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REPORT

on the Commission communication to the Council and the European Parliament to prepare the meeting of Euro-Mediterranean Foreign Ministers, Valencia, 22-23 April 2002
(SEC(2002) 159 – C5-0128/2002– 2002/2057(COS))

Committee on Foreign Affairs, Human Rights, Common Security and Defence Policy

Rapporteur: Pere Esteve

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PROCEDURAL PAGE

By letter of 14 February 2002, the Commission forwarded to Parliament a communication to prepare the meeting of Euro-Mediterranean Foreign Ministers, Valencia, 22-23 April 2002 (SEC(2002) 159 – 2002/2057(COS)).

At the sitting of 14 March 2002 the President of Parliament announced that he had referred the communication to the Committee on Foreign Affairs, Human Rights, Common Security and Defence Policy as the committee responsible and the Committee on Industry, External Trade, Research and Energy for its opinion (C5-0128/2002).

The Committee on Foreign Affairs, Human Rights, Common Security and Defence Policy had appointed Pere Esteve rapporteur at its meeting of 28 May 2001.

It considered the Commission communication and the draft report at its meetings of 26 February and 19 March 2002.

At the latter meeting it adopted the motion for a resolution unanimously.

The following were present for the vote: Baroness Nicholson of Winterbourne, vice-chairman; Geoffrey Van Orden and Christos Zacharakis, vice-chairmen; Pere Esteve, rapporteur; Ole Andreasen, Alexandros Baltas, André Brie, Gunilla Carlsson, Carlos Carnero González (for Emilio Menéndez del Valle), Alejandro Cercas (for Magdalene Hoff, pursuant to Rule 153(2)), John Walls Cushnahan, Rosa M. Díez González, Andrew Nicholas Duff (for Paavo Väyrynen), Francesco Fiori (for David Sumberg, pursuant to Rule 153(2)), Hélène Flautre (for Elisabeth Schroedter), Pernille Frahm (for Efstratios Korakas), Per Gahrton, Gerardo Galeote Quecedo, Alfred Gomolka, Ulpu Iivari (for Véronique De Keyser), Giorgos Katiforis (for Glyn Ford), Joost Lagendijk, Catherine Lalumière, Cecilia Malmström, Pedro Marset Campos, Hugues Martin, Hans Modrow (for Luigi Vinci), Pasqualina Napoletano, Raimon Obiols i Germà, Arie M. Oostlander, Reino Paasilinna (for Klaus Hänsch), Jacques F. Poos, Lennart Sacrédeus (for Michael Gahler), Tokia Saïfi (for Jas Gawronski), Jannis Sakellariou, José Ignacio Salafranca Sánchez-Neyra, Amalia Sartori, Olle Schmidt (for Bob van den Bos, pursuant to Rule 153(2)), Jürgen Schröder, Ioannis Souladakis, Ursula Stenzel, the Earl of Stockton (for Johan Van Hecke), Ilkka Suominen, Hannes Swoboda, Charles Tannock, Antonios Trakatellis (for Alain Lamassoure), Demetrio Volcic, Karl von Wogau and Matti Wuori.

The Committee on Industry, External Trade, Research and Energy decided on 19 March 2002 not to deliver an opinion.

The report was tabled on 21 March 2002.

The deadline for tabling amendments will be indicated in the draft agenda for the relevant part-session.

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

European Parliament resolution on the Commission communication to the Council and the European Parliament to prepare the meeting of Euro-Mediterranean Foreign Ministers, Valencia, 22-23 April 2002 (SEC(2002) 159 – C5-0128/2002 – 2002/2057(COS))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Commission communication to prepare the meeting of Euro-Mediterranean Foreign Ministers, Valencia, 22-23 April 2002, (SEC(2002) 159 – C5-0128/2002¹),
- having regard to Articles 11 to 18, 21, 23, 27 and 28 of the Treaty,
- having regard to the Barcelona Declaration and the work programme of 28 November 1995 adopted at the Barcelona Conference,
- having regard to the conclusions of the Malta Conference of 15 and 16 April 1997, the Palermo Conference of 3 and 4 June 1998, the Stuttgart Conference of 15 and 16 April 1999, the Marseilles Conference of 16 and 17 November 2000 and the Brussels Conference of 5 and 6 November 2001 and the conclusions of the Civil Forums held in Malta, Naples, Stuttgart, Marseilles and Brussels,
- having regard to the Common Strategy of the European Union on the Mediterranean region, as laid down by the Feira European Council on 19 June 2000, and its own resolution of 1 February 2001 on the common strategy²,
- having regard to the final declarations of the first, second and third Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Forums, held in Brussels on 27 and 28 October 1998, 8 and 9 February 2001 and 8 November 2001 respectively,
- having regard to its previous resolutions of 11 October³ and 14 December 1995⁴, 13 March 1997⁵ and in particular its resolution of 1 February 2001⁶ on the need to reinvigorate the Barcelona Process,
- having regard to its resolution of 14 May 1998⁷ on Euro-Mediterranean Agreements, and its recommendation to the Council of 11 March 1999⁸ and its resolutions of 30

