



FUNDACIÓN ASAMBLEA DE CIUDADANOS Y CIUDADANAS DEL MEDITERRÁNEO (FACM)

FONDATION ASSEMBLÉE DES CITOYENS ET CITOYENNES DE LA MÉDITERRANÉE (FACM)

MEDITERRANEAN CITIZENS' ASSEMBLY FOUNDATION (MCAF)

مؤسسة مجلس مواطني و مواطنات المتوسط

abril 10, 2013

A WAVE OF CITIZENSHIP IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

The Mediterranean stands torn between renewal and crisis. New political, social and cultural realities struggle through the pain of birth. To north and south there is a palpable sense of expectation and uncertainty, and no clear path to follow.

The debt crisis in Europe has shaken people, politics and institutions and resulted in rampant unemployment that particularly affects the youth. The political costs are witnessed in an increasing sense of impotence, an increasing distrust towards politics and a worrying increase in intolerance against people of different beliefs or ethnicity.

Along the southern and eastern shores of the Mediterranean, the ousting of previous authoritarian regimes has opened up a challenging arena in which competing actors are struggling to create an inclusive political transition. Meanwhile, the unbearable Israeli-Palestinian impasse remains, only overshadowed by the tragedy of the 80,000 dead in Syria.

A new Mediterranean impetus built around our shared space and values is badly needed. The openings are there, and so is the political and economic rationale. And the political will?

Between the 4th and 7th of April, the Anna Lindh Mediterranean Forum will be held in Marseille, Europe's 2013 Capital of Culture, with the participation of more than 1000 civil society organisations and institutions from all 42 countries of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM).

On the 6-7th of April, building on the findings of the Forum, the first Summit of Heads of Parliament of the Union for the Mediterranean will be held, still in Marseille. More than 40 Speakers of Parliaments from the EU and Mediterranean countries will attend the gathering. This will be a landmark moment, the first high-level political gathering of the UfM since the 2008 Paris Summit.

The objective is clear: as much as Euro-Mediterranean cooperation is built on the principle of three Ms: money, mobility and markets, so political dialogue should be constructed on three Ps: People, Parliaments and Participation. The successful re-launching of Euro-Med dialogue must centre on the mobilisation of civil society, of the citizens for the Mediterranean.

The recent Anna Lindh Foundation/Gallup Survey on Intercultural Trends has demonstrated that the citizens around this shared sea are increasingly interested in the politics, economics and cultures of their neighbours. The Survey, the first Euro-Med Opinion-Poll carried out following the uprisings in North Africa, also reveals that citizens on both shores of the Mediterranean think the Arab Awakening will have an overall positive impact on Euro-Med relations.

But beyond polls, the mass mobilisation on both sides of the Mediterranean show that citizens will not accept to be sidelined in the governance of their countries. The toppling of entrenched regimes in North Africa eroded the prevailing assumptions that the outside world held in regard to Arab societies.



FUNDACIÓN ASAMBLEA DE CIUDADANOS Y CIUDADANAS DEL MEDITERRÁNEO (FACM)

FONDATION ASSEMBLÉE DES CITOYENS ET CITOYENNES DE LA MÉDITERRANÉE (FACM)

MEDITERRANEAN CITIZENS' ASSEMBLY FOUNDATION (MCAF)

مؤسسة مجلس مواطني و مواطنات المتوسط

And while values may be shared, the challenges too are the same and they need to be clearly identified for what they are. Economic instability, social inequality, youth unemployment and environmental degradation, affect us all and must be treated as common issues. In the struggle to rebuild fractured societies, to create new democracies, the way forward must be centred upon these issues and on common tangible projects.

If anything is clear from the society-shaking events experienced in the region, it is that governmental structures and other traditional sources of community authority need to be brought back to dealing with and for citizens. There must be a genuine partnership that implies shared ownership and a community of interests. Systems of power that merely feed the old system will not work.

In an international situation where economic and material resources are ever scarcer, the public must have a strong ownership on the priorities which are chosen. The potential of the region's abundant youthful energy and dynamism, coupled with its entrepreneurial and innovative spirit, is enormous. We need to address the issues which have undermined previous attempts at building a union for the peoples of the Mediterranean. Top-down solutions will not work. Mediterranean partnership must be for the citizens, from the citizens and to the citizens.

Martin Schulz, President of the European Parliament

André Azoulay, President of the Anna Lindh Euro-Mediterranean, Foundation for the Dialogue Between Cultures