Parliamentary Assembly
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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Recommendation 1249 (1994)[1]
Final version

Co-operation in the Mediterranean basin

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Mediterranean, situated at the centre of trade and cultural exchanges, tensions and political dialogue, and a crossing point between cast and west, north and south and the numerous peoples and regions of Europe, Africa and Asia, has always been a reference point for Europe and an area of special relations among its coastal states

2. Today, the Mediterranean region is characterised in particular by wide disparities in wealth among the coastal states. The food situation in the countries to the south and east of the Mediterranean basin is continually deteriorating, partly as a result of development policies being concentrated on industrialisation and limiting the role of agriculture to production for export purposes.

3. Furthermore, the region is at the centre of the biggest migration flows in Europe, resulting *inter alia* from the demographic and economic imbalances between the countries on the northern and southern shores of the Mediterranean.

4. While pursuing its efforts aimed at the Council of Europe's enlargement and co-operation with the central and east European countries – which it considers as a priority – the Assembly believes that the Mediterranean basin is a region of paramount importance for Europe; and particularly as it is today experiencing significant political instability resulting from the democratic deficit and the socio-economic imbalances in certain Mediterranean countries

5. Consequently, the Assembly, in order to contribute to the political stability of the Mediterranean region which it has already sought to foster through its stances on earlier occasions, would like to see the Council of Europe (which comprises other bodies such as the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe (CLRAE) or the European Centre for Global Interdependence and Solidarity, also concerned with Mediterranean co-operation) devote greater attention to this frontier region

6. The Mediterranean region has a great potential for trade, investment and prosperity. For the poorer countries, access to European markets is essential. However, it is equally important for these countries to achieve greater diversification of their domestic economics through structural reform and more intensive trade with each other.

7. At parliamentary level, the Assembly fully supports and wishes to continue its involvement with the Inter-Parliamentary Union's initiative to institute a Mediterranean co-operation process by organising interparliamentary conferences on security and cooperation in the Mediterranean, along the lines of the conference held in Malaga (15-20 June 1992).

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1. Assembly debate on 7 October 1994 (31st Sitting) (see Doc. 7153, report of the Committee on the Environment, Regional Planning and Local Authorities, Rapporteur: Mr Parisi; Doc. 7155, contribution from the Political Affairs Committee by Mr Kaspereit; Doc. 7157, contribution from the Committee on Economic Affairs and Development, by Mr Pavlides; Doc. 7147, contribution from the Committee on Culture and Education, by Mr de Puig; Doc. 7160, contribution from the Committee on Science and Technology, by Mr Inönu and Doc. 7136, contribution from the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Demography, by Mr Cucó). Text adopted by the Assembly on 7 October 1994 (31st Sitting).

8. It has also noted the resolution, adopted by the European Parliament on 6 May 1994, to set up a Mediterranean assembly which, as an organ of political dialogue, would bring together representatives of the parliaments of the European Union and of the countries of the southern and eastern Mediterranean; in this respect, the Assembly intends to monitor any action taken on this resolution and, if appropriate, to make concrete proposals.

9. The Assembly notes, moreover, that the foreign ministers of the Mediterranean countries met in Alexandria on 4 July 1994 at the invitation of the Egyptian President Mr Hosni Mubarak, expressed their support for developing a "Forum for Mediterranean dialogue and co-operation" and decided to set up working parties in various fields (political, cultural, economic and social) of relevance to the Council of Europe's own sphere of activity with a view to preparing for the next ministerial meeting.

10. The Assembly stresses the importance of protecting the environment and natural resources (water, energy, soil, forests) as well as the coastline and the sea by long-term management and in accordance with the principle of sustainable development. Local and regional authorities have a role to play in this field, in particular the regions directly concerned with the multiple aspects of Mediterranean co-operation.