¹ Not yet published in OJ.

² OJ C 267, 21.9.2001, p. 60.

³ OJ C 287, 30.10.1995, p. 121.

⁴ OJ C 17, 22.1.1996, p. 178.

⁵ OJ C 115, 14.4.1997, p. 159.

⁶ OJ C 267, 21.9.2001, p. 68.

⁷ OJ C 167, 1.6.1998, p. 196.

⁸ OJ C 175, 21.6.1999, p. 286.

March¹ and 15 November 2000² on EU Mediterranean policy,

- having regard to its numerous resolutions on the Middle East conflict, in particular the resolutions of 11 March 1999³, 20 January⁴ and 5 October 2000⁵, 17 May 2001⁶, and 7 February 2002⁷, and its recommendation to the Council of 13 December 2001⁸ on the crisis in the Middle East and the role of the European Union in the region,
 - having regard to Rule 47(1) of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, Human Rights, Common Security and Defence Policy (A5-0087/2002),
- A. whereas the extraordinary changes and events of recent times, both in the international sphere and within the European Union, make it more necessary than ever to deepen and strengthen Euro-Mediterranean relations by reinforcing with action the statements of political will set out in the Barcelona Declaration of 1995,
- B. whereas the terrible events of 11 September 2001 in the United States have tragically illustrated the crucial importance of dialogue and cooperation in the world and, in the case of the European Union, particularly with the Mediterranean region,
- C. whereas the stepping up of relations between the Union and its Mediterranean partners is particularly necessary in the light of the launch of the euro on 1 January 2002, the opening of negotiations on the most crucial chapters for the enlargement of the Union and the beginning of the work of the Convention on the future of Europe,
- D. whereas the strategic dimension of the Barcelona Process today represents the most important and crucial instrument for dialogue and cooperation between the European Union and its Mediterranean partners and whereas the relaunch of this process would represent a vital contribution to the Middle East peace process,
- E. whereas strengthening the Barcelona Process will require in particular the establishment of much more effective instruments in the fields of security, finance and social questions,
- F. whereas the signing of the Association Agreement with Egypt on 21 September and the initialling of agreements with Algeria on 19 December 2001 and Lebanon on 10 January 2002 represent decisive steps in the process of creating a free trade area between the EU and its Mediterranean partners,

¹ OJ C 378, 29.12.2000, p. 71.

² OJ C 223, 8.8.2001, p. 147.

³ OJ C 175, 21.6.1999, p. 282.

⁴ OJ C 304, 24.10.2000, p. 202.

⁵ OJ C 178, 22.6.2001, p. 283.

⁶ Not yet published in OJ.

⁷ Not yet published in OJ.

⁸ Not yet published in OJ.

- G. whereas the Barcelona Process must not under any circumstances remain the preserve of political or economic elites in the region, but must embrace and promote Mediterranean society as a whole,
- H. whereas the Euro-Mediterranean partnership is one of the top priorities of EU policies, with the aim of creating an area of shared prosperity and of setting up effective long-term action on conflict prevention,
- I. whereas cooperation between the Mediterranean countries and their European neighbours is necessary,
1. Welcomes the Commission communication and its approach, putting forward in a practical and appropriate manner various concrete recommendations to give a renewed impetus to the Barcelona Process, although more concrete details and imaginative proposals could still be included, with special attention being given to the various subregional situations, to reinforce the political will of all the Mediterranean partners in favour of the Process and the joint programmes and projects;
 2. Unreservedly supports the launch, proposed by the Commission, of an Action Plan at the Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference to be held in Valencia on 22 and 23 April 2002; considers that the Plan should include all the new initiatives necessary to stimulate the three fundamental objectives of the Barcelona Process, and should constitute the key political commitment of the conference;
 3. Considers that, when deciding on this plan, the Conference should take particular account of the proposals made by the Commission and the Mediterranean partners, the outcome of the final declarations of the three Euro-Mediterranean parliamentary forums which have been held, and the proposals put forward in this resolution;

