

Meeting of EUROCITIES Euromed Working Group Report
Fès- Palais de Congrès
June 1st -2nd , 2006

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Opening session

During the opening session **Rinaldo BONTEMPI**, City of Torino, welcomed the participants, and he also expressed his satisfaction for a consistent presence of delegates from Euromed member cities, coming from the southern Mediterranean shore as well. After underlining the importance of Fès conference, representing an opportunity to follow up the works which have already been started in the last few years for an effective cooperation in the Mediterranean Basin, he left the word to **Hamid CHABAT**, Mayor of Fès, who declared to be honoured to host a Meeting of Euromed Working Group in his town. Then, the mayor warmly welcomed the participants and thanked them for their presence at the meeting. He also spent some words to give a brief description of the City of Fès, which is the scientific and cultural capital of Morocco and was also capital of the Kingdom of Morocco in the past. Fès is also an important meeting point for the possible dialogue among Euro-Mediterranean cultures and the city is open to new relationships in order to improve its own position and start up new action plans. Generally, Morocco is a state facing many important reforms regarding women's rights, promotion of social safety, scientific research, fight against terrorism. But Morocco and Fès need to create and develop partnerships with western towns to consolidate the way towards reforms.

Mohamed LARAQUI HOUSSEINI, Vice Mayor of Fès, Delegate for Culture and International Affairs, warmly welcomed the participants and thanked them for their presence. He also stressed what was said by the Mayor about the role that could be played by Fès, as a city that joins different cultures. In the framework of decentralized cooperation Fès has developed a close collaboration with many cities and carried out various plans, among which there is the so called Med'Act. The City of Fès must be a town promoting the development of relationships among Mediterranean populations. Fès, Morocco, Maghreb and Africa are lands whose main features are brotherhood, hospitality and unification.

Nazih YAZBEK, Vice Mayor of the City of Jdeidé, spoke afterwards and gave the audience Jdeidé Mayor's, Antoine Gebara, regards. Mr Gebara could not take part in the conference because of other institutional duties. Then he kindly thanked the City of Fès for welcoming the participants with such an enthusiasm and the City of Torino, as President of Euromed Working Group for organizing Fès meeting. During his speech he presented the report concerning the activities carried out by the City of Jdeidé from January 2005 to January 2006 as Vice President of EUROCITIES Euromed Group for Middle East.

Mohamed SFAR GANDOURA, Mayor of Mahdia and Euromed Vice President for Maghreb region, thanked for being invited to Fès conference, and remembered that the town belongs to the world heritage. Then, he also expressed his own satisfaction for the conference topics: dialogue among cultures, training and research, new initiatives in the framework of MED PACT and the role played by women, a very important theme for Tunisia. Mayor of Mahdia concluded his intervention by inviting the Presidency of Euromed to consider the membership of other Northern African towns.

Brigitte FERRARI, Councillor of the City of Nice and Vice President for Euromed Working Group for Europe, claimed to be very satisfied for taking part in the meeting and declared that the conference was the opportunity to follow up the work which have already been carried out in the last few years, to bring some novelties for North-South relationships. Members of Euromed Group are deeply committed to share a spirit aiming at carrying out a number of cooperation plans. Moreover, the new MED PACT program represents an excellent opportunity to develop new activities. Unfortunately, only 12 projects will get funds and Mrs **FERRARI** hoped that the ones which were presented by Euromed Group cities could be selected.

Roger KALIFF, President of External Relationships and Decentralized Cooperation Commission of the Committee of the Regions, kindly thanked Euromed presidency for being invited in Fès conference. The Committee of the Regions and EUROCITIES network have very good relationships and share the many goals. The Committee of the Regions is the institutional voice of European local authorities. It is an advisory body whose members are representatives of local authorities from 25 EU member countries. Local government authorities could be interested in many different topics: economical development, role of women, education, cultural integration. The Committee of the Regions has published documents about Barcelona Process to achieve a better governance standard, to improve the political connections and coordinate the cooperation tools to grant the highest possible level of integration. The Committee is available to apply Barcelona Partnership principles. Mr **KALIFF** hoped for future collaborations with EUROCITIES and with Euromed Working Group in particular.

