The European Parliament,

– having regard to the Barcelona Declaration and the work programme of 28 November 1995 adopted at the Barcelona Conference,

– having regard to its earlier resolutions on Mediterranean policy, with particular reference to that of 11 April 2002¹ on the meeting of Euro-Mediterranean Foreign Ministers in Valencia on 22 and 23 April 2002,


– having regard to its resolution of 23 October 2003 on peace and dignity in the Middle East²,

– having regard to its resolution of 20 November 2003³ on the abovementioned Communication of 11 March 2003,

– having regard to the Communication of 21 May 2003 from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament on 'Reinvigorating EU actions on human rights and democratisation with Mediterranean partners' (COM(2003) 294),

– having regard to Rule 37(4) of its Rules of Procedure,

A. whereas the new neighbourhood policy will contribute in particular to a strengthening of EU relations with the Mediterranean countries at a time when the Union is preparing itself for enlargement to include ten new Member States,

B. whereas the absence of any solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is continuing to undermine the development of the Barcelona Process,

C. whereas Euro-Mediterranean parliamentary dialogue initially took place within a parliamentary forum bringing together members of parliament from the EU Member

¹ OJ C 127 E, 29.5.2003, p. 644.
States and the Mediterranean partner countries and whereas the forum's conversion into a parliamentary assembly (EMPA) forms part of the action programme of the VIth Meeting of Euro-Mediterranean Ministers of Foreign Affairs to be held on 2 and 3 December 2003 in Naples,

D. whereas, on the one hand, the process marks a turning point in EU action in the region, but, on the other, an overall assessment of EU policy in the Mediterranean thus far reveals shortcomings in relation to the promotion of civil society, respect for human rights, the establishment of common security mechanisms and the development of free trade,

E. whereas in a number of partner countries women have unfortunately yet to be actively involved in social and political life,

1. Reaffirms the need to ensure, through dialogue, a mutual awareness and understanding of genuinely equitable cooperation in the Euro-Mediterranean area with a view to strengthening the rule of law and democracy, improving its inhabitants' living conditions and maintaining peace;

2. Is strongly in favour of closer parliamentary cooperation and calls on all the Member States to help step up Euro-Mediterranean parliamentary dialogue; advocates the establishment of the EMPA, which is the most suitable instrument for this purpose, and calls for the Ministerial Conference in Naples to approve the conversion of the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Forum into a parliamentary assembly with consultative powers;

3. Takes the view that one of the tasks of the future EMPA will be to monitor, assess and participate in the smooth functioning of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership, to promote the proper implementation of the association agreements concluded between the European Union and the Mediterranean partner countries, and to adopt recommendations to be addressed to the Interministerial Conference with a view to achieving the objectives of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership; stresses the need to step up political dialogue;

4. Emphasises the urgent need for the cycle of violence afflicting the Middle East to be brought to an end by means of full implementation of the road map and achievement of the goal of 'two peoples, two states'; restates its support for those in Israel and Palestine who are working for a fair settlement to the conflict, and for the Peace Coalition that drew up the Geneva Agreement; considers the establishment of a climate of trust between Israelis, Palestinians and the Arab peoples to be of the utmost importance to Euro-Mediterranean relations;

5. Restates the view that each party to the Barcelona Process must first and foremost work to promote democracy and the rule of law and respect for human rights, particularly women's rights; places special emphasis on compliance with the provisions set out in the democratic clauses contained in the Euro-Mediterranean association agreements;

6. Hopes that the 'New Neighbourhood Policy' and the Communication entitled 'EU-Mediterranean Region: human rights and democracy' will result in a clarification of that aspect and calls on the Council to lay down clear benchmarks in the Action Plans so as to establish a specific and constructive dialogue with the partner countries in this field;
7. Calls on the Commission, the Council and partner countries to place these issues high on the agenda during the Association Council meetings, with a view to bringing about a real step forward on the basis of annual reports;

8. Maintains that civil society should be given a central role in the partnership and calls for the implementation of policies aimed at creating a rich social fabric;

