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## Euro-Mediterranean region: call for a Council of Europe strategy

### Committee Opinion<sup>1</sup>

Committee on Economic Affairs and Development

Rapporteur: Mr Ertuğrul KUMCUOĞLU, Turkey, European Democrat Group

### A. Conclusions of the committee

The Committee on Economic Affairs and Development warmly welcomes the report prepared by Mr Denis Badré on “Euro-Mediterranean region: call for a Council of Europe strategy”, and to a great extent shares the main conclusions and suggestions contained in the draft resolution and draft recommendation tabled by the Political Affairs Committee. The amendment submitted in this opinion supports the approach adopted by the Political Affairs Committee and attempts to clarify and complete the draft resolution from an economic point of view.

### B. Amendment proposed by the committee

#### *Amendment A (to the draft resolution)*

In the draft resolution, add the following phrase at the beginning of paragraph 5:

*“While not forgetting that the achievement of economic and social development is also a fundamental necessity,”*

### C. Explanatory memorandum by Mr Kumcuoğlu, rapporteur

1. I thank Mr Denis Badré for his report which includes a draft resolution and a draft recommendation for adoption by the Parliamentary Assembly. It mainly focuses on the questions which arise concerning the Council of Europe’s role with regard to the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM). In general, I agree with Mr Badré’s conclusions and proposals.

2. It should be noted that the emphasis put on the interdependence of Europe and the Mediterranean region, as well as the strong “historical, cultural, economic and human links” between the two are well founded and realistic. The further emphasis placed by the report on the need for co-operation between Europe, the southern Mediterranean, the Middle East and central Asia, including matters such as intercultural and inter-religious dialogue, could be useful in order not only to consolidate and preserve long-standing relations but also to establish a stronger connection between these regions with the aim of promoting democracy and human rights. Therefore, we should strongly endorse this perspective and recall once more that the role of the

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1. See [Document 12108](#) presented by the Political Affairs Committee.



Council of Europe is to preserve, consolidate and disseminate values and principles such as democracy, human rights and the rule of law. These values are at the core of and complementary to the long-term development of the UfM as also foreseen in the European Union's strategy.

3. We believe that it would be improvident for the Council of Europe to establish parallel structures which would compete with the European Union's activities with respect to the UfM's actions. I think the rationale behind the potential division of labour between the Council of Europe and the European Union should be such that the former would concentrate on promoting values and principles, whilst the primary objective of the latter would be to ensure stability, security, peace and prosperity in the region. Although the European Union is also concerned with the promotion of human rights, democracy and the rule of law, these values and principles should be considered as having secondary importance in the context of relations between the EU and the UfM. The Council of Europe's role should also be supportive of and complementary to the European Union's actions in all possible fields, and it should share its full experience in all fields in which its achievements are extensively recognised. This perspective requires that economic and social progress and development in the Mediterranean while safeguarding fundamental values and principles should be recognised as an essential component of the process. The Council of Europe's potential contribution to the Union for the Mediterranean should be seen primarily in terms of the intertwined nature of peace, security, stability, welfare, the rule of law and democracy. Therefore, it would be useful to adopt a step-by-step approach, setting the priorities first and then focusing on them.

4. Accordingly, the participation of Mediterranean states in the Council of Europe's conventions and partial agreements can be considered as a first step towards implementing the Council of Europe's values. However, there is no peace and stability without prosperity. Therefore, a free trade area agreement which includes all interested parties could be another important step towards improving trade relations and strengthening the economic base in the region. Moreover, the rule of law, as an intrinsic feature of democracy, is essential to ensure peace, stability, security and of course welfare in the countries concerned. Moreover, I would like to stress that bilateral relations between the Council of Europe and countries in the region with the aim of promoting democratic standards and institutions should be conducted in parallel with the multilateral developments within the Union for the Mediterranean.

5. The goals of the European Centre for Global Interdependence and Solidarity (North-South Centre) and the rationale behind them should be considered as complementary to the aim of narrowing the gap between Europe, the southern Mediterranean and the Middle East. Solidarity from economically better off countries is indispensable in order to ensure cohesion in view of the north/south, east/west and centre/periphery cleavages inside and around Europe. In this context, the general structure and requirements of the North-South Centre should be revised constantly in order to ensure the participation of all member states of the Council of Europe as well as the European Union so as to further support other projects and institutions like the UfM.

6. As far as these cleavages and huge economic, political, social and cultural differences are concerned, the countries which might play a considerable role in the UfM in achieving security, stability, peace and welfare and in resolving the conflicts across this vast region should be given sufficient political support. A task-based approach could be useful in urging and supporting the countries which are historically or geographically closer to the conflict areas to be more active in helping to solve existing problems. Other countries should be expected to act in a spirit of solidarity. Settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (with the involvement of other neighbouring countries) is considered to be the key to the UfM's success. Therefore, all interested parties should strive to do their best to help solve the problem.

7. To conclude, although the UfM is mainly a European Union strategy, its core is also based on the mutual understanding, interdependence, reciprocity, intercultural and inter-religious dialogue and multidimensional approach promoted by the Council of Europe in fostering its values and principles. The creation of a free trade area and the strengthening of economic relations in parallel with the establishment of a secure and stable region in accordance with the UfM goals should be accompanied by the consolidation of the rule of law, human rights and democracy, as strongly emphasised by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.

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*Reporting committee:* Political Affairs Committee

*Committee for opinion:* Committee on Economic Affairs and Development

*Reference to committee:* Reference 3420 of 14 April 2008

*Draft opinion* unanimously approved on 22 January 2010

*Secretariat of the committee:* Mr Newman, Ms Ramanauskaite, Mr de Buyer and Mr Pfaadt