THE FIRST MEDITERRANEAN CITIZENS’ ASSEMBLY:

« MEDITERANNEAN DIALOGUES: INSTITUTIONS AND CITIZENSHIP IN THE MEDITERRANEAN »

Valencia (Spain), July 2 to 4, 2010

SYNTHESIS
From 2 to 4 July 2010, the first Citizens’ Assembly of the Mediterranean was held in Valencia, Spain, on the theme “Institutions and Citizenship in the Mediterranean. Eighty individuals from eighteen different Mediterranean countries attended this first meeting. Representatives of all public institutions of the Mediterranean were also present, such as the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean, the Euro-Med Parliamentary Assembly, the Anna Lindh Foundation, the Economic and Social Council, the European Commission and the European Investment Bank.

DISCUSSIONS WERE SPLIT INTO FOUR AGORAS:

AGORA 1 : Thinking about the Mediterranean region.
- What political/institutional framework?
- Which institutional realities for the Mediterranean?
- What visions of the Mediterranean from the perspective of countries participating in the Euro-Mediterranean process?

AGORA 2 : Citizenship in the Mediterranean, rights and responsibilities
- What is Mediterranean citizenship?
- Which instruments and policies should be used for exercising citizenship?
- Is there a Mediterranean identity?

AGORA 3 : Creation of a sustainable area of peace: are there any prerequisites?
- What forms of citizen participation are needed to work towards a community of Mediterranean peoples?
- Which Euro-Mediterranean agreements will help eradicate socio-economic inequalities?
- How do we un-compartmentalize the mindsets and practices of organisations working for the Mediterranean area?

AGORA 4 : Les Current and future challenges in the Mediterranean:
The individual and collective responsibility of citizens
- What is the environmental responsibility of citizens of the Mediterranean area?
- What education is needed to face the challenges of tomorrow?
- What “territorial developments” are needed in the Mediterranean area?
- What mobility policies are needed in the Mediterranean to meet public demand?
AGORA 1: THINKING ABOUT THE MEDITERRANEAN REGION

The more we travel throughout the Mediterranean, the more we realize the proximity of its peoples, their cultures and the similarity of their everyday problems.

We are very much aware of the existence of the process of the Union for the Mediterranean (UPM) as an attempt to create a new Euro-Mediterranean institutional framework, a process of institutionalization in which we are both observers and actors, and we want to maintain this dual condition. Observers in the sense that we do not take decisions in the process of the UPM, and actors, because, as citizens, we have an obligation and the ethical requirement to seek by every means at our disposal that political institutions offer answers to the needs and requirements of citizens.

We understand citizenship as an engine for change, able to overlook borders, walls, misunderstandings, prejudices and fears. Through our individual capacities, we need to make this new impetus possible by creating synergies in order to build a Mediterranean political space.

The notion of citizenship is crucial for the development of the Union for the Mediterranean. Mutual trust must become the basis of our relations, not only at the political, administrative and institutional level, but also and especially at the social and civil one.

We are convinced that the Mediterranean must have a political dimension. We do not yet know why, or how, but at some point the Mediterranean will require a political dimension.

Direct relations between Mediterranean cities and direct relations between entrepreneurs can strengthen the Mediterranean. This action was already developed in the past but must be reformulated in the present context. This is for us a frame of reference because citizens’ circles of the ACM are local, territorial, and present in cities. Thus, they can also be part of a dynamic linked directly to local and institutional policies.

We think about the Mediterranean in its uniqueness and in its relationship with other parts of the world. The Mediterranean must be understood in its global context and not just in a Euro-Mediterranean one. The Mediterranean is at the heart of everything we have made and is not isolated from the rest of the world. Instead, in this time of globalization, the Mediterranean has the opportunity to be part of the configuration of the international order under construction. The Assembly of Citizens of the Mediterranean must be prepared to influence representatives of political institutions and elected representatives.

We also have an obligation to support civil society, rights and responsibilities of citizens in the South, but also in the North. We must decolonize the mind and actions. As citizens, we have an obligation to think differently and, from that thought, to require that political institutions and elected officials decolonize their actions.
There is widespread ignorance of shared values in the Mediterranean and there are problems of prejudice and stereotypes among populations of North and South. We need to promote intercultural dialogue and involve the media to promote the Mediterranean. Access to education must also be improved and values of tolerance and solidarity must be taught. We must encourage knowledge transfer and avoid brain drain.

We notice a failure of multilateral frameworks for cooperation, a clear failure in the implementation of democracy in the South which is accompanied by a lack of critical eye on institutions.

