



**EUROMED SUMMIT  
OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCILS  
AND SIMILAR INSTITUTIONS**

**Amman, 17-19 October 2012**

***FINAL DECLARATION***

1. The representatives of the Economic and Social Councils and similar institutions, together with the representatives of civil society organisations (in the Euro-Mediterranean partner countries which do not have an ESC or similar institution, and representatives of numerous NGOs from the Euro-Mediterranean region, meeting in accordance with the mandate conferred by the Barcelona Declaration of 1995 and extended under the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), held their 2012 meeting in Amman. The participants warmly thank His Majesty the King of Jordan and the Economic and Social Council of Jordan for its hospitality and contribution to the success of the Summit. The following major themes were discussed at the Summit: the political context and rights-related issues; efforts to improve governance in the Euro-Mediterranean region through better involvement of civil society; social dialogue, training and networking; the need to protect and promote freedom of the media in the region; the need to advance the economic and social situation of women; the importance of developing the economy through coherent industrial policies, in particular in the energy sector; promoting and maintaining the sustainable development drive; and civil society's role in the fight against corruption.

*On the political context and rights-related issues:*

The participants:

2. condemn the violence taking place in Syria of which the main victims are innocent civilians, including very often children. They urge the Syrian regime to end its military assaults and to make way for a political, economic and social transition in which all Syrians have a stake. They commend the work being carried out by independent civil society and humanitarian organisations in Syria in the face of difficult circumstances;
3. insist that human rights violations in the region must stop, in particular those against women, and urge governments to implement full democratic transitions and to acknowledge the inalienability and indivisibility of the rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, including the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights set out in the related protocols and the regional protocols;

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4. deplore the failure of certain governments to guarantee basic freedoms, including freedom of assembly and expression, as well as their attempts to obstruct the work of independent civil society organisations, including socio-professional organisations such as trade unions;
5. call for national and regional dialogue and awareness campaigns to be launched, with the involvement of civil society and the support of the EU, on the application of universal human rights. The aim of these campaigns must be to initiate a long-term national and regional discussion process on the day-to-day application of universal human rights and on how they relate to religious and ideological beliefs;
6. urge the political authorities and the international community to take all necessary actions to reach a just and lasting solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict on the basis of the relevant United Nations Resolutions;
7. believe that the EU, which is the biggest donor in the region, needs to insist on the implementation of clauses on the protection of fundamental freedoms and individual rights, especially for vulnerable sections of society, and call on the EU institutions to develop a longer term strategy to be implemented under the EU's 2014-2020 financial perspectives in which the various strands of the EU's policy are joined up.

*On efforts to improve governance in the Euro-Mediterranean region through better involvement of civil society:*

The participants:

8. stress that it is essential for the civil societies of the countries in the Euro-Mediterranean region to be meaningfully involved in policy-making by their national political authorities since their involvement helps to improve governance and consolidate democracy;
9. stress that governments in the region should promote the establishment of national economic and social councils (ESCs) or similar institutions that are inclusive of the whole spectrum of civil society in order to promote "civil dialogue" through the regular and formal involvement of civil society organisations in policy-making and follow-up of policies;
10. call on the EU, through its delegations, to establish mechanisms for regular consultations with national councils and civil society organisations, including on the EU's Action Plans where they exist, since at present such consultations are at best irregular;
11. call on the EU to earmark a proportion of its funding to civil society in the region for economic and social players such as employers, trade unions and other professional organisations, and to provide simpler and effective access to funds for civil society by cutting red tape and providing training support;

