



Fraktion der Europäischen Volkspartei (Christdemokraten) und europäischer Demokraten im Europäischen Parlament  
Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) and European Democrats in the European Parliament  
Groupe du Parti Populaire Européen (Démocrates-Christiens) et Démocrates Européens au Parlement européen



Konrad  
Adenauer  
Stiftung

# **Mediterranean Dialogue**

## **Conference Report**

**by Dr. Hardy Ostry, Gerrit F. Schlomach**

### **From Barcelona to the Neighbourhood Policy Parliamentary Dimension of the Mediterranean Dialogue**

3<sup>rd</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> December 2006

Dead Sea - Jordan

This international conference organised by the Regional Program Near East/Mediterranean of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) in cooperation with the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) and European Democrats in the European Parliament, took place on 3<sup>rd</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> December 2006, at the Dead Sea-Jordan. It was attended by members of the European Parliament as well as deputies from Jordan, Algeria, Tunisia, Turkey, Egypt, Israel, Morocco, and the Palestinian territories. The purpose of the conference entitled "From Barcelona to the Neighbourhood Policy – Parliamentary Dimension of the Mediterranean Dialogue" was to establish informal direct contacts between parliamentarians from both shores of the Mediterranean.

Key conclusions were as follows:

- Considering the already established formal contacts at the institutional level, all participants welcomed the approach of informal networking between parliamentarians, political parties and movements from both shores of the Mediterranean in order to serve a better understanding of peoples.
- In order to strengthen mutual understanding and exchange different views, all participants agreed to work together in concrete trans-national fields where common interests exist, mainly economic, cultural and environmental issues.
- After this first initial gathering, most of the participants look forward to future opportunities to deepen their relations and to increase the networking based on similar political affiliation.
- Euro-Mediterranean political party networking might continue through various means such as: future direct meetings on general or specific issues, parliamentary friendship societies, study visits for regional legislators as well as support staff to the EPP-ED group in the European Parliament.
- The participants agreed on the fact that sustainable networking could be put into practice alongside official meetings, like the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly, or through informal direct contacts facilitated by third partner like the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung.

## **Opening session**

On Sunday, 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2006, **Hardy Ostry** focused in his opening speech on the important work to establish a solid basis for Euro-Mediterranean Partnership through parliamentary diplomacy. Accordingly, the conference cooperation between KAS and the EPP-ED group in the European Parliament aimed at backing-up the ongoing Barcelona process and the beginning of the new European Neighbourhood Policy starting from 2007 with a new financial instrument. To achieve an increased impact of the legislative bodies, he saw the need for a complementary informal approach, based on direct contacts between political parties and movements which make mutual understanding possible.

**HE Vito Bonsignore**, MEP and Vice-President of the EPP-ED Group responsible for the Euro-Mediterranean Policy, stressed the interests of his political group to cooperate more and more with actors in the region. In reflecting the positive elements of the Barcelona process as well as the challenges, he emphasised the need to back up this relationship by further efforts. Consequently, HE Vito Bonsignore highlighted the positive impact of parliamentary diplomacy to do so. He regarded direct contacts and the support of political parties in the region as a good opportunity to improve communication and develop a closer relationship.

In representing the host nation of the conference, **HE Abdel Hadi Al Majali**, President of the Lower House of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, underlined the important role of parliaments for cooperation of the Mediterranean area in order to bring peoples together and to live in contentment and prosperity. However, HE Abdel Hadi Al Majali called on more European involvement in settling the regional conflicts that present the main barrier to realising this vision. In his conclusion, he acknowledged the Arab need for more cooperation with its European neighbours. In this regard, the creation of a large network is the best way to exchange knowledge and establish joint understanding as a basic need for cooperation.

## **First working session: the Neighbourhood Policy and its Challenges for the Euro-Mediterranean Dialogue**

Chaired by **HE Michael Gahler**, MEP and Vice-Chairman of the EP Committee on Development, the first working session focused on the impact of the new European instrument on regional cooperation. **HE Miloud Chorfi**, Member of the Algerian Parliament, talked about the Algerian strategic vision towards peace and its relationship to the Barcelona declaration and the European Neighbourhood Policy. Against the background of the positive developments of economic and trade relations in the Euro-Mediterranean area, he emphasized the need for more European intervention in overcoming regional conflicts as well as in establishing better cultural relations. After the settlement of the Algerian struggles in the 1990s, he saw the potential for the beginning of better neighbourhood relations based on dialogue in several fields, like culture and politics. HE Miloud Chorfi concluded his speech with expressing his hope that this conference would serve better understanding through an expansion of the existing dialogue.

