentation of the Euro-Mediterranean underwater cultural heritage based on the exchange of best practices.

42. As part of the new EuroMed Strategy on Culture:

1. Ministers adopt the first “*Strategy for the development of Euro-Mediterranean Cultural Heritage: priorities from Mediterranean countries*”, developed on the basis of the experience gained during the EuroMed Heritage Programme, as an important step forward towards a future cultural strategy leading to appropriation of the Euro-Mediterranean heritage by citizens. They insist on the relevance of the main approaches of this strategy in strengthening the Euro-Mediterranean partnership: raising public awareness and education on the subject of cultural heritage and cultural heritage as a means of local development.

2. Ministers also recognise the *Strategy for the Development of Euro-Mediterranean Audiovisual Cooperation*, drawn up by a reflection group of European and Mediterranean professionals as an important tool for structuring audiovisual policies, and endorse the priorities developed in that paper. Ministers stress that the activities of the EuroMed Audiovisual programmes I and II have already been making a substantial contribution to promoting cultural diversity and mutual comprehension, and to enhancing the audiovisual sector in the region. They call for further action to structure the audiovisual sector in the Mediterranean region. On the basis of these priorities, Ministers call for a new regional Audiovisual programme for the Mediterranean, to be financed with a view to ensuring the continuity of the current activities.

43. Ministers take note of the preparatory action, authorised by the European Parliament, to strengthen cooperation between the audiovisual industries of the European Union and other countries.

44. Ministers underline the need for complementarity between those European

programmes, and cooperation initiatives undertaken at Member State level.

45. Ministers agree that the following areas for action should be given consideration and further explored:

- Exchange of views on current cultural policies and experiences regarding cultural programmes.
- Development of synergies between policies and programmes in the fields of art, cultural heritage and education to foster access to culture.
- Culture as a sector that creates jobs and generates income and is therefore relevant for sustainable development, in particular through cultural tourism; reflection on further engagement of small and medium-sized enterprises in the cultural and creative sectors.
- Mobility of cultural workers and operators and the training of cultural actors.
- Fostering of contemporary cultural creation, so as to perpetuate our rich cultural heritage.
- Intensifying cooperation with civil society in accordance with national legislations.
- Support translation policies in the region which plays a significant role in promoting better understanding between the peoples of the Euro-Mediterranean countries.
- Support the digitization and documentation of cultural heritage.

46. Ministers agree to establish a follow-up mechanism to draw up a Euro-Mediterranean Cultural Strategy and concrete proposals, to be endorsed by the next meeting of the Ministers of Culture, to be held in the first semester of 2010. This mechanism will include the establishment of a Euro-Med Group of Experts on Culture which will meet at least twice before the next Euro-Mediterranean Conference of the Ministers of Culture.