



Final Declaration

“From Conflicts to Reconciliation: Consolidation of dialogue among NGOs and civil society in the Mediterranean countries”

ME.DIA.T.E., Malta, 18th of December 2004

Ten years after the Barcelona Process, Civil Society is scaling up its commitments to turn the Euro-Mediterranean basin into an area of dialogue, exchange and co-operation guaranteeing peace, stability and prosperity and is reasserting its essential contribution to the development process of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and the importance of exchanges between civil societies.

We, the representatives of the civil societies of the Countries bordering the Mediterranean¹, gathered in Malta between the 16th and 19th of December 2004 for the meeting “From Conflicts to Reconciliation: consolidation of dialogue among NGOs and civil society in the Mediterranean countries”:

- believe that the various positive experiences of conviviality being experimented need more visibility and need to serve as a positive inspiration for others;
- believe in a pro-active bottom up approach where peace is not talked about but lived through concrete actions on the ground;
- commit ourselves to the promotion of human rights in all their forms as defined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in the subsequent related conventions including the right to self determination;
- commit ourselves to the promotion of social justice throughout the Mediterranean Basin;
- reaffirm our commitment to consolidate and carry forward the process started together in Naples during March 2003 where the participants declared that:

- It is not possible to build Peace, without dialogue
- It is not possible to have Democracy, without dialogue
- It is not possible to respect the Person, without dialogue
- It is not possible to make Politics, without dialogue
- It is not possible to have Civilisation, without dialogue.

In order to follow up and make operational the commitments taken at Naples, a committee was set up whose work led up to the creation of MEDIATE on October 7th 2004. MEDIATE aims exclusively at the promotion of social solidarity and promotes and realises activities aiming at:

¹ Insert list of participants

- a) Promoting the dialogue and networking of civil society organisations in the Mediterranean countries through institutional capacity building, education, research and training;
- b) Favouring multi-cultural dialogue between the populations and institutions in the Mediterranean countries by sharing experiences, tools and resources;
- c) facilitating actions of participation, advocacy and lobbying toward the European and international institutions;
- d) promoting strategies for democracy and peace in the Mediterranean countries at the local, national and international level;
- e) promoting strategies for the development and cooperation in the Mediterranean region;
- f) facilitating the exchange of information, the access to technologies and tools of communication;
- g) promoting processes of decentralised cooperation with the support of social activities promoted by civil society,
- h) promoting activities and intercultural exchanges among youth in the Mediterranean countries.

The participants stressed that:

Actors

1. Civil society is one of the key pillars of polity, policy making and development.
2. The overarching priority is to ensure respect for the dignity of others and guarantee the freedom of expression in all fields and that Development NGOs have an essential role towards this goal.
3. Priority ought to be given to vulnerable and marginalized groups.
4. Religion is a foundation to alleviate tensions and promote peaceful co-existence.
5. Inter-religious dialogue and cooperation provide support that can resonate throughout society.
6. Gender awareness, equality, and perspectives as well as participatory approaches are key to help translate intentions for peace into practice.
7. Reconciliation is carried out in respect of differences but with the desire to converge towards coexistence, social equity, sustainability and human security.
8. Special attention ought to be given to children and the rights of the child.

Dialogue

1. Regular dialogue strengthens civil society against the constant threat of resigning oneself to the inevitability of conflict, intolerance and division.
2. Dialogue does not weaken the identity of anyone, but makes each man and woman see the best in the other and root oneself in the best that we can be;
3. To have a true Peace, it is necessary and decisive that a dialogue among and with the Mediterranean cultures exists, in a framework of civil society emergence, through a process of mutual recognition.
4. Dialogue is, in fact, an answer to the growing demand for participation coming from actors of the civil society, and represents an approach and a strong factor of enrichment for both the Mediterranean shores.
5. Dialogue is an effective mean to interpret and solve common problems, through the personal meeting of the parties, in respect of their differences.
6. The imperative of building trust between people in conflict situations;
7. The role of Civil Society Organisations in serving as a model of democratic dialogue by giving good examples and best practices of transparency in their programmes and activities;
8. The imperative of a pro-active bottom up approach where peace is not talked about but lived through concrete actions on the ground.
9. Dialogue is essential to change public opinions between parts in conflict.
10. There can be no dialogue without effective communication;

Communication

1. A free and responsible means of communication can contribute a lot to the peaceful development of the Mediterranean Basin.
2. Communication is an essential part of development co-operation between NGOs of the North and the South of the Mediterranean Sea, and it closely complements the institutional strengthening and capacity building process that MEDIANE in the whole is addressing.
3. Communication is essential for promoting the exchange of information among NGOs and between NGOs and public opinion, institutions, and other realities of the civil society.
4. Communication is essential for promoting dialogue, exchange of opinions, and cooperation between NGOs.
5. Acknowledge the different forms of communication, including the arts.

Recommendations

The participants expressed:

- To take into account that in various regions civil society is often weak and fragmented, and that there is an overwhelming need to strengthen local and regional cooperation and networking, and to foster the conditions for capacity building and co-learning;
- Given the experiences and realities expressed by the participants we urge the more experienced and established NGOs to share lessons learnt, in order to enable capacity building and empowerment of Civil Society Organisations and we believe that this can come about solely through local and regional cooperation and networking;
- To develop and make available means of communication and Information systems to support Civil Society Organisations;
- To promote the training of trainers in order to have an effective impact at local level;
- To continue liaising with the dynamic process started in Barcelona in 1995;
- To strengthen dialogue with the institutions in order to reinforce the communication channels and ensure an adequate participation in the definition of strategic guidelines with reference to the Mediterranean Region;
- To address the coordination problem in the Civil Society that often exists both in the North and in the South;
- To create a centre in every country with the mission of facilitating information exchange mechanisms among NGOs acting on the ground;
- To create within MEDIANE structured moments for meetings and exchange of experiences and best practices to strengthen the Civil Society Organisations linked to MEDIANE including through co-learning and reciprocal capacity building.
- To promote within MEDIANE structured dialogues that aim to find common grounds, propose solutions and develop alternative strategies towards a culture of peace in the Mediterranean.
- That MEDIANE will seek to share the outcomes of the Malta Meeting and the aspirations of its members in other forum and meetings, such as.
 - The Barcelona +10 process to be held in November 2005
 - The UN World Summit on Information Society at Tunis Nov 2005
 - Seminars around the New Neighbourhood Policy