The second speaker in this session, **HE Habib Aouida**, Tunisian Member of Parliament, started from a geographical and historical assessment of the Euro-Mediterranean proximity. Concerning the new European Neighbourhood Policy, he stressed the openness of his country to cooperate under this new umbrella with Europe and its readiness to work hard on implementing the goals of the established action plan. However, Habib Aouida, concluded stressing the need for the European side to take more into consideration the positions and aspirations of the countries at the Southern shore of the Mediterranean, especially in the field of security and migration aspects, regional South-South cooperation as well as the human and social development.

**HE Simon Busuttil**, MEP and Vice-Chairman of the Maghreb Delegation, focused more on trans-national issues in order to have deeper insights in the concerns of the Southern shore, because countries from the southern shore of the Mediterranean have recently become destinations for immigrants from other countries. In addition,

he saw an increasing need to understand how problems are perceived differently. He pointed to that the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership has to be serious in all aspects of social and economic development. Consequently, three conditions were to be met: the mobilisation of investments, a good business climate and more efforts in strengthening small and medium-sized enterprises. Finally, he emphasized the need for giving higher priority to transport links to facilitate exchange on both sides.

The last speaker in this session, **HE Zekeriya Akçam**, a member of the Turkish Parliament, talked about the process of "Europeanization" around Europe following its specific neighbourhood approach. Against the background of a deteriorating image of the USA in the region, according to him, the EU plays a crucial role in providing security and transmitting standards worldwide. In this context, Turkey serves as an example for democratisation and a facilitator towards other regions. Nevertheless, it is up to the partner countries how far they want to go with the relationship and what they want to implement in their domestic affairs. HE Zekeriya Akçam welcomed the new European Neighbourhood Policy towards Mediterranean and Eastern European countries.

Following the presentations and the subsequent discussion **HE Mohammad Arslan** (Jordanian MP) emphasized agreements reached during this first session such as a shared belief in the importance of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, and the need for an increasing European role due to a declining American influence in region, as well as on several important issues for deeper cooperation. HE Mohammad Arslan mentioned security aspects and asked for more European support in fighting terrorism, as Arabs were among the first to pay the costs. As to migration, he stressed that it was necessary for both sides to investigate further into the root causes, such as differences of revenues, or social and political oppression. Speaking about economic relations, he reviewed the relative low investment level of the EU in the region compared to investments in Eastern Europe. According to the speaker, until now South-South direct trade has not developed its potential, in spite of Arab initiatives for intra-regional cooperation. As a further field for more intense cooperation between Euro-Mediterranean countries, he mentioned the environment.

## **Second working session: Parliamentary Diplomacy in the Framework of the Neighbourhood Policy**

The second working session, chaired by **HE Othmar Karas**, MEP and Vice-President of the EPP-ED Group in the European Parliament, focused on the international role for parliamentary diplomacy. After highlighting the essentials of a parliamentary diplomacy in contrast to official diplomacy representing state's interests, **HE Hisham Mustafa Kalil** focused on the parliamentary aspects of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership. According to him, the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly specifically constituted the right framework to develop further this partnership that is based on common values and human rights. In talking about future aspects of this partnership, he urged to engage the parliamentary dimension more to become an instrument of civil society dialogue and a way to establish democracy as a way to peace.

**HE Hichem Hajji**, member of the Tunisian Parliament, concentrated on civil society engagement in regional cooperation. He underlined the role of political parties to back up networks of civil society actors. As the dialogue of political parties remained very weak until now, actors should think about the establishment of specific frameworks. Accordingly, HE Hichem Hajji proposed to establish friendship societies within parliaments in order to raise awareness for strengthening the dialogue. The speaker suggested that Konrad Adenauer Foundation could provide a framework for dialogue.