In support of reinforced political dialogue and Euro-Mediterranean political and security cooperation

4. Proposes a reinforced Euro-Mediterranean political dialogue, on subjects which should include the new ESDP, in the context of mutual security; conflict prevention; the threat of terrorism; the promotion of democracy, human rights and the rule of law; governance; the fight against poverty; environmental and sustainable development issues; maritime transport safety; immigration and justice issues and the fight against drug-trafficking, terrorism, arms-trafficking and all other forms of organised crime;
5. Reiterates that it is vital for the Barcelona Process to ensure strict compliance with human rights, individual freedoms and democratic principles as fundamental factors in establishing an area of peace, stability and sustainable economic development in the Mediterranean basin;
6. Calls on the Mediterranean partners to respect and comply with the principles and commitments underlying the Union's human rights policy, with particular reference to

the provisions contained in the 'democracy clauses' included in all Euro-Mediterranean association agreements, and calls on the Commission to spell out the implementing measures needed to ensure that these clauses are fully effective; calls also on the Member States to ensure that these principles are observed in their relations with the associated countries;

7. Deplores the serious violations of human rights observed in various Barcelona Process partners with regard, in particular, to those countries where the human rights situation has worsened after the signing of the relevant association agreement, and urges all governments and authorities in the region to take the measures necessary to guarantee full and unconditional respect for human rights;
8. Welcomes the recent progress in the field of international relations made by Libya and the willingness it has shown in the fight against terrorism; hopes that relations between the Union and Libya can develop without further obstacles in the context of the Barcelona Process and, in particular, in the framework of EU/UMA relations; reaffirms the desire of the Euro-Mediterranean parliaments for the obstacles linked to the embargo to be removed, in accordance with the United Nations resolutions;
9. Reiterates also the request that Mauritania should take part in the Barcelona Process political dialogue as a full member;

The Barcelona Process and cooperation in a common front against terrorism

10. Calls on all the Euro-Mediterranean partners to give unconditional backing to the convening of an International Conference on Terrorism under the auspices of the United Nations, and to adopt a joint approach to the drafting of a general convention on terrorism;
11. Calls on all Mediterranean partners which have not yet done so to sign, ratify and comply strictly with all international treaties in force on measures to combat terrorism;
12. On the basis of United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1368 and 1373 (2001), supports the decision by the states participating in the Barcelona Process to pursue and bring to justice those who perpetrate, plan and sponsor terrorist acts; urges the associated states to conclude the necessary agreements on extradition and to sign, ratify and apply the Rome Statute establishing the international criminal court as soon as possible;
13. Proposes that a Euro-Mediterranean contact network should be established, to facilitate the exchange of information and cooperation in the fight against terrorism, and proposes that a common Code of Conduct should be drafted for the fight against this scourge;
14. Reaffirms that the fight against international terrorism should not be based only on military action but should use all available diplomatic and political instruments;
15. Supports the endeavours of the various partner countries to combat terrorism at home,

but considers it necessary for a broad social consensus to be secured, primarily by extending democracy and meeting social needs, e.g. through measures to combat unemployment;

In support of reinforced economic and financial cooperation and the establishment of a Euro-Mediterranean free trade area

