



Resolution 1197 (1999)¹

Peace, democratic stability and sustainable development in the Mediterranean and Black Sea basins: the role of interparliamentary co-operation

Parliamentary Assembly

1. In 1985 the Parliamentary Assembly organised the 1st Conference of Mediterranean Regions in Marseilles in co-operation with the then Standing Conference of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe (now the Congress). Since then, four other conferences have taken place.
2. Although local and regional authorities in the Mediterranean basin share the same problems, they are not well placed to develop or benefit from co-operation that would help them to find common solutions. The aim of the conferences was therefore to bring together representatives of the parliaments and regions of the countries bordering on the Mediterranean on a periodic basis in order to identify opportunities for contributing to the sustainable development of the region.
3. The conferences thus fit into the general framework of existing co-operation, which takes place at different levels, whether at bilateral or multilateral intergovernmental level or at the level of non-governmental organisations operating in different fields such as education, culture, the environment and youth affairs.
4. Despite a wide range of activities, the results of this co-operation are often limited with regard to the resources expended and do not meet the standard of priority action which the security and development of the region requires.
5. This was clearly the reason why the European Union took the initiative in November 1995 of launching, at the Barcelona Conference, an extensive intergovernmental programme for partnership between the Union and the countries of the southern shore of the Mediterranean.
6. The enlargement of the Council of Europe after 1992 also included five Mediterranean basin countries - Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Slovenia and "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" as full members, which made the Council of Europe a good institutional framework for Mediterranean co-operation.
7. Moreover, in 1992, the countries bordering on the Black Sea also decided to start co-operating both at intergovernmental level (Black Sea Economic Co-operation, BSEC) and at parliamentary level (Parliamentary Assembly of the Black Sea Economic Co-operation, PABSEC).
8. Since all the states of the Black Sea basin are members of the Council of Europe, or associated in some way with it, the Council of Europe is in an ideal position for dealing in a comprehensive manner with the problems, especially those of a political nature, that affect both basins.
9. Following the 4th Conference of Mediterranean Regions in Cyprus in September 1995 and on the basis of the outcome of the First Interparliamentary Conference on the Environmental Protection of the Black Sea (Istanbul, July 1996), it was decided that the enlargement of the Council of Europe to include the Black Sea countries and the fact that the Mediterranean and Black Sea basins form a single "ecosystem" and share many problems would justify a comprehensive approach to co-operation in the region.

1. Assembly debate on 21 September 1999 (27th Sitting) (see [Doc. 8498](#), report of the Committee on the Environment, Regional Planning and Local Authorities, rapporteur: Mr Briane). Text adopted by the Assembly on 21 September 1999 (27th Sitting).



10. The Assembly considers that the institutional framework of the discussions held through these conferences, in co-operation with parliaments and local and regional authorities, means that the Council of Europe's approach is unique in character and complements other major, particularly intergovernmental and interparliamentary, co-operation initiatives such as that of the European Union.

11. Moreover, as the systems of local and regional government in the countries in the two basins differ greatly and, in certain cases, still do not fully comply with the principles of local and regional democracy promoted by the Council of Europe, interparliamentary co-operation could also contribute to the establishment at local and regional level of democratic structures and methods of operation that enable the principle of solidarity to be applied.

12. To this end, intensified relations between the national parliaments of all the countries in the two basins, both members and non-members of the Council of Europe and the Parliamentary Assembly, could be an ideal means of co-operation in priority areas such as legislative reform and accession to, and implementation of, relevant international conventions and legal instruments.

13. Furthermore, the Assembly welcomes the interparliamentary dialogue which was set up at the initiative of the President of the Italian Parliament, and which complements in an appropriate way the "Barcelona process" of the European Union.

14. While having decided to extend its reflections to the countries of the Black Sea basin, the Assembly recognises that it must not lose sight of the problems specific to each basin: on the one hand, the economic, demographic and sociopolitical problems of the countries of the southern shore of the Mediterranean, which threaten to undermine peace and stability in the region; and on the other, the problems of environment, shipping and lack of co-operation between riparian countries, which appear to be priorities for the Black Sea basin.

15. The fifth conference in the series therefore examined interparliamentary and interregional co-operation in the Mediterranean and Black Sea region and, in particular, the contribution such co-operation could make to peace, democratic stability and sustainable development.

16. The Assembly is particularly concerned about the environmental situation, and is convinced of the need to give priority to those major problems which are having a decisive impact on economic and social development and even on the political stability of the region of the two sea basins, as well as of the priority that should be given to actions designed to raise public awareness and inform and educate all citizens about environmental management and a culture of peace.

17. Accordingly, the Parliamentary Assembly:

- a. approves the conclusions of the preparatory group for the 5th Conference of Mediterranean and Black Sea Basins held in Marmaris on 25 and 26 February 1999 and, with more particular regard to action possible at parliamentary level:
 1. decides to intensify its relations with the specialist committees in the national parliaments of the member countries and non-member riparian countries which have responsibility for the priority issues of sustainable development in the region, such as the environment, culture, education, migration, local and regional government and the role of women, and to ask its relevant committees to open up some of their meetings to them;
 2. endorses the proposal to prepare, in close association with the partner countries concerned and in co-operation with the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe and the relevant committees, a Charter for Sustainable Development of the Mediterranean and Black Sea Basins whereby national parliaments, regions and towns would pledge their resolve to undertake more intensive co-operation and to commit themselves to certain key principles that should guide them in any interventions likely to have an input on the ecological balance;
- b. desires to study with the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), the Parliamentary Assembly of the Black Sea Economic Co-operation (PABSEC), and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Central European Initiative opportunities for intensified co-operation;
- c. welcomes the proposal of the Bulgarian national delegation to organise the 6th Conference of Mediterranean and Black Sea Basins in Varna in October 2000.