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12. welcome the fact that the EU has made available a range of regional and local programmes to promote the development of civil society in the region and call for more regular and closer contacts between the EU Delegations and civil society organisation in each country;
13. call for the EU and the southern Mediterranean partner countries' governments to involve civil society in all stages of the development of future Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreements (DCFTAs): the sustainability impact assessments, the monitoring of negotiations, and the monitoring of the implementation of these agreements;
14. call for more coordination between EU stakeholders, including the EU institutions, EU level socio-professional federations, and national civil society players in the EU, on policies towards the region so that these stakeholders can maximise the effectiveness of their individual actions;
15. welcome the Union for the Mediterranean's (UfM) attempts to involve civil society in its projects and underline their willingness to explore cooperation mechanisms that will boost civil society's involvement in those projects;
16. emphasise that civil society organisations (CSOs) must strengthen the principles of democracy, dialogue and tolerance through transparent actions, internal rules and procedures, so that they can continue to play an authoritative role in the ongoing reform process, and encourage CSOs from the north and south of the Mediterranean to enhance their north-south, south-south and north-north networking capacities;
17. agree to adopt, as a contribution to better internal governance on the part of ESCs, a "Charter for Economic and Social Councils in the Euro-Mediterranean network" which sets out non-binding benchmarks against which individual economic and social council's efforts to meet the democratic, economic and social aspirations of their people will be measured. These benchmarks include, by way of example, the requirement that ESCs be made up of a representative spectrum of independent civil society organisations; that appointments to the ESCs be made without interference from government; that internal appointments are carried out by democratic procedures; and that ESCs are provided with an independent budget.

*On social dialogue, training and networking – key areas for social and economic development:*

The participants:

18. underline the vital role that social dialogue plays in social cohesion and in achieving a balance between economic and social development. The social partners are key players in the search for a national consensus which reconciles different social and economic interests, and emphasise that Euromed social affairs and employment ministers should regularly consult national and regional social partner organisations;

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19. stress that the essence of social dialogue is the search for consensus through direct relations between employers' associations and trade unions, based on exchanges of information and negotiations between two equal and independent partners;
20. emphasise that a clear legal basis protecting the right to social dialogue is needed in the countries of the region, which respects international labour standards, including freedom of association, free collective bargaining and economic and social rights;
21. underline that EU funds to support civil society in the region should contribute to an effective strengthening of social dialogue. A comprehensive programme on social dialogue in Euromed should be set up with the involvement of the ILO. The quality of social dialogue in a country should be one of the formal criteria by which the EU assesses the implementation of association agreements and the "more for more" principle on funding;
22. underline that support should be provided to BusinessMed and the Euromed Trade Union Forum in their endeavours to boost social dialogue at Euro-Mediterranean level;
23. stress that there is a need to widen access to vocational education and training (VET) and enhance its quality by making it more relevant to labour market demands and the needs of diverse groups of learners and enterprises, in order to facilitate the transition from school to work and to improve the difficult labour market situation facing young women in particular;
24. emphasise that there is a need for effective involvement of civil society in policy making and implementation, and call for a shift from policies and strategies to actual implementation and for greater synergies between strategic planning in governments and bottom up initiatives in the field;
25. underline that the attractiveness of VET in societies needs to be improved compared to higher education which is very highly regarded in spite of the low employability of graduates. A better take-up of VET will help to tackle the problems of dropouts, the informal economy and unemployment.

*On the need to protect and promote freedom of the media in the region:*

The participants:

26. emphasise that media freedom is an important corollary of freedom of expression in all societies and as such is a shared goal for organised civil society and the media;
27. underline that whilst the media landscapes in the region vary from country to country there are many common challenges facing the media, including political interference and attempts to repress the media by political players; economic challenges, including issues of ownership

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and dependence on external sources of income; self-censorship by journalists; a fragile media landscape which is still dealing with a legacy of political and economic repression and limited professionalisation; potential violence against journalists and civil society supporters of free media; and uncertainty about future political, economic and social developments;

28. emphasise that a strong regulatory environment is required, managed by strong and independent media-market regulators and self-regulatory bodies whose role it should be to monitor and regulate the political and financial independence of media organisations, set out ethics codes for journalists, and guarantee transparency, in order to promote a pluralist media landscape;
29. stress that the public, through civil society, needs to push governments to support the continued development of an independent judiciary that is free of corruption and has the capacity to deal with the multitude of media-related legal issues that will arise from a media landscape in transition;
30. call on the EU to give even more weight to freedom of the media as a benchmark in its evaluation of countries' progress towards a pluralist society;
31. stress that the EU and its Member States, amongst other outside supporters of media freedom in the region, must channel their funds in a way that allows media organisations, regulators and civil society organisations to address specific media needs. This should include: widely accessible direct training and exchange programmes for journalists in the region; grants to facilitate networking and dissemination of best practices; assistance for the development of journalists organisations' and NGOs' advocacy and lobbying capacities; long-term partnerships between self-regulatory bodies and media market regulators from the EU and the south; legal training for journalists, prosecutors and judges; support for young journalists and uncensored access to internet.

