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## **A Strategic Reassessment of EU Policy in the Mediterranean**

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The historic transformation that has taken place across the Southern Mediterranean in 2011, with regime change in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya, and upheavals in other Arab countries, demands a strategic reassessment of European Union policy making towards the region.

The complex policy framework that has resulted from the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, (EMP), the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) and the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) must be reviewed in light of the new political landscape that has emerged in North Africa. The European Union's strategic objective must be that of formulating a better coordinated cooperative mechanism in the Mediterranean that provides direct support to the Middle East and North African countries at this delicate moment of political and economic transition.

The European Union must seize the moment to assist the Arab countries in transition to move away from the possibility of an escalation of domestic political instability and provide tangible economic support. In essence, the European Union should seek to advance its strategic objectives in the Mediterranean by appealing to the overwhelming desire of the populations in the different Arab states to establish a more transparent and accountable functioning democracy.

Geographical proximity and stability in the Mediterranean dictates that the EU needs to try and influence regional dynamics in the Mediterranean more systematically than it has been in recent years. Failure to do so will continue to stifle attempts to strengthen Euro-Mediterranean relations through the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership agenda that now also encompasses the

Union for the Mediterranean agenda and will also have a negative impact on the EU's Neighbourhood Policy agenda that is currently being implemented.<sup>1</sup>

All extra regional actors with an interest in ensuring that future Euro-Mediterranean relations remain peaceful and more prosperous, including the United States, must act to ensure that the Middle East is not left to collapse as a result of an attitude of indifference. International organisations must guard against adopting an attitude of indifference when it comes to securing a peaceful future for this region. The outcome of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and other regional conflicts across the Middle East will have a major bearing on the future direction of twenty-first century international relations, including of course, those of the Mediterranean. One cannot over emphasise the strategic significance of this region when providing an assessment of countering sources of insecurity in post- Cold War relations.<sup>2</sup>

When it comes to identifying a way forward to enhancing Euro-Mediterranean regional cooperation in both the European Union and the Arab world, there is the need to conduct a critical reassessment of regional cooperation. Regional cooperation is not an aim in itself. It has to be pursued with a clear strategy, clearly defined objectives and instruments to advance long-term objectives, and a clear sense of priorities. What sort of regional cooperation makes sense? Where is there a chance of advancing? How can the Euro-Mediterranean partnership be redefined now that a radical political transformation has taken place across the Southern Mediterranean? How can pan-Arab regional integration

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<sup>1</sup> Calleya, Stephen, 2005: *Evaluating Euro-Mediterranean Relations* (London: F. Cass).

<sup>2</sup> Calleya, Stephen, 2007: "Yes, but surely it's the Mediterranean that risks being Europe's dark side", in: *Europe's World*, 7 (Autumn) :117-119; See also de Marco, Guido, 2008: *Malta's Foreign Policy in the Nineties*, 5 (Malta: Ministry of Foreign Affairs); "Enhancing Euro-Arab Relations", *Times of Malta* (12 February 2008): 1, 17.

be spurred to complement the major overhaul underway in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya?

A road map that stipulates short, medium, and long-term phases of region-building is necessary if progress is to be registered in establishing a Euro-Mediterranean community of values. All international institutions with a Mediterranean dimension should provide their think tank platform to map out such a strategy, so that a Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) of diverse states becomes a reality in future.

As the second decade of the new millennium commences, the Mediterranean must avoid becoming a permanent fault-line between the prosperous North and an impoverished South. The key development to watch in the emerging Mediterranean in the next decade will be to see whether the phase of cooperation between Europe and the Arab world, that has dominated post-Cold War relations to date, is consolidated by tangible measures to enhance political reform that is underway as a result of the Arab Spring of 2011. If such an opportunity is not grasped, political paralysis coupled by economic stagnation could lead to a scenario where a clash of cultures takes hold and disorder dominates Mediterranean relations. Such a scenario of instability and uncertainty will stifle the economic growth and political stability that is necessary to improve the standard of living of all peoples across the Mediterranean.