16. Reiterates its support for the establishment of a free trade area by 2010 that would entail the creation of a genuine 'common market' and would cover all goods, capital and services, and proposes in particular that a regulatory framework and a timetable for harmonisation measures in certain priority sectors, including services, should be established in Valencia;
17. Takes note of the signature of the Association Agreement with Egypt, the recent initialling of the Association Agreement with Algeria and Lebanon and the continuation of negotiations for an association agreement with Syria;
18. Believes that assessments need to be made in order to gauge the economic, social, and environmental impact of the economic measures to be implemented in connection with the free trade area;
19. Repeats its request that in due course the bilateral association agreements, which represent decisive steps in the process of establishing a free trade area between the European Union and its Mediterranean partners, should be replaced by a single multilateral agreement;
20. Expresses its firm support for the Agadir Declaration and strongly backs the creation of a free trade area between Egypt, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia within the framework of the Agadir process; urges these countries to conclude an agreement to this effect during the first half of 2002, in order to help give a real boost to South-South trade as quickly as possible, thereby acknowledging the importance which a substantial increase in trade would have for the interests of the Mediterranean partners;
21. Urges other Mediterranean partners not currently part of the Agadir process to join that process as soon as possible and to accept the philosophy which inspired its founder members and the acquis it has built up;
22. Commends the recent technical decisions adopted in the field of trade on rules of origin and calls on all the Mediterranean partners to pursue their efforts in the field of environmental, health and plant health harmonisation in order to secure the establishment of a genuine internal Euro-Mediterranean market;
23. Reiterates the need to give priority to supporting private investment, since this is a crucial factor in the success of the Barcelona Process and reciprocal economic development; with this in view, stresses the importance of training, developing infrastructure networks, the cost of labour and the internal market dimension for the partner countries;

24. Therefore deplores the inadequacy of direct foreign and local investment in the area and calls on the partner states and relevant institutions to increase investment rapidly and substantially;
25. Stresses that it is absolutely vital to carry through all the economic, legal and administrative reforms needed to create a favourable framework for private investment in all the Mediterranean partner countries;
26. Proposes in particular that cooperation in the process of economic integration be enhanced by introducing a network of national agencies responsible for promoting investment in the Euro-Mediterranean countries, with a view to substantially strengthening private external investment in the countries of the Barcelona Process;
27. Considers it absolutely essential, to that end, to be successful in combating corruption and excessive bureaucracy;
28. Regrets the incongruent situation whereby borders are closed between certain Mediterranean partners, since this is against the spirit of the Barcelona Process, which is seeking to establish a genuine free-trade area; stresses that the MEDA programmes should encourage initiatives to promote structural reforms in the economies of the Mediterranean partner countries, with the aim of making these economies more complementary and encouraging trade in agriculture and energy in particular; regrets that South/South trade is so limited;
29. Supports also the Commission's proposal to strengthen the dialogue on economic policy among the partners, at bilateral and multilateral level, and to enter into much greater detail, particularly as regards growth and employment; in any event, the social partners (employers and trade unions) should take part in this dialogue; calls on the Council and Member States to propose relevant measures in international bodies to reduce and convert the external debt of the Mediterranean partner countries;
30. Endorses the proposal by the Spanish Presidency of the Council for the creation of a Euro-Mediterranean Development Bank with a view to a policy of sustainable development, in which the EIB should play a prominent role (thus ensuring coordination rather than duplication), together with capital from third countries, particularly countries of the southern and eastern Mediterranean (thus ensuring a sense of co-ownership), and takes the view that Parliament should give its opinion on this matter; with this in view, calls on the Commission to submit a new specific communication at an early date covering financial needs, existing financing flows, and the most appropriate institutional financial machinery, in the interests of ensuring a swift launch of the Bank's activities;
31. Calls again for Euro-Mediterranean cooperation to be brought into line with the needs of the environment and sustainable development and calls on the partner countries to adopt the measures necessary with regard to integrated management of water resources, waste disposal, critical points (polluted areas and biodiversity risks), integrated management of coastal areas and measures to combat desertification, making use of the

European Union's practical know-how and extensive experience;

32. Considers that micro-businesses and SME have a vital role to play in strengthening the Euro-Mediterranean industrial association and therefore calls for the introduction of specific programmes of technical and financial assistance for both these sectors and for programmes geared to vocational training to be stepped up;
33. Supports the Commission's proposals to launch regional infrastructure strategies including, where necessary, interconnections with the trans-European networks and to contribute to their funding from bodies such as the EIB and the World Bank, as well as through private sector participation; calls on the Commission, when implementing the strategies, to pay heed to the need for proper regional planning and improved use of existing resources in each of the partner countries, including energy resources;
34. Reiterates the need to consider carefully the possibilities for increased and mutually beneficial liberalisation of trade in agricultural products, involving a strategy taking into account the complementary nature of Mediterranean agriculture, and to introduce a Euro-Mediterranean agricultural policy; this policy should take into account both the impact of agricultural liberalisation on certain Mediterranean regions geographically close to the EU and the social and environmental dimensions of agriculture;
35. Calls for the swift and effective implementation of the Euro-Mediterranean regional programme for local water management which, with funding from MEDA, should significantly improve the management of existing drinking water resources, sanitary infrastructures, measures to combat drought and irrigation management;
36. Calls in addition for the promotion of the role of women in economic development and support for women's organisations, associations, undertakings and networks in the countries of the region; supports the regional programmes drawn up by the Commission to promote equal opportunities for women, helping them to participate in economic life and, in this connection, supports the drawing up of action plans in each country; stresses the importance of recognising and respecting women's rights, particularly the 'personal statute', so as to secure ongoing democratisation of the Mediterranean partner countries and calls for reforms to be introduced to this end;
37. Stresses the key role played by civil associations; urges the Commission, in this connection, to find ways of developing and consolidating them with regard, in particular, to the setting up of independent local NGOs;
38. Calls again on the Council and Commission to promote a regional programme for a Euro-Mediterranean social area taking into account employment and the labour market, training, social rights and migratory processes;