*On the urgent need to advance the economic and social situation of women:*

The participants:

32. deplore the significant deterioration in women's rights that has taken place in numerous countries of the Euro-Mediterranean region in recent months;
33. stress that whilst women's rights so far have theoretically been supported in law, in practice implementation of these rights falls short of requirements. They stress that women's social and economic rights need to be aligned with those of male workers since at present women are suffering major inequalities in terms of pay, access to and quality of employment;
34. draw attention to the fact that the participation rate of women in the labour market in the southern Mediterranean region is the lowest in the world, at 24%, and that the segmentation

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of the labour market means that women's work is concentrated on a limited number of sectors. Ratification of gender-related ILO conventions (100; 111; 156; and 183) remains very low;

35. point out that 45-50% of women in the southern Mediterranean region cannot read or write and a primary prerequisite for enhancing women's integration into economic and social life is to improve their access to education;
36. underline that in many countries of the southern Mediterranean region employers rather than the state are responsible for covering women's salaries during maternity leave which discourages the employment of women in non-traditional sectors;
37. lament the lack of in-depth and comparable data on the political, economic and social situation of women in the region, which in itself hampers coherent policy formulation and reflects a general lack of concern on the part of policy-makers for women's issues;
38. urge governments to demonstrate transparently that they are promoting public and private-sector initiatives to tackle the inequality gap and that they are taking the necessary steps in their own budgets to allocate sufficient funds to measures to guarantee effective equal rights;
39. call for more awareness raising amongst public officials, in particular the police, the judiciary and government officials, of women's rights and in particular their right to dignity;
40. call on the Union for the Mediterranean to ensure that the principles of the Istanbul and Marrakesh declarations are taken into account in its projects;
41. insist that the EU must adhere to the principles it has set out in its European Neighbourhood Policy and ensure that its programmes in the region effectively advance gender equality.

*On the importance of developing the economy through coherent industrial policies, in particular on energy:*

The participants:

42. stress the importance of implementing policies for industrial development that promote an economically, socially and environmentally sustainable growth model and generate synergies in the three areas. Therefore, industrial cooperation instruments should guarantee consistency between policies on labour and employment, immigration, energy, transport, the environment and water supply;
43. acknowledge and endorse the efforts made by the secretariat of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) to initiate and maintain projects that are helping to promote economic and social development in the region, and call on the UfM and the EU to work together closely on a joint future strategy;

44. underline that a stable political and institutional environment would improve governance in the region and, together with legal certainty, would create a more favourable investment and business climate, including for foreign direct investment;
45. underline that north-south cooperation on industrial policy should include action in areas such as technology transfer, support for SMEs, stronger transport and logistics networks, and training;
46. stress that the energy sector offers vast potential for co-development in the Euro-Mediterranean region and that the southern Mediterranean countries have the potential to develop an internationally competitive renewable energy industry. The development of this industry, combined with a suitable network deployment, is key to promoting socio-economic development;
47. call for cooperation between the southern partner countries and the EU in the energy sector to be based on a regional approach rather than on bilateral action by individual states;
48. underline that the achievement of a "power ring", through the interconnection of electric grids between the countries of the region, is a priority, in order to secure efficient energy provision to all, the possibility of energy exports, and at the same time to reduce the impact on the environment. Emphasise that beyond the technical integration of electrical systems this will require changes in institutional frameworks, specific technological training, adequate financial support to R & D, and the development of transport and storage infrastructure;
49. stress that in order to strengthen the regional perspective of industrial cooperation, the involvement of social and economic stakeholders should be enhanced through joint consultation mechanisms, including within the sectoral ministerial conferences.