The only way this future can be avoided is if the European Union's external policy towards the Mediterranean delivers the economic support it promises and succeeds in attracting the interest of international institutions such as the World Bank and the IMF, and persuades them to become more altruistic in their dealings with the region. The European Union's credibility is severely undermined when it does not deliver the funding it allocates to those countries that have recently experienced a profound change. During the first nine months of the "Arab Spring", EU funding to Tunisia and Egypt has not been

forthcoming and has added further to the uncertainty that is being experienced at this moment.<sup>3</sup>

The Mediterranean countries themselves must also adopt more of a self-help mentality. Rather than undermine or diminish the significance of the EU in the Mediterranean, the growing socio-economic disparities across the Mediterranean underlines further the significance of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership agenda as outlined in the Barcelona Declaration of November 1995, the only multilateral process of its kind in the area.

The more recent complementary Union for the Mediterranean agenda and European Neighbourhood Policy Review of 2011 must aim at reviving and recalibrating the Euro-Med Partnership, by building on the political and security perspective enshrined in the Barcelona Declaration. The ENP Review offers an opportunity to spur the resurgence of sub-regionalism – intensify sub-regionalism and bilateral interplay in the Mediterranean. It also offers the chance to map out a more action oriented and more target focused agenda. The ENP Review towards the Mediterranean will only succeed if it is matched by leadership and political will, that succeeds in engaging all European Union and Mediterranean states to work together to address the long list of security challenges across the Mediterranean area.

The heterogeneous nature of the Mediterranean represents a great challenge when it comes to managing the security challenges present in contemporary international relations. The Mediterranean Sea connects three continents. In the words of Fernand Braudel: The Mediterranean is not even a single sea, it is a complex of seas; and these seas are broken up by islands,

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<sup>3</sup> “Tunisia and Egypt Receive Mere Fraction of Promised Aid Funds,” *Financial Times* (8 September 2011): 1.

interrupted by peninsulas, ringed by intricate coastlines.<sup>4</sup>

From a strategic perspective one notes at least four different “seas”: the western Mediterranean from Gibraltar to the Gulf of Sirte, linking southern Europe to the Maghreb; the Adriatic Sea, linking Italy to the Balkans; the Aegean Sea connecting Greece, Turkey, and Cyprus; and the eastern Mediterranean basin also in the vicinity of the Israeli-Arab conflict.<sup>5</sup>

An analysis of the pattern of relations in the different sub-regions of the Mediterranean a decade into the new millennium reveals that while Southern Europe states have become more deeply integrated into the European sphere of influence, similar to their counterparts in Eastern Europe since the end of the Cold War, no similar pattern of unity is noticeable across the other Mediterranean sub-regions. Actually several Arab states in the Maghreb and Mashreq resisted the option of embracing the global trends of democracy and liberal values until the Arab Spring of 2011 changed the equation completely. It remains to be seen if most states along the southern shore of the Mediterranean opt for a process of political and economic reform that includes guaranteeing freedom of expression and gender equality.

The Mediterranean continues to be a source of instability in international relations. It is the location of the more than six-decade-old conflict between Israel and Palestine. In addition to the continuous hostilities between these two peoples, this conflict also

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<sup>4</sup> Braudel, Fernand, 1949: *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Phillip II* (originally in French: London & New York 1973). See also Hultdt, Bo, 2003: “Euro-Mediterranean Security and the Barcelona Process”, in: Hultdt, Bo; Engman, Mats; Davidson, Elisabeth (Eds.): *Euro-Mediterranean Security and the Barcelona Process Strategic Yearbook* (Stockholm: Swedish National Defence College).

<sup>5</sup> Abulafia, David, 2011: *The Great Sea* (Oxford: Oxford University Press): xxiii.

attracts the attention of Euro-Mediterranean regional actors and international great powers. The Arab Spring of 2011 has also unleashed a period of upheaval that has further attracted international attention to the Mediterranean.