Rinaldo BONTEMPI then, read the message from **Elmar BROK**, President of Foreign Affairs Commission of the European Parliament, that praised the activities carried out by Euromed Group member cities, whose aim is to promote the Euro-Mediterranean cooperation and to improve the dialogue among cultures, main topic of the conference and priority for the European Parliament.

Session: “UNITAR- United Nations Institution for Training and Research”

The session is focused on the presentation of UNITAR, “United Nations Institution for Training and Research” made by **Benedetta ODDO**, Advisor for Euro-Mediterranean and Arabic region. UNITAR is a UNO institution dealing with training and research. At first it was constituted exclusively for diplomats and MPs and then it ended up including decentralized cooperation theme as well. UNITAR cooperation plan is based on two points: 1) ways to help local communities conclude agreements and international conventions regarding sustainable development and environment, 2) ways to support local governments to carry out millennium goals locally (1st -3rd -6th -7th -8th goals, in particular). The main points of interest for UNITAR are the protection of the environment, the urban services to improve local competence and the access to economic and social development so to get a higher level of economic territorial competitiveness.

The Ministry of Iraqi Municipalities has recently given UNITAR the task to reinforce local governments competence. Even though war and everyday attacks still exist, Iraqi towns are trying to provide services to the citizens, even if there are huge difficulties. The training courses for Iraqi people training will not be held in Iraq for safety reasons. Therefore, a pilot action will take place in order to train 150 officials and elected citizens working at national, regional and local level (citizens working for private companies and for the civil society will be part of the project as well) with two weeks of training, one in Barcelona and the other one in Beirut.

Session: “Euro-Mediterranean Foundation Anna Lindh for the dialogue among cultures”.

The session was focused on the presentation of the activities which “Euro-Mediterranean Foundation Anna Lindh for the dialogue among cultures” promoted. The presentation was made by **Gianluca SOLERA**, Coordinator for the Foundation network. **Mr SOLERA** thanked for being invited at Fès conference as a speaker and presented the activities of Anna Lindh Foundation in detail. The main basis for the foundation activity is the intercultural dialogue as a factor for the development of the whole Mediterranean region.

One of the main points is the approach to the young, since new generations will be more and more committed to work in favour of social and cultural relationships in the Mediterranean area. The Foundation aims at promoting the role of women, especially thanks to North-South partnership. Another very important aspect of the Foundation is the research and without it no progress can be reached in any field.

In each of the 35 countries there is a coordinating body of the Foundation. Almost 1000 institutions are part of the national networks of the Foundation. Training paths concerning different subjects are offered within each single network.

Some of the activities the Foundation will be carrying out in the next future are listed here below:

- 1) Signing of an agreement with the Swedish Agency for Development for a project about children's literature (goal: raising children's awareness regarding the differences among populations);
- 2) Establishing “Prize for Young Journalists” (maximum age: 25 years), organized by the International Federation of Journalists. Selected journalists will take part in a tour across Euro-Mediterranean Countries and give lectures on their media job concerning mutual understanding;

- 3) Creating a network that, thanks to e-mails between youngsters from the northern and southern Mediterranean, will allow the debate on the differences among the populations (the project is called "Messagers de la Paix");
- 4) Promoting training workshops for teachers and students on the mutual respect

Session: "MED PACT- New initiatives in Mediterranean region in the framework of the new MED PACT program"

Raffaella SCALISI, Director of International Affairs Department for the City of Torino, opened the session by reading the message sent by Laura Baeza, Director of Euromed Unit of the European Commission, where she mentioned the new invitation to present MED PACT proposals (expiring in the days of Fés conference) as a remarkably important tool to improve the development of local authorities and the establishment of strong partnerships in the Euro-Mediterranean region. **Raffaella SCALISI** then, left the word to the representatives for cities and institutions that presented projects in the framework of MED PACT and she also proudly stressed the important result EUROCITIES Euromed Working Group achieved in obtaining a modification of MED PACT public notice regarding the accepted costs for European staff that was selected for the projects that were MED PACT co-financed.

