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EU/Maghreb Arab Union relations: privileged partnership

European Parliament resolution on relations between the European Union and the Arab Maghreb Union: a privileged partnership (2001/2027(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the signature by the five Arab Maghreb States in Marrakesh on 17 February 1989 of a Treaty establishing the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU),
- having regard to the Declaration and work programme adopted at the Barcelona Conference on 28 November 1995,
- having regard to its recommendation to the Council of 11 March 1999 on the European Union's Mediterranean policy¹,
- having regard to the common strategy of the European Council on the Mediterranean region, as defined by the Feira European Council on 19 June 2000²,
- having regard to the Fourth Euro-Mediterranean Conference held in Marseilles on 15 and 16 November 2000, and also to the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Forum of 8 and 9 February 2001,
- having regard to the Presidency Conclusions of the Nice European Council of 7 to 9 December 2000,
- having regard to the conclusions of the Euro-Mediterranean Forum held in Agadir on 25 and 26 October 2001 and the extraordinary Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Forum held in Brussels on 8 November 2001,
- having regard to the conclusions of the Euro-Mediterranean Conference of Foreign Ministers (Barcelona V) held in Valencia on 22 and 23 April 2002,
- having regard to the conclusions of the extraordinary Brussels European Council of 21 September 2001 and the European Parliament resolution of 4 October 2001 on that meeting³,
- having regard to its resolution of 16 March 2000 on Western Sahara⁴,
- having regard to the Agadir Declaration signed by Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt and Jordan of 8 May 2001,

¹ OJ C 175, 21.6.1999, p. 286.

² OJ L 183, 22.7.2000, p. 5.

³ OJ C 87E, 11.4.2002, p. 216.

⁴ OJ C 377, 29.12.2000, p. 354.

- having regard to the report of the UN Secretary-General of 10 January 2002 on the situation in Western Sahara and the UN Security Council resolution of 29 June 2001 on the draft framework agreement for Western Sahara,
 - having regard to the revival of political dialogue within the AMU, reflected in the various meetings held in 2001,
 - having regard to the decision of the Foreign Ministers of the 27 signatories of the Barcelona Declaration, meeting in Stuttgart on 15 and 16 April 1999, to grant the Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya the status of partner in the Barcelona Process,
 - whereas the Republic of Algeria and the Kingdom of Morocco are signatories of the Barcelona Declaration,
 - whereas the Islamic Republic of Mauritania is a signatory of the Cotonou Agreement governing relations between the European Union and the ACP States,
 - having regard to the visit by the Troika to Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia from 11 to 15 January 2001,
 - having regard to the EC-Morocco and EC-Tunisia Euro-Mediterranean Association Agreements,
 - whereas the EC-Algeria Association Agreement was signed on 22 April 2002 at the Euro-Mediterranean Conference of Foreign Ministers in Valencia,
 - having regard to its resolution of 18 January 2001 on the situation in Algeria¹,
 - having regard to its previous resolutions on the Maghreb countries,
 - having regard to the action plans on immigration adopted at the Tampere European Council on 16 October 1999,
 - having regard to the motion for a resolution by Jorge Salvador Hernández Mollar, on a Morocco – European Union development programme (B5-0418/2001),
 - having regard to Rule 163 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, Human Rights, Common Security and Defence Policy (A5-0175/2002),
- A. whereas there cannot be a Union without regional stability, stability without peace, or peace without respect for human rights, democracy and the rule of law,
- B. whereas respect for the clause on human rights, democracy and the rule of law is a vital element in the association and partnership agreements concluded between the European Community and third countries and pointing out the lack of implementation of such a clause,

¹ OJ C 262, 18.9.2001, p. 261.