The global economic crisis leads to ghettos and there is concern with the hypocrisy of conditionality in partnership agreements between North and South and blocking the peace process in the Arab-Israeli conflict.

We need to promote SMEs as well as the integration of women. We should facilitate mobility, especially youth mobility, in the Mediterranean area from the south to the north.

The citizens’ contribution to the construction of the Euro-Mediterranean area is possible if it meets certain prerequisites. Among them, there are the issues of human rights, the relationship between citizens and their governments, the development of the “alliance of civilizations”, the notion of «European power» and the role of the United States in Euro-Mediterranean developments, or the necessary promotion of bilateral relations in order to enable the Euro-Mediterranean project to eventually take off.

Without a Mediterranean of men, women and youth, without a Mediterranean of cities, the Euromed project is doomed to failure. The Mediterranean is indeed not a problem but a solution to the crisis.

With the level of misunderstanding between cultures and religions increasing dangerously, it is important to strengthen one of the key objectives enshrined in the founding Charter of the ACM: “Work towards overcoming mutual fears to give a sense of human, political, cultural, environmental and economic unity to a community of Mediterranean peoples once again”. Promoting intercultural and interfaith dialogues is essential to create a basis on which can be built real political, economic and social cooperation between Mediterranean countries. This will lead us towards the consolidation of a prosperous and stable region for all our peoples.
AGORA 2 : CITIZENSHIP IN THE MEDITERRANEAN, RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

We found that the cultural and religious diversity is part of the Mediterranean identity. We affirmed that the Mediterranean identity is a shared identity. We have values that identify us and what we stand for: freedom, peace, respect for diversity and environmental responsibility.

We said that the Mediterranean has been, and is still a space for change and crossbreeding between both shores. This is, in fact, what we find to be the basis of Mediterranean citizenship. It should further deepen the ongoing interaction between rights and responsibilities and active participation, political and social, which are the foundations of citizenship.

Crossbreeding and action are the two pillars of Mediterranean citizenship that we want to develop, extending the concept of citizenship and its relation to identity in a globalized world. We must continue our reflection on what exactly this means in the early twenty-first century context.

It is important that citizens take ownership of issues requiring a common response. The challenges are many: the challenges of legitimacy, consensus building, and credibility. We must create a dialogue between public institutions and citizens.

Citizenship has at least three dimensions: 1) a constant interaction, 2) Rights and responsibilities (there could be a Bill of Rights in the Mediterranean), and 3) political and social participation of citizens.

In the Mediterranean there are vectors of common citizenship beyond plural identities. Up to now, this citizenship has been linked with national sovereignty. There is: a) the unwillingness of states to cede sovereignty to create a supranational citizenship b) the concept of citizenship traditionally excluded those who are not recognized as citizens and are often the most vulnerable; c) the creation of symbolic boundaries when physical borders disappear; and d) the reduced mobility reinforces existing prejudices.
AGORA 3: CREATION OF A SUSTAINABLE AREA OF PEACE: ARE THERE ANY PREREQUISITES?

Are there prerequisites to peace? Against those who argue that we must prepare for war if we want peace, we want to affirm that we must prepare for peace to avoid war.

Wars have accompanied the history of the Mediterranean. It has been said that an extreme desire for peace and a great political decision exist to make the Mediterranean a sea of peace, where inequalities between North and South, but also within North and South gradually decrease until they disappear. If not, the roots of the conflict shall continue to exist. We must also avoid becoming a source of conflict, and they already are, ownership, use and management of natural resources: water, land, energy resources, land, forests, and sea.

There are unresolved conflicts in the Mediterranean that citizenship should help to resolve peacefully, thanks to the weapons of politics. None of us doubt the need for political action, nor think that conflicts should be depoliticized. The conflicts in Israel and Palestine, Morocco and the Sahrawi people can be resolved and we need help to ensure that this solution is possible in the short term.

International law must be abided to and implemented, starting with the recognition of the International Court of Justice. We said that all kind of fundamentalisms are a threat to peace. And we also said we want to build a civilian peace machine facing the war machine.

A reduction of persistent inequalities between North and South would probably mean the redefinition of a global and multilateral project, through the promotion of co-development that would give priority to employment among others. At the same time, an opening up of attitudes and practices is also necessary, which can pass through a better integration of migrants or a dedication to the fight against discrimination.

The old Mediterranean conflicts are spreading, and the Mediterranean area has lost its central position because of both the weakness of European Community institutions and the fragmentation of the Mediterranean Sea. These phenomena cause a movement of trivialization of politics as an instrument of conflict resolution.

It is important to strengthen the role of culture in societies, to create a «civilian diplomacy» to make possible the achievement of objectives.