Then, **Rinaldo BONTEMPI**, presented a project by the City of Torino regarding town markets, which are old institutions, places of trade, entertainment, culture and socialization at the same time.

In Turin there is Porta Palazzo market, an ancient place for integration: after the Second World War (with migrations from the South of Italy and Veneto region too). Extra-communitarian people have joined the community in the last few years (20% of traders are foreigner) especially, Moroccans, Chinese and Senegalese. Turin has already worked with Barcelona in a project concerning markets (La Boqueria) and "Emporio" Association was created, including Lione, London, Budapest and whose headquarter is in Barcelona. The aim is the creation of "networks" for new activities and the promotion of a popular but very innovative guideline, through the Association. Tourism, integration, social relations, production, economic development, price policy are the values on which the market project is based. If the project is approved, other cities will be part of it (requests arrived from Cracovia and Munich).

Véronique MARCAULERY, Director of the Cooperation Office of the City of Marseille, presented the project proposed by her city, involving the City of Danzica (Poland) as well. This city is willing to open up to Southern Mediterranean countries, since Danzica does not have any kind of relationship with them at the moment. Finally, there are also the City of Rabat (Morocco), Alexandria (Egypt) and AL Fayahaa- Tripoli Urban Community (Lebanon). The goal of the project is to provide support for the cities to protect their coasts (coast engineering) following a sustainable development process. Many offices of the interested towns have been involved, to get different types of expertise (technical and administrative) because various aspects were taken into consideration such as town planning, economic and tourist development. The towns have been chosen among the ones Marseille is already in contact with.

Anna CASTELLANO, Councillor of Culture and Cooperation of the City of Genova, presented the project organized by her city, involving Venice, Bordeaux, Istanbul (Turkey), Beirut, El Mina (Lebanon) and Oran (Algeria). The goal of the project is to mobilize the civil society, through interventions in district which have already been pinpointed by the towns for specific topics such as tourism, environmental protection, and cultural heritage enhancement (e.g.: protection of historical buildings). Studies for urban regeneration will be carried out and a pilot project will take place in each pinpointed district. At the end of the project, a conclusive international conference will be held, in order to analyse the project results. One of the goals of the project is to furtherly promote South-South relationships.

Manoelle WASSEIGE, representative for Région Bruxelles Capitale, spoke afterwards and said that Bruxelles Capitale region has already established a strong partnership in the framework of Med'Act. MED PACT will allow to widen the fields of action which have already been started up. As a matter of fact, apart from the partners of previous projects (Rome-Italy, Bosra –Syria-, Mahdia –Tunisia) Lille Métropole Urban Community was involved. The aim of the project is represented by strategies of sustainable urban development: enhancement of the towns heritage, integrated resource management and environmental protection. The Mayor of Mahdia, **Mohamed SFAR GANDOURA** briefly presented his city, which is settled on the coast and which is highly gifted for tourism. In fact tourism has enormously developed in the last few years and caused management problems, unfortunately. Therefore, an intervention is compulsory, and it has to be made in collaboration with the town which can boast a wide competence regarding these topics to try to solve problems and learn how to behave autonomously in the future. Another important

aspect is garbage management, when rubbish could “suffocate” the city itself. There is a paradox among Southern cities: they have difficulties in getting in contact with other cities in the same area. So, it was proposed to include other Maghreb cities in the Euromed Working Group (as it was mentioned during the opening session in the morning), to activate better synergies which do not exist at the moment.

Brigitte FERRARI, Councillor for the City of Nice, presented “Citadelle”, a project whose aim is to create a network of fortified Mediterranean towns, among which we can find Cagliari, Pathos (Cyprus), Jbeil-Byblos (Lebanon), Tanger (Morocco) and Constantin (Romania). The goal of the project is to exchange tourist information (e.g.: the strengthening of the competence for tourist planning), and to promote the research about the historical identity of port cities.