The post-Cold War Mediterranean is a geographical area where the majority of contemporary soft and hard security challenges are present, including ongoing conflicts in each sub- region of the basin primarily over territorial claims, the proliferation of weapons, terrorist activities, illegal migration, ethnic tensions, human rights abuses, climate change, natural resources disputes especially concerning energy and water, and environmental degradation.

The main objective for international organisations is to match policy communiqués and agreements with action on the ground. An analysis of the EU's external relations strategy during the past two decades must call for more attention towards the EU's immediate neighbourhood, especially the Mediterranean.

Given the indivisibility of security in Europe and the Mediterranean, the EU must realise that it is in its strategic interest to continue to adopt a more proactive stance when it comes to influencing and managing the international relations of the Mediterranean area.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Nadal, Miquel., 2003: "The Barcelona Process: Background and Vision", in: Huldt, Bo; Engman, Mats; Davidson, Elisabeth (Eds.): *Euro-Mediterranean Security and the Barcelona Process, Strategic Yearbook* (Stockholm: Swedish National Defence College): 19-27. See also Yenel, Selim, 2002: "Creating a More Viable Mediterranean: Regional Efforts, Difficulties in Cooperation and Future Prospects". Paper presented at the 13<sup>th</sup> Euro-Mediterranean Seminar, MEDAC, Malta, 15-18 November; Calleya, Stephen, 2006: "The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and Sub-Regionalism: A Case of Region Building?", in: Adler, Emanuel; Bicchi, Federica; Crawford, Beverly; del Sarto, Raffaella (Eds.): *The Convergence of Civilisations, Constructing a Mediterranean Region* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press): 4.

## **Strategic Visions for the Mediterranean**

The latter part of the twentieth century saw a resurgence of regional dynamics in international relations. The process of decolonization, coupled with the end of the Cold War, created an environment that was conducive to an increase in regional patterns of interaction. As a result, regionalism again became a major characteristic of the international system.

The growth of regional arrangements since the end of the Cold War is partly due to the fact that great powers and regional powers have welcomed the opportunity to participate in collective security and cooperative frameworks in which the costs of foreign policy actions are shared among several actors. Although common historical, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds and a common civic culture continue to influence regional constellations, the post-Cold War era has seen an increase in the impact of geo-economic and geo-political factors on the foreign policy direction that countries decide to adopt. For example, there are parallels between the systemic changes taking place between the Caribbean and Central America and the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which embraces the United States, Canada, and Mexico, and those impelled by the relations of the Mediterranean countries with the European Union.

In emphasizing the significance of international regions as an intermediate level of analysis between the nation state and the global international system, this study seeks to assist in identifying the changes taking place in Euro-Mediterranean international relations at the start of the twenty-first century and the potential for future cooperation in the Mediterranean basin. Consequently, the following issues arise: Are the obstacles blocking regionalism across the Mediterranean insurmountable?; What can be done to trigger sub-regional cooperation?; What time frames should be adopted to carry out the necessary political changes to cope with regional demands?; Should there be a more concerted effort to institutionalize regional relations?; This last issue is probably an

essential measure if regional working programmes are to be implemented in the foreseeable future.

It has become a truism that the new global economy is drawing states ever closer together. Yet, growing interdependence has not affected all parts of the globe to the same extent. Some regions have become much more interdependent in political and economic terms than others. For example, while countries across Europe are constantly increasing the intensity of political and economic interaction between themselves, the countries just south of the European continent in the Mediterranean have not succeeded in fostering similar patterns of interaction.

The removal of Cold War shackles over the last decade has resulted in a situation in which the countries of the Mediterranean are finding it more difficult to compete globally. Unless Mediterranean states begin a process of sub-regional integration and regional integration, they face the stark danger of falling further behind in the post-Cold War international system.