- C. having regard to the benefits that economic and political integration would bring in terms of democratic developments in the Maghreb countries and their partnership with the European Union,
- D. whereas a priority aim of the partnership should lie in improving the economic and social situation in the Maghreb countries,
- E. whereas it is the European Union's duty, and is in its interest, to strive to set up a privileged partnership with a unified Maghreb,
- F. whereas a privileged partnership entails improving, where necessary, the cooperation instruments which are already available and setting up initiatives which may result, where appropriate, in a new form of economic and political relations between the European Union and the Maghreb,
- G. whereas the lack of an agreement to date on the question of Western Sahara remains an obstacle to the establishment of the AMU and to further regional integration,
- H. mindful of the findings of the UN Secretary-General's most recent report of 19 February 2002 in the light of the mediation efforts of his personal envoy, Mr James Baker, and of the 27-year deadlock over the issue of Western Sahara,
- I. whereas Mauritania wishes to give its support to any solution which would restore peace and which was consented to by the parties concerned,
- J. having regard to the priority that the European Union gives to deepening dialogue between cultures, religions and civilisations, and to the potentially important role in this respect for dialogue with non-member countries which support a tolerant form of Islam open to a secular society, democracy and the rule of law,
- K. convinced that human beings have their roots in the soil of their birth and the culture in which they are raised,
- L. deploring the fact that the negotiations on the EC-Morocco fisheries agreement have still not concluded,
- M. whereas Spain, which holds the Presidency of the Council of the European Union in the first half of 2002, decided to use the Valencia Conference on 22 and 23 April 2002 as a means of giving a fresh impetus to the European Union's Mediterranean policy,
 - 1. Considers that closer relations between the various Maghreb countries are vital for the development of the entire Euro-Mediterranean partnership; welcomes, in this connection, the decision by the AMU heads of state to meet on 21 and 22 June 2002 in Algiers,
 - 2. Welcomes the meeting of AMU foreign ministers, which was held on 19 January 2002 for the first time in eight years and concluded with the commitment to hold a summit of heads of state in the first half of 2002;

3. Considers that, in accordance with the spirit of the Barcelona Declaration, it is the European Union's duty, in cooperation with the United Nations and in accordance with its resolutions, to use dialogue and mediation to help resolve the conflicts which may involve the Maghreb countries that are the EU's Mediterranean partners, such as that in Western Sahara, in the case of this report;
4. Suggests that to that end, and taking a lead from the recent changes to the Rules of Procedure of the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly and from the 'regional' restructuring of the Joint External Relations Service through the creation of the EuropeAid Directorate-General, structures for dialogue and discussion on a regional scale should be set up within the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Forum; proposes that those structures should take the form of working parties which meet regularly, and that they should have as their main aim to assemble the members of parliament of all the parties to the conflict around one table; suggests that such working parties should have the option of holding regular hearings of representatives of civil society; proposes that one of them should focus on the question of Western Sahara, and another on the questions raised by immigration;
5. Urges the European Union Member States and non-member countries to comply with the agreements that they have signed, and in particular the clause on human rights, democracy and the rule of law in the Euro-Mediterranean association agreements; calls on the Maghreb States to guarantee political pluralism and, to that end, to refrain from impeding the development of political parties;
6. Believes that all signatories of the Barcelona declaration must be committed to undertake concrete measures in order to develop and implement all the aspects of the partnership; urges, in this regard, all parties to define clear mechanisms concerning the implementation of Article 2 of the association agreements;
7. Stresses the need for the agreements in force to undergo regular, annual assessments by the Association Council, and asks to be fully involved, together with the parliaments of the Maghreb countries, in such assessments; stresses the need for enhanced political dialogue with the parliaments of the Maghreb countries which have signed those agreements, and proposes that a joint parliamentary committee be set up with those states, which might work in direct relation with the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Forum;
8. Stresses the need to establish the means required to step up cooperation in the fight against terrorism under the agreements signed and as part of the political dialogue between the parties;
9. Highlights the importance of promoting and protecting freedom of association in the process of establishing and strengthening the rule of law; calls for this principle to be effectively guaranteed; encourages the Commission to act independently when allocating democracy and human rights programmes;
10. Welcomes the condemnation by all the Maghreb States of the terrorist attacks in New York and Washington on 11 September 2001; supports the fight against terrorism but believes that it cannot in any circumstances justify practices which are contrary to the rule of law, fundamental freedoms and respect for human rights and international law;