*On promoting and maintaining the sustainable development drive:*

The participants:

50. welcome the RIO+20 outcome document "The future we want", the adoption of the 10 year framework of programmes, and the reaffirmation of UN Member States' commitment to sustainable development, in spite of the current slowing of the global economy;
51. emphasise the need in the Euro-Mediterranean region for a transition to an inclusive green economy as an important tool for achieving sustainable development. They point out that the current economic and financial crises in the EU, and the political, economic and social changes in many of the Arab states of the Mediterranean, will challenge governments' willingness to make the necessary changes, but that at the same time these challenges provide

a rare opportunity for change, and therefore call for the adoption of regional sustainable development objectives;

52. underline that a key challenge for the region will be to deal with the impact of climate change and the urgent requirement to "decouple" the economic development needs of a rapidly expanding population from the overuse of natural resources by investing in forward-looking technologies;
53. emphasise that the key to success lies in mainstreaming sustainable development objectives into all policy areas, such as water, agriculture and rural development, transport, tourism, energy, waste, construction and preservation of the marine environment;
54. stress that it is essential to bring on board all stakeholders, in particular civil society and local and regional authorities, in order to achieve a coordinated and long-term approach to demand management that seeks to improve consumption and production trends;
55. emphasise that transitions towards an inclusive greener economy need to be carried out in consultation with civil society organisations, including the social partners and multi-stakeholder fora such as economic and social councils in order to make sure that decent work, gender equality, preservation of the environment and social protection are part and parcel of the transition;
56. in view of the fact that sustainable development challenges are common to the north and the south of the Mediterranean, urge stakeholders on both shores to introduce common measures and shared projects which draw on enhanced north-south and south-south cooperation and which set out shared short-, medium- and long-term development goals;
57. call for the introduction of a sustainable development scoreboard in the Euromed region which provides for comparable performance indicators and guidelines, the exchange of best practices, the identification of pilot projects, the preparation and distribution of national and regional progress reports, and capacity-enhancement measures in order to help countries undergoing development and transition to pursue their strategies over the longer term.

*On civil society's role in the fight against corruption:*

The participants:

58. underline that corruption in its various forms was one of the main triggers of the recent popular unrest of the "Arab Spring", which underlines the close interconnectedness in public perception between corruption on the one hand, and political repression, lack of freedoms and economic and social deprivation on the other;

59. acknowledge that corruption is a phenomenon that occurs in most countries of the world and that tackling corruption is a complex and multi-faceted challenge requiring a multi-stakeholder approach and a long-term eradication plan;
60. recognise that anti-corruption action plans – be they at government or civil society level – must be able to draw on broad public support if they are to succeed, and underline that civil society, including the media and social partners, have a key role to play in galvanising such support;
61. underline in this context that civil society organisations and the media must themselves be independent, representative and free of corruption, and call on these organisations to lead the way in society by establishing internal transparency measures such as codes of conduct, auditing and financial reporting, and other appropriate measures, drawing on the know-how provided by local and international anti-corruption organisations and NGOs;
62. stress that governments are responsible for establishing the necessary legislation and implementing bodies to fight corruption and that these must be extended and consolidated as a measure of the transparency and quality of new governance in legislative and government institutions and in public services. They thus welcome the setting up of anti-corruption bodies in certain countries, for example in Morocco, which should play a visible coordinating role in fighting corruption;
63. call on the political authorities to work together with civil society in order to set up an action plan with step-by-step commitments to prevent and eradicate corruption at all levels, including high-level corruption amongst the elites;
64. stress that the EU Action Plans must support judicial and prison reform, as well as police and judicial cooperation, and call on the EU to maintain its ENP priorities regarding cooperation measures to combat organised crime, drug and arms trafficking, money-laundering and financial and economic crimes, as these are often corollaries of corruption.

*On the 2013-2014 work programme:*

The participants:

65. have decided that at the 2013 Summit the following themes will be addressed:
  - a) Managing water-related challenges in the Euro-Mediterranean region;
  - b) Youth and employment in the Euro-Mediterranean region;
  - c) Follow-up report on immigration and cooperation in the Euro-Mediterranean region;
  - d) Follow-up report on the economic and social situation of women in the Euro-Mediterranean region.

66. have decided that at the 2014 Summit the following theme will be addressed:
- a) Fighting poverty and social exclusion in the Euromed region.
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