In support of intercultural dialogue and genuine Euro-Mediterranean cooperation on social, cultural and human activities

39. Reaffirms its commitment to helping to strengthen all arrangements for intercultural

dialogue and to promote inter-religious dialogue between the partner countries to enable the Euro-Mediterranean peoples to consolidate the mutual respect, understanding and tolerance which they feel;

40. Endorses the Presidency's proposal to launch a framework programme for dialogue between cultures and civilisations, with particular reference to the spheres of education, youth and the media;
41. Firmly endorses the Commission's proposal to create a Euro-Mediterranean Foundation to promote dialogue between cultures and civilisations, and the funding envisaged of EUR 1 million from each Member State and the Commission, together with voluntary contributions from each Mediterranean partner and calls on the Commission to draw up a firm proposal to put this idea into practice;
42. Expresses its support for the regional programmes under way in the culture, audiovisual and youth fields in the context of a spirit of cultural identity; expresses in particular its firm support for the Euromed Heritage II and Euromed Audiovisual II programmes;
43. Calls for the implementation of policies for vocational training, universities, technology and education, the definition of local and regional development programmes, and the promotion of programmes to further equal opportunities and health and safety at work;
44. Calls for all existing European Union programmes for schools, universities, vocational training, cultural heritage, the information society and new technologies, communications media, research and development, the environment and small and medium-sized businesses, to be extended to the Mediterranean partner countries;
45. Stresses once again the need to launch a wide-ranging debate between the Commission, the Council, the public authorities of the fifteen Member States, Parliament and representative associations, in order to identify legal methods and tools to introduce harmonised legislation in all Member States on migration flow organisation;
46. Proposes once again that the object of the debate on the regulation of migration (including measures to combat illegal emigration and the gangs that profit by it) should be to enable migration to be jointly managed, to lay down policies on temporary migration, to introduce a special travel visa for those men and women, be they entrepreneurs, academics, researchers, students, journalists, or trade-unionists, involved in the Euro-Mediterranean partnership, to harness immigration to assist development in countries of origin (aid for migrants' projects in their countries of origin), and to introduce an explicit integration policy in host countries in relation to legally established immigrants;
47. Proposes that a Euro-Mediterranean contact network be set up to pave the way for exchanges of information and cooperation on immigration;
48. Calls for a regional programme in the justice and home affairs sphere to be signed in the near future; the programme ought to give special consideration to judicial cooperation and the fight against terrorism and organised crime;

49. Reiterates that this programme should pay special attention to cooperation in the fight against illegal immigration and trafficking in human beings, so as to obtain a better understanding of the ties between economic and commercial globalisation and migration and establish co-development strategies;
50. Calls on the Commission to launch a study, in which the EP should be involved, on consolidation of democracy in the Euro-Mediterranean area with a view to strengthening the strategy and the means designed to enable civil society to participate in the partnership;
51. Firmly supports stronger Euro-Mediterranean cooperation on the information society and calls for specific measures to adapt and develop telecommunications infrastructures and services, research and development in this field and human resources training and specialisation;
52. Stresses the need to improve customs cooperation throughout the Euro-Mediterranean territory, particularly as regards vocational training, simplification of customs procedures and measures to combat fraud;