In his introductory statement, **HE Michael Gahler**, MEP and Vice-Chairman of the EP Committee on Development, highlighted additional values of parliamentary diplomacy. They consist in their openness to tackle all kind of issues freely without the need for any kind of consensus. Experiences with the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly led him to trust the problem solving capacities of parliamentary work. Against the background of the dark past of European history, he saw some hope for the Israeli Palestinian conflicts, especially as there is an increasingly shared demand of the youth to find peaceful solutions. In emphasizing the European Neighbourhood Policy as a new instrument for cooperation, he welcomed the Euro-Mediterranean

Parliamentary Assembly as a way to focus on better, peaceful developments in the region.

**HE Suleiman Obeidat**, a member of the Jordanian Parliament, summarized the session by stressing the important role of representatives to find solutions for their peoples in all the different areas of politics. Establishment of friendship societies would enhance the possibility of building bridges between peoples. As governments often face limits in solving problems, his hopes focused on international parliamentary cooperation and its efforts to build parliamentary institutions to work together in a better way.

### **Third working session: Beyond the Debate on Democracy - Strengthening the Impact of Civil Society on Political Development**

On Monday, 4<sup>th</sup> December 2006, the third working session was chaired by **HE Jana Hybášková**, Czech MEP and Member of the Foreign Affairs Committee. In a more personal perspective, **HE Amira Dotan**, Member of the Israeli Knesset, presented her considerations about the real need to better understand each other. First, she highlighted the need to overcome the gap between different languages in order to have a basic understanding of different meanings. Second, she put forward that no cooperation was possible based on zero sum games, and stressed the need to find new ways of thinking. Good will to build on the regional strength, flexibility and the support of an honest broker to bring together all parties were needed. She concluded with an optimistic note and stressed the need to start a new area, based on the assessment of the each other's real interests.

In acknowledging the positive exchange between the political partners in various aspects, **HE Sabah Bounour**, a member of the Algerian Parliament, emphasized the need to be more committed and effective in bringing peoples together. She recommended internal reform struggles for democracy to develop democratic practice and culture in less developed countries, especially by granting civil society more space for free movement and political engagement. She concluded with three recommendations: the need to improve the laws, more workshops and training for

civil society organisations empowering them to work together and to address civil society actors directly. She asked for renewing their role in establishing internal dialogue.

**HE Fahmi Nashed**, a member of the Egyptian Parliament, came up with some new ideas and suggestions concerning the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. First of all, all sides had to understand that this conflict was the main obstacle for mutual understanding and agreements on other issues. Second, he urged all sides to respect international commitments, thus designing a way out of mutual distrust starting with drawing border lines in mutual agreement.

The last speaker in this session was **HE Fatima Leili**, a member of Moroccan Parliament, who concentrated her talk on the impact of civil societies on domestic political development. In reviewing the long-term engagement of civil society movements in Morocco, she clarified their role in being home-grown approaches in peaceful settlement of disputes. Coming to the current situation, she clearly highlighted the impact of the work of civil society actors on recent internal developments, like the new family code or the increasing number of women in parliament following a national quota system. She concluded her talk in stressing that especially these actors have the ability to be peace-makers by bringing together the diverse voices of public opinion.

**HE Fouad Kokaly**, a member of the Palestinian Parliament, concluded the third session with some comments on the precedent presentations and discussions. From a regional point of view, he saw the need to empower the civil society actors more in order to strengthen their role on decision-making processes. Talking about the interference of national authorities, he made the point clear that they should renounce these actions in order to provide independence for non-state actors. In his conclusion, HE Fouad Kokaly emphasized the role of the private sector to be integrated more in democracy building, so far the impact of private financial resources had been low in these processes.

#### **Fourth working session: Towards a Network of Values – The Role of Political Parties in the Euro-Med Dialogue**



Chaired by **HE Antonios Trakatellis**, MEP and Vice-President of the European Parliament, the fourth working session addressed the crucial topic about the role of political parties in the Euro-Med Dialogue.

**HE Mevlüt Cavusogly**, a member of the Turkish Parliament, introduced the session with a historical review on Mediterranean cultural roots as a basis for shared values of different religions, languages and ethnicities. He pointed out that the success of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership could serve as model for regional cooperation and for intercultural understanding which could influence other regions. Against this background, strong political parties would need to back up democratization and serve as facilitators to live the common values and strengthen political legitimacy and political education. Additionally, political parties could inform the European Union about domestic developments, put new ideas on the common agenda, and explain the importance and positive impact of the partnership on both shores of the Mediterranean.

