

DECLARATION OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES FOR THE MEDITERRANEAN

To the Heads of State and Government, meeting on 13 July 2008 for a revival of the Barcelona process: A Union for the Mediterranean

We, local and regional elected representatives of the Mediterranean and Europe, meeting in Marseille, reiterate our willingness to contribute to the creation of a Euro-Mediterranean area founded on the principles of economic, social and territorial cohesion, which bring concrete results to the citizens.

Despite real progress and significant developments, the hopes and the extent of the challenges which were initially raised by the Euro-Mediterranean partnership are still far from being realised.

We share your desire to give it a fresh impetus, capable of reducing the growing differences between Europe and the South and East of the Mediterranean, and also of coping with the highly disturbing nature of the economic, social and environmental difficulties which influence the development of our territories.

New sector-based policies are going to be introduced which seem to us to be vital and relevant. To achieve all these objectives, the amount of public aid for development in the Mediterranean should be increased to put it on a level with the scale of challenges posed, and yet at the same time, it should be reconsidered in order to give it more impact. Policies implemented on a bilateral and/or multi-lateral basis suffer from over-centralisation and an inability to reach all people in the territories in which they live.

We propose working together to make these policies more effective at regional level and much more in touch with the citizens. Indeed, experience shows that when regional governments have real involvement, when they have a genuine autonomy, sufficient human resources and their own financial resources, they can play a key role not only in terms of economic and social development but also for the well-being and integration of all citizens. We urge you to move forward along these lines and exploit this potential.

We encourage you to foster local and regional development initiatives which focus in particular on job creation, innovation, support for small and medium sized enterprises, the promotion of cohesion and social inclusion and sustainable development, in particular, of agriculture which is closer to the needs of the people.

For this, we request the strengthening of the role played by regional governments, while respecting local autonomy and their responsibility in the creation and implementation of territorial policies, by developing decentralisation and devolution policies as well as policies supporting local democracy in Mediterranean countries.

We also ask you for a strong commitment, involving the local and regional authorities, on the intercultural dialogue which is at the very foundations of a Region's stability and which constitutes a pillar of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership.

This willingness must be reflected at institutional level. A formal representation system of local and regional authorities must be set up urgently in the Euro-Mediterranean partnership, in order to involve them in the design and implementation of the main policies, to ensure an ever-increasing role for infra-state governments in the modernisation of public policies with regard to their closeness to the citizens, and to depend more on a multi-level governance and territorial development initiatives, whether at urban, rural or regional level.

For our part, we, cities, provinces, Regions and other regional governments, commit to:

- Providing our contribution to solving major sector-based problems, namely:
 - o Economic development policies and job creation;
 - o The low level of investment in education and training;
 - o The degradation of natural resources, particularly on the coastline;
 - o Integrated water management;
 - o Local difficulties surrounding health and social policies.
- Setting up integrated territorial development plans (regional, local and urban amongst others) in the hope that national, regional, European and international funding provides the necessary support, while at the same time encouraging the participation of and consultation with, civil society;
- Working to integrate immigrants as an opportunity for discussion and intercultural dialogue;
- Encouraging local governance and democracy in all these policies, whether sector-based or integrated;
- Strengthening the existing coordination mechanisms to offer a real dialogue to other players in Mediterranean cooperation;
- Mobilising the main networks of Mediterranean local and regional authorities to strengthen and improve cooperation between - and targeted at - local and regional authorities;
- Holding regular meetings, to continue the initiative we first introduced in 2005, to take stock of expected progress, namely on the occasion of the Barcelona +15 celebration.

We wish you the very best for this new step which will commence on 13 July 2008 and we sincerely hope that the results live up to the expectations created.

Marseille, 23 June 2008