Concerning the funding of the enhanced Barcelona Process and the MEDA programme

53. Continues to believe that it is vital for the MEDA programme to be better managed and for financial aid cooperation to be much more decentralised, with the objective of making progress in the areas of human rights and democratisation, sound management of public affairs, the primacy of law and sustainable development;
54. Considers therefore that, despite the considerable progress made, the efforts successfully launched by the Commission in recent times to 'debureaucratize' the MEDA programme with regard to project management must be resolutely pursued; stresses its total support for funding the regional dimension of the partnership and calls for a redistribution of the funds provided under the MEDA programme in order to boost this dimension;
55. Also urges the Mediterranean partners to make the necessary efforts in all areas so as to be able to absorb and properly benefit from the assistance provided under the various existing programmes;
56. Points out, in this respect, the need to readjust MEDA Democracy programmes in order to make them more flexible and available for small-scale projects, with a view to raising public awareness of the Barcelona Process;
57. Calls on the Mediterranean partners to make full use of the investment opportunities offered by the EIB, and supports the Commission's proposal to establish a new programme within MEDA to provide risk capital facilities in the investment sector;

The Barcelona Process as a key supporting measure in resolving the Middle East conflict

58. Acknowledges that a solution to the conflict in the Middle East is a fundamental condition for achieving peace and stability in the Mediterranean region; agrees nonetheless with the Spanish Presidency that the complementary nature of both processes must not be allowed to translate in reality into a weakening in the Barcelona Process;
59. Considers it vital for all the Mediterranean partners and the European Union in particular to be more closely involved in efforts to find solutions to the conflict in the Middle East, bearing in mind the great potential of the Barcelona Process as a special instrument for dialogue and cooperation between the Union and the countries of the southern and eastern Mediterranean;
60. Calls therefore for all political, economic, cultural and social cooperation instruments under the Barcelona Process to be used in a clear and committed manner to further the Middle East peace process, with a much clearer emphasis on supporting the populations and the peace policies of the governments of the countries involved in the conflict than has hitherto been the case;
61. Reiterates its call for a prompt and unconditional resumption of the negotiations between Israel and Palestine based on all the presidency conclusions of the Euro-Mediterranean meeting of foreign ministers held on 5 and 6 November 2001 in Brussels and the principles and proposals set out in its recommendation to the Council of 13 December 2001¹ and in its resolution of 7 February 2002²;
62. Reiterates also its firm belief that Israel needs the Palestine National Authority and its President, Yasir Arafat, as partners in the negotiations to eradicate terrorism and move towards peace, and that the Barcelona Process can be a useful instrument in bringing the parties to the conflict closer together;

Some institutional proposals to reinforce the Barcelona Process

63. Proposes an annual summit of heads of state and government of the countries participating in the Barcelona Process, as a forum for debate and political impetus at the highest level;
64. Proposes the establishment of a Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly, which could operate in plenary assembly and in Joint Parliamentary Committees, to be set up, one of which should be given responsibility *inter alia* for immigration and another for democracy and human rights; believes that both the plenary and the above-mentioned committees should meet at least once a year and should monitor closely the application of the association agreements;
65. Is examining the possibility of involving representatives of the parliaments of the

¹ Not yet published in OJ.

² Not yet published in OJ.

Balkan countries as far as possible in the parliamentary dialogue, with a view to the future enlargement of the Union and bearing in mind that this will complement the Barcelona Process;

66. Emphasises the fundamental role which the regions ought to play, with special treatment for the islands, regions, cities and local bodies of the Mediterranean states, both in the cross-border cooperation sphere, with appropriation coordination of MEDA Interreg, and in relation to decision-taking within the Barcelona Process;
67. Proposes that a Euro-Mediterranean regional MEDA-LOCUS programme should be launched, to encourage cooperation at all levels between administrations, local bodies and civil society in the Euro-Mediterranean area in line with the proposals put forward in the Euromed Pact signed at the meeting of the Euro-Mediterranean group on Eurocities held in Barcelona on 22 February 2002;
68. Supports the Commission's proposal to hold meetings of political directors during the periods between ministerial conferences, so as to give consistent and ongoing impetus and follow-up to the process;
69. Also endorses the Commission's proposal to enhance the role of the Euro-Mediterranean Committee as the standing body of the Barcelona Process, to refocus its global activities on the Euro-Mediterranean acquis and to increase the level of cooperation between its various different parts;
70. Views the growing institutionalisation of the Barcelona Process as a positive and desirable step and hopes that the proposals to establish a Euro-Mediterranean Development Bank and a Euro-Mediterranean Foundation for the promotion of cultural dialogue will soon be put into effect;
71. Calls again on the Council and Commission to ensure that the undoubted progress made as regards decentralisation of aid management is accompanied by a significant increase in the human resources assigned to the Euro-Mediterranean partnership within their services and to make more resolute efforts to decentralise and transfer responsibilities from the Commission to the beneficiary countries;
72. Considers it, consequently, a matter of urgency to develop Mediterranean cooperation into an effective Mediterranean association of equal partners with a permanent organisation, in which all matters of common interest could be discussed and resolved, building on a common internal market;
73. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and the Commission and to the governments and parliaments of the Member States and the Mediterranean partner states which are signatory to the Barcelona Declaration.