Following the introductory remarks, **HE Bernard Sabella**, a member of the Palestinian Parliament, focused his speech on the critical role of broader political mobilisation. According to him, political elites still dominate the political process in the Middle East. Although he welcomed the suggestions for stronger ties between political actors in the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, he urged also the need to include the broader public in such efforts. Stressing the positive effects of the dialogue so far, he hoped to see Europe more engaged in regional politics, not only as a donor in financial respects. In his view, only a stronger political role of Europe could prevent a worsening of the situation in the Middle East.

The second speaker, **HE Majalli Whbee**, a member of the Israeli Knesset, concentrated on the intra-regional efforts and capacities to achieve a peaceful future. He presented three steps for stability in the region: first, education for tolerance and respect the other; second, the fight against desertification to ensure a proper environment; and finally cooperation through technology and innovation. Regional cooperation in the framework of the Barcelona process could benefit from such a threefold approach in order to move towards better partnership.

The last speaker in this session was **HE Mohammed El Ansari**, Moroccan legislator who commented on political parties in the Euro-Mediterranean Dialogue. He pointed out that such cooperation was the foundation to find ways for harmony and stability in the region and guarantee social and economic development. In reconsidering the crucial role of parties as providers of legitimacy, he highlighted the specific role of these actors in Northern Africa and in Morocco. Since his country established a multi-party system in the 1960, an increasingly stronger role in domestic politics had been observed, especially in the field of human rights politics. As to the future of the Barcelona process and the Neighbourhood Policy, he welcomed direct meetings to cooperate more between political parties.

This last session was concluded by **HE Jana Hybášková**, Czech MEP, who insisted on a mutual consensus that political parties should not harm nor deepen rifts in the framework of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership. In fact, the impact of political parties could bring an added value to this relationship. It would be necessary to address issues of common interests, like migration, terrorism, intolerance and extremism. However, this approach should not be restricted to elites only, but be open to normal citizens, at a global as well as on a local level. In addition, the work of political parties had to reflect transparent financing, internal democratic functioning, and include work with disadvantaged groups. Coming to international political parties' cooperation, she emphasized the need to find a way out of the dilemma between criticised foreign intervention in internal affairs and demand for stronger international commitment in regional affairs. A possible agenda for political party cooperation had to cover real and concrete issues such as education, education to tolerance, fight against desertification, and debate on modern technologies.

### **Round table: Ideas and Possibilities to Strengthen Contacts and Cooperation of Political Parties in the Mediterranean**

The closing round table, chaired by **HE Hubert Pirker**, MEP and Member of the Foreign Affairs Committee, brought together all different aspects of the precedent

discussions and concluded with some recommendations for future ways of cooperation.

The chair proposed five crucial points for further discussion and consideration, as following: First, the need to identify partners for political party cooperation in the Euro-Mediterranean area based on shared values. According to different interventions, these shared values were justice, including the rule of law and values of equality. Following the nature of the EPP-ED group as a Christian democratic and conservative party, the recognition of the role of religions, the centrality of the individual responsibility for tolerance and social solidarity as well as the respect for life, women and family. There was less agreement among the participants to add to this list the concept of modernity. Second, there was the need to realize bilateral cooperation with the help of political parties' institutions, such as the general secretaries for international political party cooperation. This could go along with friendship societies in the different parliaments or the designation of Members of European Parliament serving as direct point of contacts for Southern countries. Third, strengthen cooperation at the multilateral level for example through visits at national or European party gatherings. Another participant suggested the creation of a Euro-Mediterranean TV Program in order to send common messages to the whole region. Fourth, identify issues of common interests as a basis for sustainable party networking; in the field of security policy for example migration issues, trafficking of drugs, terrorism, but also in the field of education or trade relations. Other participants mentioned economic cooperation, energy relations and the dialogue of cultures and religion. However, there was agreement on the need to prioritize these different aspects of prospective common interests based on a regional balanced selection. Fifth, clarify the role of third partners like political foundations in the field of political party cooperation, like the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung or think-tanks. These institutions can provide an added value to the networking with their already existing contacts on both shores of the Mediterranean. Another import role of such third parties could be their services to prioritize the agenda and use their specific regional knowledge in future gatherings.