June 2nd, 2006

Session: “The role of women in development process of the Mediterranean region”.

Jamila HASSOUNE, representative for Caravan du Livre Association, kindly thanked Euromed Presidency for being invited in Fès conference, thus allowing her to talk about her experience. Mrs **HASSOUNE** has been managing a family owned bookshop in Marrakech, close to the University, since 1994. She has also been struggling to make books arrive to the most disadvantaged Moroccan areas for a long time, for example rural areas near Marrakech and on the High Atlas mountains. Rural areas in Morocco constitute the 45% of its territory and many other areas are extremely disadvantaged and underdeveloped, and there are no books there. Therefore, Mrs **HASSOUNE** decided to move to the countryside and “book caravan” experience was born. The young were the first targets of this initiative, since working, talking about books and discussing about literature with them is much more difficult. The basic concept for the book caravan was the creation a dynamic way of communication between the village and the town. Thanks to this initiative, a new cultural bridge allowed people living in disadvantaged areas to read and learn.

Moreover, a workshop called “Mother and Daughters” was created in 2006. Illiterate mothers and daughters, coming from a Moroccan village far away from Marrakech, were invited, and they learned to read together, a very pleasant and interesting experience. Women taking parting in the project had an opportunity to get out of their house and create a mother-daughter synergy with a mutual impulse to improve themselves. The project has developed a lot during the years and next book caravan will take place in April 2007.

Session: “Bilateral Co-operation among Euro-Mediterranean cities”

Kasem KHALIL, Mayor of Bosra (Syria), thanked Mayor of Fès and those who contributed to organize the meeting. Then he presented Bosra and he underlined its needs. It is commonly known that Syrian, Jordanian and Lebanese towns share a common difficult situation (they have problems in local public transport, education, water supply, garbage management, householding policy).

The old city of Bosra has 100,000 inhabitants with a low income which does not allow them to leave the old town, given that recently built houses are too expensive. Bosra municipality introduced public services in the old town, regarding electricity and drinkable water and opened new passages to better access the old town, thus creating a connection with the new town.

Bosra can boast 1,700 old residences, making part of a peculiar cultural and architectural heritage. Yet, some of them have been abandoned, some others are in very bad conditions but some can be saved. This heritage would be better restored to improve investments and to attract tourists. Talking about tourism, Bosra is working to strengthen this resource locally, in fact the city is opening up to foreign tourists.

Bosra hopes that the culture of peace, and the understanding among Mediterranean populations will be consolidated and maybe the urban heritage will be safeguarded, as it is a positive factor for regional development.

Sonia DUBORG-LAVROFF, Town Councillor of Bordeaux, spoke about the guidelines of the training project that the City of Bordeaux started up with Algerian City of Oran with which a twinship was signed in 2003. The spirit of the project – that was started in the framework of the sectorial and geographical priorities that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of France defined, and one of them is to support countries, as Algeria, which are in a “prior solidarity” area – was to share technical competence regarding different subjects. An interchange of experience was alternatively carried out both by the City of Bordeaux officials and teachers and also by those professionals who are employed in the national training system. In particular, the aim of

the project was to provide specific technical competence to lively up again a district in Oran whose situation was particularly critic.

Bordeaux-Oran partnership can count on a 117,000 Euros budget and the city of Oran is extremely committed in financing this operation.

The first training phase took place in February 2006. The second part will be held in Bordeaux in September, where City of Oran officials will be welcomed to deal with topics as garbage, water, environment, cleaning, garbage management techniques. Algerian officials will have the opportunity to visit some urban technical services, and they will discuss about the industrial systems to improve effective cleaning.

Rinaldo BONTEMPI, concluded the works. After thanking the Mayor and Vice Mayor of Fès for hosting the meeting of Euromed Working Group in their beautiful town, he also underlined the fact that towns must keep on working together to achieve concrete results concerning development and growth in Mediterranean basin. Finally, he said he would be glad to welcome everybody to Turin in November 2006 for the next Meeting of Eurocities Euromed Working Group.