In the last two decades, numerous initiatives have been put forward to stimulate the concept of regionalism across the Mediterranean. The most prominent of these are the '5+5' initiative that brought together five Southern European states with their Maghreb counterparts, the Mediterranean Forum initiated by Egypt, the Maltese proposal to create a Council of the Mediterranean, and the Italian-Spanish proposal to launch a Conference on Security and Cooperation in the Mediterranean (CSCM). Other regional initiatives include the initiative to create an Arab Maghreb Union (AMU), which was established in 1989, and the European Union-led Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP) and Euro-Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), and more recently



the French proposal to establish a Union for the Mediterranean.<sup>7</sup>

Efforts to reactivate sub-regional cooperative initiatives in recent years have helped to improve regional relations across the Mediterranean. The lack of coordination between the different regional groupings and the heterogeneous nature of the grouping's membership have, however, not triggered any specific attention to the goal of building a more integrated and thus dynamically competitive Mediterranean region.

During the first two decades of the post- Cold War, sub-regional modalities of cooperation have not been able to contribute to a more harmonious relationship between the states of the Mediterranean. On the contrary, instead of influencing positively relations between the different clusters of countries concerned, they have largely fallen victim to the conflict dominant pattern of relations. Providing the necessary political will necessary will be essential if sub- regional groupings in the Mediterranean are to become a more influential force of cooperative relations in the years to come.

At the first Euro-Mediterranean foreign ministerial meeting which took place in Barcelona in November 1995, the twenty-seven partner countries established three principal areas of cooperation. The Barcelona Process set out three basic tasks:

- a political and security partnership with the aim of establishing a common area of peace and stability;
- an economic and financial partnership with the aim of creating an area of shared prosperity;

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<sup>7</sup> Calleya, Stephen, 2009: "The Union for the Mediterranean An Exercise in Region Building": *Mediterranean Quarterly*, 20,4 (Fall): 49-70. See also Gabriel, Jürg Martin 2009: "The Mediterranean: Clashing Patterns of Governance", in: MEDAC (Eds.): *Mediterranean Perspectives on International Relations* (Valletta: MEDAC).

- a partnership in social, cultural and human affairs in an effort to promote understanding between cultures and exchanges between civil societies.

In the past decade, the EMP has certainly strengthened North-South relations between the EU and the Mediterranean. The sheer amount of meetings and policy actions that have been launched since 1995 has resulted in the creation of an emerging intricate web of political, academic and civil societal networks that are all contributing to a more intensive Southern European pattern of relations in this part of the world. In contrast, the EMP has only recently succeeded in spurring North-South relations in the Mediterranean, despite the high priority that has been given to this objective since the start of the EMP.

The EU's "Wider Europe – Neighbourhood" policy of 2003 provides a new framework for relations with our Eastern and Southern Neighbours and a good basis for developing a new range of policies towards a long list of important strategic partners that include the Ukraine, Moldova, Belarus, Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya Morocco, the Palestinian Authority, Syria, and Tunisia.

While cooperative relations between the European Union and the Mediterranean partner countries have improved over the last decade, the evolution of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP) has not been as positive as many had expected or hoped, when the Partnership was first launched in 1995. While the lack of momentous progress should not lead the EU to abandon the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, it is obvious that the EMP is a long-term process that can only be sustained if it is supported by more short- to medium-term sub-regional processes.

Fortunately, eight years after the start of the EMP, the European Union recognised the importance of promoting sub- regional patterns of interaction in the Mediterranean. The specific commitment to supporting sub-regional dynamics, that the EU made in the April 2002 Valencia Action Plan, is a welcome

development that will hopefully be followed by serious political and technical support for sub- regional initiatives, that have once again emerged across the Mediterranean.

It is essential that one examines the pattern of relations that is evolving between Europe and the Mediterranean and within the Mediterranean, and also seeks to identify the likely impact such developments will have on relations in the area up to 2020. Throughout its first fifteen years of functioning, the EMP was too EU driven. Moreover, since the EU enlargement of 2004, when the number of member states rose to 25, there has been a noticeable shift towards the East of Europe in EMP agenda- setting.

