
**Position Paper of the major networks of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and
Environmental NGOs
addressed to the
Euro-Mediterranean Civil Forum
(Valencia, 12-14 April 2002)
and the
Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference
(Valencia, 22-23 April 2002)**

We, the Environmental organizations, grouped under the major Networks¹ of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP) and NGOs for the environment, representing an important part of the Civil Society of the European and Mediterranean region, and in view of the forthcoming Euro-Mediterranean meeting of Athens (8-10 July 2002) and the Johannesburg Summit, have agreed on the following positions.

1. A Mediterranean Sustainability Strategy

- The Valencia Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference should adopt the principle of a Mediterranean Sustainability Strategy (Strategy for Environmental Integration towards Sustainability in the Mediterranean Region) to be developed with concrete indicators, targets and timetables. It should secure coherence with the overall Euro-Mediterranean policies and the EU Sustainability Strategy, as it was developed through the Gothenburg process and other relevant initiatives. It should also take into account the outcome of the Strategic Assessment (Review) undertaken in the frameworks of UNEP/MAP. The Strategy should be completed and adopted at the 2nd Ministerial Conference of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership on the Environment, to be held in Athens (8-10 July 2002), or at Barcelona VI, at the latest. This Strategy or commitment should be announced in Johannesburg. Ideally, a Euro-Mediterranean Partnership Sustainability Council, with the participation of Civil Society representatives should be established by/at Valencia V, to co-ordinate and finalise this work.

- As mentioned in the Communication by the Commission "a peaceful, stable and prosperous Europe is inconceivable without an equally peaceful, stable and prosperous Mediterranean basin". Since armed conflict, poverty and the widening gap in economic development and distribution of wealth between countries and sub regions followed by massive migration and unemployment are among the root causes of many of the environmental degradation and development problems, particular attention should be paid to these issues in the Strategy and sufficient adjustments in the operational, financial and institutional provisions should be made accordingly.

- Along with designing the sustainability strategy, procedures should also be designed to make it operational e.g. define and refine the mandate of the EMP Sustainability Council, mandate regular reports from all the EMP sectoral fora (energy, water etc), MEDA, EIB and other relevant organs to the EMP Sustainability Council on how they are incorporating sustainability issues into their work. These reports should be reviewed regularly by a Council meeting, which should meet once a year at ministerial level.

- Such an enlarged Strategy should include a variety of instruments among which SMAP should continue its role as an important instrument to promote projects that protect the environment. Bureaucratic procedures must be minimised, their budget substantially increased, and the necessary provisions and technical requirements (e.g. staff) must be secured in order to ensure effective functioning.

- The Strategy should fully incorporate any new commitments/goals emerging from Johannesburg.

2. The Strategic Impact Assessment (SIA) of the MFTZ

¹ Arab Network for Environment and Development (RAED), Environment and Development Action in the Third World (ENDA), European Environmental Bureau (EEB), Friends of the Earth (FoE/MedNet Programme), Mediterranean NGO Network for Ecology and Sustainable Development (MED Forum), Mediterranean Information Office for Environment, Culture and Sustainable Development (MIO-ECSDE), World Wild Fund Mediterranean Programme (WWF/MEDPO)

The Strategic Impact Assessment (SIA) of the MFTZ must be formally launched by Valencia Ministerial V; its findings must be made available within one year and then incorporated both into the draft Mediterranean Sustainability Strategy and on-going negotiations. Revision of existing agreements should be undertaken to align them to agreed sustainability criteria.

3. Enhancing the role of Civil Society

Genuine civil society participation must be mandated at Valencia Ministerial in all the activities of the EMP. Channels of dialogue between EMP officials and grassroots NGOs must be opened and supported financially. Civil society groups should be entitled and encouraged to submit presentations and comments to the Euro-Mediterranean Committee, the EIB and MEDA programme management, which must consider them with due care and invite oral presentations and comments from civil society at their meetings. Civil society, and NGOs in particular, should be involved in the conception and implementation of National and Regional Indicative Programmes (NIPs and RIPs). A regular, open to comments report must be delivered by the Commission to EMP Foreign Ministers about civil society participation.

The participation of civil society should be further encouraged by creating a MEDA NGO budget line, as well as funds for NGOs in sectorial programmes (SMAP NGOs), with the aim of providing capacity building for NGOs especially in the South and East of the Mediterranean to become active in the EMP by means of projects that assist education and the creation of awareness and pro-active attitudes among the population, with emphasis on youth and intercultural dialogue.