11. Stresses that the development of civil society must be a cornerstone of the EU/Maghreb partnership between the European Union and the Maghreb countries, and emphasises the need for direct support to independent citizen associations and local NGOs;
12. Calls on the European Union and the Member States to reconsider their immigration policy with the Maghreb countries in the context of the Valencia Conference, since the opening-up of markets in the context of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership must be accompanied by greater opening-up of borders to citizens, with due regard nonetheless for the context of legality and the requisite balance between the protection of refugees, the desire to seek a better life and the absorptive capacity of the Union and its Member States, and while stepping up the fight against the illegal trafficking in human beings;
13. To this end proposes once again, firstly, a shared responsibility for managing migration flows, based on the principle of mobilising immigration for job creation and development in the country of origin, and, secondly, the implementation of a clearly established integration policy in the host countries for immigrants legally residing there, based on equal rights; proposes, in this perspective, provisions to facilitate the granting of visas to persons who participate in activities that aim to promote Euro-Mediterranean cooperation, such as business people, university teachers, researchers, students, and representatives of civil society and trade unions; calls on all the competent authorities of the European Union, the Member States and the partner countries to use the association and cooperation agreements to coordinate implementation of that policy, and calls on them in particular to fight effectively against illegal trafficking in human beings;
14. Notes the statements made by President Gaddafi, and expects these to take practical form in the near future with the establishment of the rule of law, democracy and respect for human rights in Libya;
15. Hopes that the various options for resolving the conflict in Western Sahara set out in the most recent report of the UN Secretary-General, together with any other possible proposals, will be submitted for direct negotiation between the parties concerned;
16. Hopes that the further cooperation between the countries of the AMU can help bring a climate of peace to the region for the sake of all the peoples concerned, and above all the Sahrawi people, who have experienced great suffering over the last 25 years;
17. Reiterates the importance that it attaches to deepening inter-cultural and inter-religion dialogue between the two shores of the Mediterranean; calls on the Commission and on the Committee on Foreign Affairs, Human Rights, Common Security and Defence Policy to take initiatives in this area; believes that the number of existing programmes in the field of culture and education should be increased and that these should be implemented more effectively;
18. Calls on the Commission to assess the economic and social impact of the implementation of the association agreements;
19. Calls on the European Union to significantly improve conditions for the export of products from the Maghreb countries to Europe and to cooperate with the Maghreb countries to promote increased private investment, the establishment of joint ventures and trade liberalisation, these being essential elements of a deep and stable partnership;

20. Repeats its expressions of regret about the failure of the EC-Morocco fisheries agreement, and expresses the hope that negotiations will resume shortly and that these will lead to a new agreement enabling balanced trade relations, which take account of the legitimate concern to conserve fish stocks, to be restored;
21. Reiterates its conviction that the quest for and recognition of food sovereignty in the developing countries are prerequisites for sustainable development entails; stresses the need for the essential opening-up of markets to be carried out fairly amongst the partners and to be balanced by measures to ensure the long-term future of agriculture and regional fisheries;
22. Wishes to see cooperation developed in the field of public services (transport, energy, telecommunications, education, health), as this would benefit the economic development of the Mediterranean countries and meet the needs of their populations;
23. Considers it advisable for the Maghreb dimension to the Euro-Mediterranean partnership to include an increase in the trade in goods and services;
24. Notes that, with the current level of trade between Maghreb countries amounting to less than 4 %, the opening-up of borders will prove insufficient unless it is accompanied by investment in production and infrastructure geared towards the complementary development and integration of their economies, beginning with agriculture and energy;
25. Regards it as vital that the development of regional integration processes should also cover the environment (combating desertification, coastal pollution and urban decay), the further alignment of economic reforms and the approximation of social security systems;
26. Calls on the Council and the Commission to take this opportunity to demonstrate the European Union's willingness to take account of the needs of its partners and to develop new instruments for cooperation in a spirit of mutual respect;
27. Believes that the Agadir Declaration ought to be viewed as an initial stage in the development of extensive South-South trade to allow greater integration amongst the economies of all countries in the region;
28. Proposes that EU-Maghreb relations should in future be envisaged in a specific innovative framework which could take the form of a stability, democracy and development pact, to support and revive economic and political integration between the five Maghreb countries, as laid down in the Treaty establishing the AMU;
29. Considers that the proposals by the European Council in Barcelona of 15 and 16 March 2002 and the decision of the Ecofin Council do not run counter to the prospect of setting up a Euro-Mediterranean development bank at a later stage; considers the decision to introduce an enhanced Euro-Mediterranean investment mechanism within the EIB and set up an EIB office in the region to be an initial positive step in this direction, capable of encouraging investment flows in the near future; takes the view that the European Parliament should give its position on this matter; with this in view, calls on the Commission to submit a new, specific communication in the near future covering

financial needs, existing financing flows and the most appropriate institutional financial machinery;

30. Suggests, in this connection, that special efforts be made to guide investment towards supporting regional and transnational projects in the Maghreb, and requests the Commission also to boost the multinational dimension of the MEDA programmes and render them more effective, with the aim of further developing and promoting regional cooperation;
31. Stresses the importance of the intercultural dialogue, not only between states but also between the different cultural communities within the Member States and within the different countries of the Maghreb; believes that the development of sustainable tourism with respect for and in order to preserve the ecological diversity and the protection of cultural heritage can play an important role in achieving this;
32. Hopes to see the Maghreb dimension enrich Euro-Mediterranean partnership policy and give it a subregional focus and, to that end, advocates relaunching cooperation amongst the countries of the western Mediterranean;
33. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the President of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania, His Majesty the King of Morocco, the President of the Republic of Algeria, the President of the Republic of Tunisia, the Leader of the Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, the Council, the Commission and the Secretary-General of the United Nations.