Ratification of the Lisbon Treaty in December 2009 augurs for an eventual more coherent EU in international relations. The Mediterranean offers the EU a litmus test when it comes to demonstrating a more effective and coherent cooperative framework towards the Mediterranean during the next decade. The EU should focus more of its diplomatic attention on encouraging sub-regional cooperation within the EMP, an objective that the Barcelona Declaration of November 1995 had already envisaged.

More than fifteen years have passed since the signing of the Barcelona Declaration in November 1995, when the Foreign Ministers of the EU and their colleagues from all the countries around the Mediterranean pledged to progressively establish a Euro-Mediterranean area of peace, stability and prosperity at the horizon of 2010. Since then we have seen profoundly asymmetrical developments in the EU and the Mediterranean: an EU frantically struggling to keep up with the constraints of globalisation, a Mediterranean falling further behind.

Since 1995 the majority of the EU's Mediterranean partner countries have moved ahead very slowly. The prosperity gap with Europe, especially Central European countries, has further widened. It would have widened even further without the general rise of oil prices and a significant slowdown of demographic growth, the only positive developments in the region.

There has been no attempt whatever towards more economic, let alone political integration. The Maghreb has not advanced a bit, even slightly, towards closer cooperation, contrary to what had been called for by the 1989 Treaty on the Maghreb Union.

Throughout the Mediterranean area, the reform process has been lamentably slow. Privatization and deregulation of the economies are still in the very beginning. Up until the “Arab Spring” of 2011 very few Mediterranean Arab countries had made convincing strides on the path towards political accountability and democracy. The EU’s Mediterranean policy must now aim at profound economic, social and political reforms in the southern neighbourhood countries. Free trade and EU assistance are only instruments to that end.

Yet the work of reform cannot be done by the EU alone. It has to be done by the Mediterranean countries themselves, their societies and above all the political elites. To that end, they have to realise that such reforms are in their long-term interest, in view of spreading education, more prosperity, better health, more political stability and less social tension and unrest.<sup>8</sup>

The gradual spreading of market forces will have a triple effect on the societies. It will raise the standard of living of the population, it will create new power centres that will want to

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<sup>8</sup> “The Free-Market Secret of the Arab Revolutions”, in: *Financial Times* (9 November 2011): 9. “Club Med”, *The Economist* (12-18 July 2008): 13. See also Escribano, Gonzalo; Lorca, Alejandro V., 2007: “Economic Reform in the Maghreb: From Stabilization to Modernisation”, *Working Paper 4/2007*, Real Instituto Elcano, Madrid; PSE Group, 2008: *The Future of the EU-Mediterranean Relations* (Brussels: PSE Group, European Parliament); Commission of the European Communities, 2008: *Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean, COM (2008) 319 final* (Brussels: European Union); Ferrero-Waldner, Benita, 2008: “The European Union and its Place in the World – the Current Agenda”, College of Europe, Bruges, 7 April; Pöttering, Hans-Gert: “Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean”, European Parliament, 20 May 2008; “The Union for the Mediterranean: examples of existing Euro-Med initiatives in the areas listed in the French reflection paper”, April 2008.

participate in the political decisions and it will weaken the role of the state bureaucracies, the military and other “cliques”. It will also enhance transparency of the system, accountability of the budget procedures through appropriate foreign assistance procedures. And very gradually it will tend to loosen the grip of the various political “mafias” and family clans that presently cling to their power.

Concretely, the EU should therefore initially focus on the non-political, non-sensitive issues, such as issues related to the business and investment climate, the macro-economic framework, the banking system, the educational system, privatisation, the legal system and the functioning of the judiciary. This is more than plenty on the agenda for the coming 5-10 years that needs to be addressed. It corresponds to the basic and urgent needs of the countries. It is mostly acceptable to the governments. It is part of their ongoing reform processes, however slowly they may proceed.