4. Relations between rights to environment and political rights

As the right to a healthy environment and to a sustainable development are important components of human rights in general, it is admitted unanimously that the relations between this right and public rights, political rights and democracy are close and synergic. The reinforced role of women in civil society as key players in the protection of the environment should be an essential objective within the strategy of sustainable development, and thus, of EMP. The fight against poverty is an essential element for environmental protection and vice versa.

5. Synergies

As a necessary input to the successful establishment of such a Strategy, the issue of the working relations between the EMP and the Mediterranean Action Plan (MAP), and other international bodies relevant to the Mediterranean region must be defined at the highest political level, i.e. by a formal political and financial commitment at Valencia Ministerial, so that full consideration and support of the work of the Mediterranean Commission for Sustainable Development (MCSDD) is given. Furthermore, collaboration should be encouraged between UNEP/MAP and its Regional Activity Centres with the EMP, while UNEP/MAP senior officials should automatically be invited to attend/contribute documents to all relevant EMP meetings relating to sustainable development issues.

6. Other Critical Issues

- The EMP must formally commit itself at Valencia Ministerial to promote the goals stated in the commitments which EMP governments have already adopted, alongside all other UN states, of the Millennium Summit and the World Food Summit re: poverty reduction² and other International Development Goals, and food security and sovereignty as agreed in Havana 2001. These goals and thus related activities must be taken into account in the development of the Mediterranean Sustainability Strategy.
- Obligatory environmental evaluations should be established as part of all MEDA projects.
- With the prospect of ratification by the EU 15 of the Kyoto Protocol before WSSD, with 2 Southern Mediterranean states having already ratified (Cyprus, Malta) and some others having announced they would do so (e.g. Jordan), Valencia Ministerial should formally launch a regional climate change strategy, dealing with both the causes and impacts, to be developed in co-operation with MAP and adopted by Barcelona VI.

² according to World Bank figures, there are about 85 million people in the South Med countries trying to survive on \$2 a day or less

- Such a Strategy could not be effective unless all issues critical for the region are included. Provisions should be made to progressively introduce policy frameworks for agriculture, tourism, transport and energy.
- Political will to implement sustainable development in partner countries is weak. Comprehensive capacity building of environmental ministries and local authorities is needed to engender this political will.

The above points could decisively enhance the efforts to raise the profile of the Mediterranean as a successful example of a region which, despite its accumulated problems due to conflicts based on serious differences of national, ethnic, socioeconomic, cultural, linguistic and religious nature, manages to sustain common institutions and formulate and implement collectively a large number of ambitious environmental and sustainable development policies mainly under the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, the Barcelona Convention and its protocols, the innovative scheme of MCSD (Mediterranean Commission for Sustainable Development). In particular, we believe that, if properly formulated, the Mediterranean Sustainability Strategy could play an extremely useful and far reaching role and could substantially assist in dealing with the main regional problems.

To conclude, the NGOs:

- **support the proposal of the Commission to develop environmental integration strategies for all sectors as written in the Communication by the Commission to the Council and European Parliament for the Valencia Summit;**
- **strongly encourage the Commission to take the steps needed in order to create the necessary provisions for an explicit, much stronger sustainability component for the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership;**
- **propose to incorporate all countries of the Mediterranean into the Euro-Mediterranean political process, as the Barcelona Convention and other bodies do;**
- **urge for a greater involvement and a more decided attitude on the part of the European Union with a view to bringing about peace in the Middle East and the Balkans as a basic prerequisite for sustainable development and for the creation of a framework of co-existence and harmonious relations between the peoples of the region;**
- **are concerned about the slow progress in the Strategic Impact Assessment of the MFTZ;**
- **urge the EMP to include support to the participation of Civil Society as a prerequisite of Sustainable Development in the region;**
- **propose to give complementary funding to reinforce capacities of South NGOs, reinforce the activities of dialogue between NGOs and Institutions, as well as dialogue between NGOs, and allow NGOs to carry out a wide range of projects.**
- **encourage to further develop synergies with existing regional schemes (such as MCSD, UNEP/MAP, GWP-Med, etc.)**
- **urge to widen the scope of the EMP and include critical issues of the region such as agriculture, etc.**
- **propose that bilateral agreements should be replaced by a single multilateral agreement with strong social and sustainable development elements.**

The environment workshop of the Euromed Civil Forum denounces the destructive effects of the war that Israel is carrying out against the Palestinian autonomous territories destroying basic environmental infrastructures and natural resources, as well as the indiscriminate slaughter of citizens, Palestinian women and children.

We declare our solidarity with the Palestinian people and demand a fair peace with acknowledgement of a Palestinian State.