The current presence of conditionality prior to sustainable construction of an area of peace requires action leading to the end of sustained armed conflict. It is thus necessary to identify the conditions necessary to do this before seeing how they are not collected in the Mediterranean Sea.

Thus, regarding the conditions:
- If the parties involved consider that the conflict is insurmountable, that there is no evolution possible, hence the need for them to believe in a sustainable and possible future;
- Trust is important and a true partnership must exist in a context in which the partners should not assume the presence of a hidden agenda.
Therefore we must:

- Promote the emergence of a Mediterranean community, for example by creating an Advisory Board of the Mediterranean;
- Create the momentum that allow such initiatives to achieve the UfM;
- Take an interest in the real priorities of the Mediterranean, such as employment;
- Foster a community of Mediterranean peoples, for example, through initiatives such as allowing Europeans to come and work in the South and know it better;
- Eradicate socio-economic inequalities.

Internal conflicts in countries make conflicts between countries more complex, nobody wants to be the minority of the other. Expressions of identity may be conflicting or even deadly. The clash of ignorance is probably the greatest threat. The logic of conflicts benefits extremism.

The non-resolution of conflict should not prevent other initiatives to reduce socio-economic, territorial, and gender inequalities. There is a need to evaluate the impacts and effectiveness of policies in place.
AGORA 4: THE PRESENT AND FUTURE CHALLENGES IN THE MEDITERRANEAN: THE INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE RESPONSABILITIES OF CITIZENS

The Mediterranean Sea is a resource and a common heritage that we must collectively manage and protect. Civil society can put pressure on government and institutions to support education that promotes development. Local civil society has a good appreciation of existing problems and various actors.

All elements are present to make Mediterranean integration profitable for both sides. Nevertheless we notice lack of cohesion and political consensus on the issue of environment. Environmental concern is not a constraint but an opportunity for economic development (growth, employment creation) and the improvement of living conditions (food, health) of Mediterranean populations. There is a need for dialogue between national stakeholders to establish a social pact.

We must rationalize the use of water resources and energy and change behaviours vis-à-vis the protection of the environment (education and awareness). Protecting the environment is inextricably linked to poverty reduction for local farmers. We must encourage the restoration of traditional agricultural practices that respect the environment (eg, crop rotation).

We must harmonize level of education of the different actors in the Mediterranean as well as the probate of different university degrees in the Mediterranean.

Mobility fosters social inclusion and the knowledge economy. Mobility is currently limited by restrictions on issuing visas. We must consider the establishment of the free circulation of individuals.

Accountability and coordination of different actors (public, private, civil society) in the field of education and the environment should be promoted. Increasing urbanization in the South involves a heavy investment in infrastructure and requires a change in economic development model that takes into account social matters. We must change the type of growth, adopt an inclusive growth and move from a culture of sub-contracting to a culture of co-contracting.

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PROSPECTS

We face current and future challenges. We have individual and collective responsibilities in our hands, the hands of citizenship. It is time to require active policies against unemployment, especially among the younger population, and integration policies of women at all levels.

We need to promote mobility – especially of young people – and promote education. Education based on new eyes, viewpoints, able to avoid repetition, reiteration of antagonism, of past and senseless struggles, an education that puts forward values of tolerance and solidarity.

We must protect and preserve the Mediterranean Sea as a resource and a heritage in all its dimensions, including the environmental dimension. We must make possible the emergence of a Community of Mediterranean peoples, rooted in a political Mediterranean space and a Mediterranean citizenship. These are the tasks we set ourselves, which we define a singular way and shaping the horizon of our developments for the next months and years.

We have a compromise with the Founding Charter of the ACM, which is open, plural and diverse. The Coordination and the Advisory Council of the Assembly of Citizens of the Mediterranean, in the exercise of their duties and responsibilities, will establish the steps to follow. We want to expand the Advisory Council to become the example of the constituent diversity of the Mediterranean, which is the basis of our citizenship.

We also call for expanding the dynamic of MCA circles. We have heard the story of the companions of Circles in Casablanca, Tirana and Volos. In the coming months we will strive to consolidate the territorial Circles for 2011-2012 in a quiet development perspective without pause.
MCA COORDINATION

- Centro de Estudios Rurales y Agricultura Internacional (CERAI - www.cerai.es)

- European University of Tirana (www.uet.edu.al/)

- Mouvement Européen International (MEI – www.europeanmovement.eu)

WITH THE SUPPORT OF


- Casa Árabe (www.casaarabe-ieam.es)

- Casa Mediterráneo (www.casamediterraneo.es)

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On the link below, you could sign the call in favour of the emergence of a Mediterranean Community of Peoples.

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