What does this require from the EU side? More focus on this reform process, regular policy dialogue, both comprehensive and specific. Ideally, each of the Mediterranean partner countries that has ratified the association agreement should prepare an “association strategy”, a list of legislative reform actions to be implemented in a 3-5 year period. The EU should assist in the preparation of these programmes; it should put its funding behind them, monitor their implementation and disburse the funding according to the progress of implementation as is the case in structural adjustment financing.

The high expectations raised in 1995 by the Barcelona Declaration have not been fulfilled. They will not be fulfilled in the future unless there is a profound change of awareness in the eight Arab Mediterranean partner countries. They have to “change gear”. Otherwise they will continue to fall behind Europe, Asia and America. The Arab Spring of 2011 provides a more conducive context within which such a shift can take place.

Reform committed Southern states, such as Tunisia and Egypt, should take lessons from Hungary, Estonia or Bulgaria or, more recently, Turkey, in order to enable their populations to enjoy a better life, more freedom, better education, more jobs, and less pollution.

Everywhere they will find similar answers: accountability and transparency of governments, market economy, higher standards of education, encouragement of civil society, particular of women, privatisation of the banking sector and major utilities, retreat of the government from direct interventions in the economic process.

The EU is willing and able to support whatever reforms governments will be prepared to launch and implement. The Association Agreements signed with all the Mediterranean countries, except Syria, and financial assistance are elements of such support. The establishment of free trade between the EU and each of the Mediterranean countries will, in due time, have a positive impact on the functioning of their economies. The case of Tunisia, the only country that is already somewhat advanced on the road towards free trade, is telling in that respect.

But the EU should do much more to stimulate and accelerate the necessary reform process in the South, especially in the aftermath of the revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt in 2011. The EU should offer its full support to all those countries in the South willing to move ahead with serious socio-economic reforms. With those volunteering for a joint reform effort, it should start a process of “open coordination” in a few areas that are essential for more rapid socio-economic progress: education, information technology, deregulation, science and research, and good governance. In return, the partner countries would commit themselves to a set of reform objectives and a strict calendar for implementation.

The EU would have to offer substantial financial assistance to certain packages of the reform process. It would focus its assistance on those countries participating in the joint exercise. In

doing so, the EU would transpose its precious experience with the transition countries in Central Europe to the Mediterranean. This will require substantially more personnel and financial commitment on the part of the EU Commission and member states than during the past fifteen years.

A more effective EU policy towards the Mediterranean requires a serious overhaul of the strategic approach adopted to date. First, the EU needs to adopt more of a long-term strategic approach. The problems of the Mediterranean will not be solved within a few years. Both sides have to think and act with a long-term horizon, towards 2020.

Linked to this is “commitment”. It is hard to say that the EU has, in recent years, been truly committed to the cause of development in the Mediterranean. The Mediterranean has been just one among other priorities on the EU foreign policy agenda. The partner countries may not have eased the job. Whatever the past, without firm political will and commitment from both sides a dynamic Euro-Mediterranean partnership will not succeed!

Second, the EU should forget about public relations gimmicks. It should focus on those parts of the Barcelona Process that really matter for the long-term socio-economic development. That is the standard by which coming generations will measure EU policies, not by the number of meetings that have been held or the volumes of papers produced.

Third, the EU should focus on improving bilateral links. A major emphasis needs to be dedicated to the country that triggered the Arab Spring, namely Tunisia. Tunisia must become a showcase success story. Reforms will have to be undertaken by each and every country. Therefore, the EU will have to enter into the substance of societal, administrative, legal, political development blockages and try to unblock these. This will be a patient process that requires continuity of effort. It is here that much can be learnt from the experience with the accession countries.