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

1. It is to be expected that in the immediate future, once the current enlargement of the Union to 27 Member States has been completed and the total number of member states of the Barcelona process has risen to 39 as a result, this process and the Mediterranean and Middle East region will inevitably become the priority focus of the Union's external relations. This is true even without taking into account the fact that resolving the Middle East conflict has now already become the most important strategic objective of the Union's foreign policy. Be that as it may, what is certain is that the enormous changes that have taken place in the international environment during the past year, particularly the terrible events of 11 September 2001 in the United States and the increasingly bloody resumption of the Middle East conflict, have once again highlighted the fact that giving fresh impetus to the Barcelona process must become a genuine operational priority, making full use of the huge opportunities it offers. With this in view, the current report submits a series of concrete proposals for action to the Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference to be held in Valencia on 22 and 23 April 2002.
2. The report has been drawn up in response to the recent Commission communication to the Council and the European Parliament intended to prepare the abovementioned conference and, in this connection, it is only fair to begin by pointing out that for once, thanks to the personal undertaking given by Commissioner Patten and the efforts of his staff, the communication in question has been published in good time to enable Parliament to adopt a position before the ministerial meeting takes place. This is a laudable practice, but has so far been the exception rather than the rule and the rapporteur would like to place on record his gratitude, while expressing the hope that this practice will continue in future.
3. The aim of the report is not to go over again the all too well known position of the European Parliament on the Barcelona process and the European Union's common strategy for the region. Parliament has already provided a thorough analysis of both matters in two recent resolutions of 1 February 2001 (adopted on the basis of the Naïr and Muscardini reports respectively), whose arguments remain fundamentally sound. In addition, a number of Euro-Mediterranean parliamentary fora were held in Brussels (the second on 8 and 9 February and the third on 8 November), providing an opportunity to thoroughly update Parliament's contribution to the ongoing political debate, with the support and additional political authority afforded by the broad spectrum of parliaments represented from all the member states of the Barcelona process.
4. First of all, your rapporteur unreservedly supports the launch of an action plan, as proposed by the Commission to the Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference to be held in Valencia, which in his opinion should include all the new initiatives necessary to give fresh impetus to the three fundamental objectives of the Barcelona process and should represent the key political commitment of the conference. They should take the form of genuine action sustained by a firm political will, rather than the pompous, empty and perfunctory declarations so frequently made in the past.
5. It is to be regretted that the problem of human rights violations is still prevalent to a lesser or greater degree in some member countries. That is why this issue is addressed in

the report with the forcefulness warranted by its importance and the need for a prompt solution.

