



Resolution 1198 (1999)¹

Need for increased economic co-operation in the Mediterranean Region

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Parliamentary Assembly represents a privileged forum for dealing with the problems of the Mediterranean region, in particular through conferences on interparliamentary and interregional co-operation, jointly organised with the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe and through the Mediterranean Agriculture Forums.
2. The Council of Europe, particularly following the enlargement carried out after 1989 in which five Mediterranean countries joined the Organisation, namely Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Slovenia, and "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia", provides an appropriate framework for increased interparliamentary and interregional co-operation in the region and could serve as a genuine forum for dialogue between the national institutions concerned.
3. As the interparliamentary co-operation established by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and other interparliamentary bodies is progressing, and the Euro-Mediterranean partnership - launched in 1995 by the European Union through the so-called "Barcelona process" - approaches its fifth anniversary, it is becoming increasingly clear that lasting security and prosperity in the Mediterranean region cannot rest exclusively on a political basis, but that they must be equally built on economic progress such as more open trade and the development of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).
4. The Assembly is convinced that the strengthening of the decentralised Euro-Mediterranean co-operation would allow the creation of certain conditions preceding the liberalisation of trade and would foster a better knowledge and understanding and at the same time develop direct links between regions.
5. However, economic development in many less advanced countries around the Mediterranean is being hampered by an underdeveloped private sector, especially SMEs; by numerous trade obstacles, not only with European countries but also between the countries concerned; and by an insistence on national economic self-reliance instead of freer trade. In order to free the economic potential in the countries concerned, Europe should be involved more directly in the co-operation established in the different fields of education, especially in programmes which will help improve the status of women in society.
6. The Assembly considers the development of SMEs in the Mediterranean region of special importance given their potential for offering local employment and professional and entrepreneurial development - for women and young people in particular, for rapid company growth, for co-operation with other SMEs including in Europe, and for stimulating economic activity at local and regional level.
7. In conclusion, the Assembly:
 - 7.1. supports the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership's ambition progressively to establish a free trade area between the European Union and numerous Mediterranean Association (MEDA) countries by the year 2010 - an arrangement which it sees as an important means for economic development, political stability and reduced migratory pressure in the region;

1. Assembly debate on 21 September 1999 (27th Sitting) (see [Doc. 8348](#), report of the Committee on Economic Affairs and Development, rapporteur: Mr Turini, and [Doc. 8356](#), opinion of the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development, rapporteur: Mr González Laxe). Text adopted by the Assembly on 21 September 1999 (27th Sitting).



7.2. welcomes the negotiations for free trade agreements now underway between the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) and numerous non-European Mediterranean countries, considering them as important instruments for developing the region and its economic links with Europe;

7.3. expresses satisfaction at the holding of conferences for Mediterranean regions organised by its Committee on the Environment, Regional Planning and Local Authorities and in particular the successful outcome of the most recent one held in Marmaris (Turkey) from 25 to 27 February 1999 which encompassed for the first time the Black Sea basin. It is convinced that the continuation of such inter-parliamentary co-operation within the Parliamentary Assembly, can only contribute further to the economic development of the region;

7.4. also welcomes the organisation, by its Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development, of the Mediterranean Agriculture Forums in co-operation with the Mediterranean Committee of the International Federation of Agricultural Producers and the International Centre for Advanced Mediterranean Agronomic Studies, the most recent of which took place in Cyprus from 26 to 27 October 1998 and was also attended by parliamentarians from Mediterranean states not belonging to the Council of Europe;

7.5. encourages the Council of Europe's Lisbon-based Centre for Global Interdependence and Solidarity ("North-South Centre") to further expand its trans-Mediterranean activities aimed at furthering understanding among all the countries around that sea, and calls on all Council of Europe member states, whether members of the Centre or not, to join in these activities;

7.6. actively supports the Conferences on Security and Co-operation in the Mediterranean (CSCM) organised by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and will examine with the IPU the possibilities of closer co-operation in this process;

7.7. supports agricultural organisations such as the International Federation of Agricultural Producers and the International Centre for Advanced Mediterranean Agronomic Studies and encourages them to continue their work of co-operation aimed at co-ordinating the Mediterranean countries' agricultural policies, balancing agri-food production and trade, modernising agricultural structures, furthering rural development and developing agricultural research and training in the region;

7.8. calls on the European Union and EU member states, as well as the European Investment Bank, to expand their Euro-Mediterranean Partnership activities related to economic and financial co-operation, and in particular the resources devoted to the development of small and medium-sized enterprises and of links between companies and branch organisations in different Mediterranean countries and also to intensify and redress the balance of trade in agri-food products;

7.9. encourages regular contacts between its committees and representatives of corresponding parliamentary committees in the countries of the Mediterranean basin concerning the issues which could result in concrete co-operation;

7.10. in this context, supports the Euro-Mediterranean initiatives launched by the Italian Parliament and the European Parliament, which represent the European Union's inter-parliamentary activities within the Barcelona process and which help increase the participation of countries concerned in this co-operation.

8. The Assembly calls upon the parliaments of the Mediterranean countries to take an active part in the Nantes Conference on sub-regional economic co-operation (13-15 October 1999), organised jointly by the Parliamentary Assembly of the OSCE and the French National Assembly, in partnership with the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe.

9. Finally, the Assembly recognises that although political stability in the region will be furthered by economic co-operation, the latter can only materialise within a context of overall peace, respect for human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The Assembly therefore calls on all Council of Europe member states to do their utmost to further the peace process between Israel and the Palestinian Authority and in the Middle East in general, in accordance with Assembly [Resolution 1103 \(1996\)](#) on the situation in the Middle East.