The EU should not be afraid of applying to the Mediterranean its technique of “accession strategies” which would become “association strategies”. The EU should sit down with each of the countries willing to undergo the experience and fix medium-term objectives for education, market opening, judiciary reforms and the assistance to be offered for such reform programmes by the EU. In doing so, the EU should have the courage to use the “stick and carrot” approach: funding should be modulated according to the pace of reforms. The EU might start with the easy reforms, for example, customs procedures, tax laws, competition laws, so as to create “success stories”.

Fourth, the regional approach should involve encouragement of South-South free trade. After the Declaration of Agadir, the time is ripe to go ahead with South-South free trade. It may be best to start with the four most advanced countries but it should rapidly also associate the latecomers. Free trade among the south should be completed by 2015.

Fifth, the EU should be prepared to progressively increase its financial support for the Mediterranean. The total of € 700-800 million p.a. for the whole region, Turkey included, is simply not good enough to make an impact.

Sixth, financial support should be concentrated on the support of specific strategic policies, for example, education. The EU should try to bundle its own assistance with that of member states and multilateral donors, and thus create more synergy.

The economic and social development of the Mediterranean does not depend exclusively on the progress registered towards peace between Israel and Palestine. The lack of peace must not be an alibi for the lack of reforms in the Maghreb or elsewhere.

Seventh, with the progress of the South-South free trade area (FTA) in the Mediterranean, it will become even more important to focus more on the GCC (and Yemen) and to conclude the FTA



with this sub- region of the Mediterranean. This is important to complete Euro-Arab free trade by about around 2015.

Eighth, the EU should be much more open on the agricultural front. As it will liberalise its own agriculture, it should review its agricultural trade with the MED and progressively dismantle the remaining obstacles to free trade (calendars, reference prices etc.). This will not constitute a big boost to agricultural exports from the South, but deprive the South from exaggerated criticism of EU double standards.

The Barcelona Declaration of 1995 should serve as a blueprint, upon which future Euro-Mediterranean relations should be mapped out. The revolutions that swept away authoritarian regimes in Tunisia and Egypt provide a conducive setting to establish stronger relations between Europe and the Southern Mediterranean for decades to come. Europe cannot escape its Southern neighbours, however messy their socio-economic situation may become. And the Mediterranean countries will not avoid Europe being a major reference for their future development, from market economy, to high-tech research, freedom of the press, good governance, democracy and human rights.

Euro-Mediterranean relations must however not become a scapegoat for the failures of Southern countries in doing their homework properly. The EU cannot undertake necessary reforms in the place of the governments in the partner countries. It can only make suggestions, share its own positive and negative experience with those who want to learn. It can try to transpose the basic methodology of the “Lisbon process” with its “benchmarking”, “open coordination”, and target setting to those countries in the South that may wish to undertake a similar exercise adapted to their particular challenges.

A different Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, that is adapted to take advantage of the Arab Spring of 2011, should seek to mobilise more support to achieve the goals outlined above and

build upon, and not replace, the cooperative relationship that has already been nurtured between Europe and the Mediterranean during the last few decades.

Successive rounds of EU enlargement have had a psychological impact on Euro-Mediterranean perceptions as the centre of gravity shifted further East in Europe and further away from the Mediterranean. Now that fundamental change has arrived in Southern shore countries across the Mediterranean, the EU's main challenge is to implement an agenda that guards against perceptions of marginalization becoming a reality or diluting the European Union's commitment towards the Mediterranean.

The challenge in the next decade will be to ensure that the European Union develops an external policy towards the Mediterranean that takes into consideration the aspirations of the millions of Arab citizens that have risked their lives to bring about the downfall of their respective dictators. Geographical proximity and geopolitical interests dictates that the EU realizes that it is in its interest to increase its political and economic commitment towards the Mediterranean. Naturally the Mediterranean countries have an essential role to play in this challenge. They must adopt policies that attract the attention of Europeans and ensure implementation of a comprehensive reform programme that is built on the rule of law and respect of universal human rights.