6. For obvious reasons, some of the most ground-breaking and important proposals in the report concern the effects on the Euro-Mediterranean region of the terrorist attacks mentioned above and the new geopolitical situation. This applies to the measures relating to cooperation among the Barcelona process partners in a common front against terrorism. Specifically, Parliament gives unconditional backing to the convening of an international conference on terrorism under the auspices of the United Nations and the drafting of a general convention on terrorism. As a further concrete measure, it is proposed that a Euro-Mediterranean contact network should be established, to facilitate the exchange of information and cooperation in the fight against terrorism and that a common code of conduct be drafted in an effort to combat this scourge. It also seems vital that all the Mediterranean partners which have not yet done so should sign, ratify and strictly apply all international treaties in force aimed at combating terrorism. Furthermore, the partner states are urged to conclude the necessary agreements on extradition and to sign, ratify and apply the Rome Statute establishing the International Criminal Court as soon as possible. Naturally, all this should start from the premise that the fight against terrorism cannot be based only on military action, but must also embrace all diplomatic, political and commercial instruments available to the partners in the Barcelona process.
7. In line with the usual practice, a further group of new proposals seeks to enhance the economic and financial association and establish a Euro-Mediterranean free trade area. It is important first of all not to overlook the fact that the economic parameters for investment and trade are crucial indicators not only of the economic development of each individual partner, but also of the stability of the area as a whole. Of the various proposals put forward, emphasis should be placed on the one hand on the firm support for the Agadir Declaration and the backing for the creation of a free trade area between Egypt, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia within the framework of the Agadir process designed to give a real boost to south-south trade and, on the other, the support for the Spanish Presidency's proposal to create a Euro-Mediterranean development bank which, in the rapporteur's opinion, should involve a prominent role for the EIB (thus guaranteeing coordination rather than duplication) and for capital from third countries, particularly the countries of the southern and eastern Mediterranean (thus ensuring a sense of co-ownership), with Parliament naturally being consulted on all these matters. It is also proposed to set up a network of national agencies with the task of encouraging investment in the Euro-Mediterranean countries, with the aim of giving a substantial boost to private investment in the Barcelona process countries, with emphasis also on the need to secure greater mutual liberalisation of agricultural markets and more effective promotion of the role of women in economic development. It is also vital to improve and 'de-bureaucratise' the management of the MEDA programme and develop much more decentralised cooperation on financial assistance.

8. Still greater importance should be attached to a whole range of proposals which should make it possible once and for all to promote intercultural dialogue and genuine Euro-Mediterranean cooperation on social, cultural and human activities, a field in which the existing shortcomings of the process are especially severe. Among the proposals is one by the Presidency to launch a framework programme for dialogue between cultures and civilisations, with particular reference to the spheres of education, youth and the media; a call to open up the Union's general programmes in the field of education, teaching and training of young people to the Mediterranean partners; and the setting up of a Euro-Mediterranean Foundation to promote dialogue between cultures and civilisations to be funded through a contribution of EUR 1 million from each Member State and the Commission, together with voluntary contributions from each Mediterranean partner. Emphasis is also placed on the need to open up a genuine debate on migratory flow organisation and joint management, the drawing up of policies on temporary immigration, the introduction of a special travel visa for those involved in the Euro-Mediterranean partnership, harnessing immigration to assist development in countries of origin, and the introduction of an explicit integration policy in host countries for legally established immigrants. A call is also made for a regional programme in the justice and home affairs sphere to be signed in the near future, giving special consideration to judicial cooperation and the fight against terrorism and organised crime.
9. With regard to the Middle East conflict, a topic on which Parliament has adopted countless positions and will continue to do so in future, the report starts from the assumption that a solution to the problem is a fundamental condition for achieving peace and stability in the Mediterranean region, while agreeing with the Spanish Presidency that the complementary nature of the two processes must not be allowed to lead in practice to a weakening of the Barcelona process. Specifically, the rapporteur proposes greater involvement of all Mediterranean partners and of the European Union in particular in the search for solutions to the conflict, bearing in mind the vast potential offered by the Barcelona process as a special instrument for dialogue and cooperation between the Union and the countries of the southern and eastern Mediterranean. It is therefore proposed that all instruments of political, economic, cultural and social cooperation under the Barcelona process be used in a clear and decisive manner to further the Middle East peace process.
10. Lastly, the report contains a whole series of relevant proposals designed to institutionalise the Barcelona process, not only for governments and parliaments at the highest level, but also with regard to the decision-making process and at regional and local level. Accordingly, it is proposed that an annual summit of Heads of State and Government of the countries participating in the Barcelona process be held as a forum for debate and political impetus at the highest level, together with the establishment of a Euro-Mediterranean parliamentary assembly with specific responsibility for monitoring closely the application of the association agreements which are creating increasingly close ties between all the Euro-Mediterranean partners. The report also stresses the essential role that the regions must play, with particular reference to the islands, regions, cities and local bodies of the Mediterranean states, both in the cross-border cooperation sphere and in relation to decision-taking within the Barcelona process. Finally, it is proposed that a Euro-Mediterranean regional MEDA-LOCUS programme should be launched to encourage cooperation at all levels between administrations, local bodies

and civil society in the Euro-Mediterranean area, along the lines proposed in the Euromed Pact concluded at the meeting of the Euro-Mediterranean Group on Euro-cities held in Barcelona on 22 February.