11. Consequently, the Assembly recommends that the Committee of Ministers:

i. include the Council of Europe's Mediterranean policy on the agenda of its next ministerial meeting and ask the Ministers' Deputies:

   a. to devote a special meeting to discussing the role and activities of the Council of Europe in the Mediterranean region;

   b. to set up an ad hoc working party of the Ministers' Deputies responsible for monitoring and implementing proposals regarding the Council of Europe's Mediterranean policy;

   c. to identify the existing activities with regard to the Mediterranean in the various fields of the work programme, and propose new activities touching on the issues of prime importance for this region, such as the environment and regional planning, democracy and local self-government, tolerance, demography and migration, youth or the historical and cultural heritage;

   d. to encourage - in the spirit of the Final Declaration of the Vienna Summit - co-operation in the field of social sciences between the northern and southern Mediterranean, in order to be better able to combat different forms of xenophobia, intolerance and racist or religious violence;

   e. to devote special attention to the Mediterranean ecosystem and commission scientific studies to gauge more accurately the consequences of population development for the region;

ii. implement Recommendation 1221 (1993) on the peace process in the Middle East and call upon the governments of member states to help create a climate of confidence in the region;

iii. ensure Council of Europe involvement in ongoing discussions regarding the Mediterranean region, particularly within die European Union, the CSCE, the working parties set up by the "Forum for Mediterranean dialogue and co-operation" (which will be meeting in Portugal at the end of 1994) and the next ministerial meeting to be held in France in 1995;

iv. consider appropriate ways of involving in certain activities of the Council of Europe the Mediterranean non-member countries which apply the principle of parliamentary democracy, respect for human rights and the rule of law;

v. consider the drafting of a partial agreement on Mediterranean co-operation open to Mediterranean non-member states of the Council of Europe;

vi. encourage, in areas of interest to both the Council of Europe and the Mediterranean non-member states, the signature by the latter of open conventions (such as the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats or the European Convention on the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage) and, if appropriate, arrange to open up other conventions which might pave the way for Mediterranean co-operation;

vii. back the proposal of the Sicily region to integrate a foundation for Mediterranean migration (as set out in the final declaration of the 3rd Conference of Mediterranean Regions) into the "demography" activities in the intergovernmental work programme, particularly under Project III. 1 concerning demographic imbalances between the countries of the Mediterranean basin;

viii. give its full support to the organisation of an international conference on demographic problems in the Mediterranean basin, proposed by the European Population Committee (CDPO), to be held in Spain in 1996;

ix. encourage co-operation between local and regional authorities in the Mediterranean basin, follow up in this connection the proposal set out in the CLRAE, and backed by the Assembly, to adopt a European convention on interterritorial co-operation and support the meeting of Mediterranean cities to be held in Barcelona in March 1995;

x. pursue the proposal made at the International Symposium on Trans-Mediterranean Interdependence and Partnership (Rome, 17-19 January 1994) to incorporate a Mediterranean element in the programme of the European Centre for Global Interdependence and Solidarity;

xi. invite the governments of member states, and in particular those of the Mediterranean countries:

a. to intensify and co-ordinate their co-operation with the Mediterranean countries, whether or not they are members of the Council of Europe, in order to contribute to the sustainable democratic, social and economic development of the region, compatible with respect for its environment;

b. to co-ordinate their immigration policies and grant lawful immigrants the same social and economic rights as enjoyed by nationals, and indeed certain political rights, in accordance with the European Convention on the participation of foreigners in public life at local level;

c. to submit to the Social Development Fund concrete projects aiming to resolve the social problems associated with the presence on their territories of immigrants or refugees;

d. to intensify technology transfer, particularly in the field of alternative energy sources, in order to redress the imbalance in the level of development that exists between northern and southern Mediterranean countries;

e. to stimulate co-operation between research centres and universities and, in particular, support the European "danger sciences: risk management" training programme, one of the activities of the Council of Europe's EUR-OPA Major Hazards Partial Agreement, for which a pilot training module in the Mediterranean will be co-ordinated by the UNIMED Mediterranean universities network, a member of the European Federation of Scientific Networks