9. Reaffirms its opposition to the use of capital punishment and calls on the Mediterranean associate countries to place a moratorium on executions; calls furthermore on the Commission to take action in support of campaigns for a moratorium on executions;

10. Deplores the obstacles to the independence of the judiciary and freedom of the media in several partner countries; in this connection, expresses its solidarity in particular with the lawyer Radhia Nasraoui, who has been on hunger strike since 15 October 2003, and Ali Lmrabet, detained as a prisoner of conscience since July 2003, and calls on the relevant authorities to give favourable consideration to their cases;

11. Emphasises that responsibility for the allocation of funds to NGOs as part of the European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights lies solely with the Commission, and is concerned, in this respect, at the Tunisian authorities' decision to freeze funds allocated by the Commission to the Tunisian Human Rights League, in contravention of the EU-Tunisia Association Agreement;

12. Reaffirms the need for mutually supportive cooperation between both shores of the Mediterranean in the fight against terrorism and organised crime at world level; stresses, however, that such action must not in any way undermine respect for the rule of law and human rights;

13. Calls on the host countries to introduce structured integration measures capable of establishing a strong link between immigration policy and cooperation and development aid policy; reiterates that priority should be given to combating illegal immigration and the mafia-type organisations which encourage it, always bearing in mind the principle of shared responsibility and solidarity between the Mediterranean partner countries; expresses in this regard its concern for the tragedies that occur almost daily in the southern Mediterranean region, specifically in the Spanish coastal region of Andalusia and in certain areas along the southern Italian coast; considers that the Euro-Mediterranean partnership should improve the management of migration flows and border controls and promote efforts with regard to readmission to countries of origin and transit, as well as the provision of the necessary technical and financial assistance;

14. Calls for the Euromed partnership to be geared to implementing a policy of economic openness and internal liberalisation in the partner countries, together with a sustainable endogenous development policy geared to the needs of Mediterranean countries;

15. Reaffirms the need to encourage the further spread of the South-South cooperation process along the lines of the Agadir agreement, since this is the only means of building a free-trade area; draws attention, in this connection, to the important role played by cross-border projects in enhancing and stepping up regional cooperation;
16. Calls for the section of the European Investment Bank dealing with the Mediterranean and the Middle East to be expanded into a branch capable of meeting the objectives laid down in the new strategy, with financial assistance from other Mediterranean countries;

17. Calls on the Council to ensure that the Valencia Ministerial Conference decisions on the establishment of a Euro-Mediterranean Foundation to promote further dialogue between cultures and civilisations are acted upon, that an operational decision is taken thereon at the Naples Ministerial Conference and that the requisite financial resources are allocated to the foundation;

18. Hopes that, through the streamlining of procedures, the new MEDA regulation will enable projects to be implemented, lead to greater decentralisation and facilitate local partners' access to funds; calls on the Commission to verify whether the revision meets real needs;

19. Hopes to see swifter ratification of the association agreements signed between individual Mediterranean countries and the EU and encourages the conclusion of the agreement with Syria as soon as possible, whilst reminding the Syrian authorities of the need to launch internal and external political reforms, and expresses the desire on the part of the national and European parliaments to participate fully in establishing the objectives and evaluating the agreements;

20. Notes with satisfaction the recent positive steps undertaken by Libya with regard to payment of compensation and cooperation in the fight against terrorism which led to the lifting of UN sanctions; insists that Libya and Mauritania should participate fully in the Barcelona Process and accept its principles, and calls on the Mediterranean associated countries which have so far stood aside from interparliamentary dialogue to reconsider their position; calls on the Commission to envisage implementing cooperation projects with Libya, once that country has accepted the principles of the Barcelona Process;

21. Calls on the Commission and the Council to instigate an in-depth debate exploring the prospects for a multi-dimensional Euro-Mediterranean agricultural system geared to product complementarity, sustainable development and the environment;

22. Calls on the Euro-Mediterranean Foreign Ministers actively to work towards a settlement of the conflict in the Western Sahara through the implementation of the United Nations peace plan;

23. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and Commission, and to the governments and parliaments of the Member States and the Mediterranean partner countries signatory to the Barcelona Declaration.