

**STATEMENT BY THE EURO-MEDITERRANEAN BUSINESS COMMUNITY IN
VIEW OF THE 4th EURO-MEDITERRANEAN MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE
MARSEILLE, 15-16 NOVEMBER 2000**

1. Industrial and employer organisations from North and South of the Mediterranean, meeting in Aix-en-Provence on 10 November 2000, draw the attention of participants in the Marseille ministerial meeting to the **conditions for a successful Euro-Mediterranean partnership**.
2. The Euro-Mediterranean business community **fully supports the objectives of the Barcelona process** and the need to re-invigorate it. They regard this partnership as a crucial and historic opportunity to develop a shared zone of peace, security and economic prosperity.
3. Euro-Mediterranean business recognises that, in the framework of the Barcelona process, many initiatives and decisions have been taken and actions undertaken in order to deepen Euro-Mediterranean relations. They regret that the latter have **not produced the expected results**, notably in terms of economic development, and deplore the process's **lack of credibility** in public opinion. They believe that this situation is largely due to **insufficient visibility** given to the Euro-Mediterranean partnership as a whole, and more particularly to what is at stake and the means to be deployed to achieve tangible and lasting results. To date, the process has principally been the preserve of the governments concerned and of the European Commission, with insufficient involvement of economic and social players.
4. A project of such political and economic magnitude cannot be successful without the broad support of the economic players and general publics concerned. To succeed the economic Euro-Mediterranean partnership **must involve action on the ground in particular by companies** – the key players for growth and job-creation, but also promotion of the economic and social reform and progressive market liberalisation which foster integration. Euro-Mediterranean business calls on participants in the Marseille ministerial meeting to develop appropriate **mechanisms for advanced consultation of recognised business organisations** on the economic aspects of the Barcelona process.
5. **Business organisations on both sides of the Mediterranean have been working together**, since already before the Barcelona process was launched, to improve the business environment and facilitate industrial co-operation. Through dialogue and concertation, at both bilateral level and in the framework of Euro-Mediterranean industrial summits, the most recent of which was held in Tunis on 12 and 13 May 2000, they have developed a common approach to addressing the main problems affecting Euro-Mediterranean partnership. They have also formulated specific recommendations to promote and encourage entrepreneurship, innovation and investments, and thereby to strengthen corporate competitiveness. They are committed to continue and strengthen their joint action in that direction.

6. The Euro-Mediterranean business dialogue has led to establishment of the **UNIMED Business Network** programme, supported by the European Commission, which seeks to strengthen employer organisations in South Mediterranean countries (SMCs) and their cooperation with their sister organisations to the North of the Mediterranean via networking and exchanges of experience and good practices. One of the goals being pursued is creation of an umbrella organisation which would bring together all South Mediterranean federations and which would act in particular as a driving force for South-Mediterranean co-operation and integration of the region as UNICE has done and continues to do on the European side.
7. Euro-Mediterranean business shares and fully endorses the objective of establishment of a **Euro-Mediterranean free-trade area** on the horizon of 2010. However, they underline that areas of instability to the South of the Mediterranean and imbalances between market integration to the North and South of the Mediterranean place major impediments on its creation. To achieve this goal, they reiterate their call for:
- conclusion of **Euro-Mediterranean Association Agreements**, as rapidly as possible, with the countries in the region that have not yet concluded one and the need to accelerate ratification by the EU member states;
 - new initiatives in South Mediterranean countries to accelerate integration of their markets through development of **regional or sub-regional free-trade areas**. Particular attention should be paid to harmonisation of bilateral preferential rules of origin and the importance of setting up a pan-mediterranean cumulation of rules of origin;
 - implementation of the legislative and administrative reforms already initiated to create an **environment conducive to private initiative and investment** based on transparency and stability;
 - joint efforts by the institutions in Europe and the states concerned to **create and improve the infrastructures** needed for the development of South-Mediterranean and Euro-Mediterranean economic integration;
 - specific, realistic and balanced proposals for the sensitive issues of trade in **agricultural products and movement of persons**;
 - intensification of **legislative and regulatory approximation** between the two regions. The business community welcomes the European Commission's Euromed Market programme, and stresses the importance of single-market-type harmonisation procedures in the sectors of rules of origin, customs matters, norms and standards, intellectual property protection;
 - **more efficient use of resources devoted** to economic and industrial partnership through proper involvement of representative industrial organisations in definition of the industrial aspects of Euro-Mediterranean programmes financed under the MEDA regulation. In implementation of the programme, particular emphasis should be placed on direct support for SMEs to the North and South of the Mediterranean engaged in industrial cooperation projects which facilitate technology transfers and create local jobs;
 - a positive decision on the **MEDA II financial envelope**, which must be coherent with the objectives in view and reflect the new programming period.
8. **Economic integration of SMCs** is not only the centrepiece of the future Euro-Mediterranean free-trade area but also the main condition identified by potential investors for long-term commitment to the region. Without significant progress in this direction, competition from other regions of the world will weigh heavily.
9. The success of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership presupposes much more than economic integration. It implies a **significant cultural evolution** towards a shared

pattern which both respects inter-cultural differences between the two regions and endorses the experience of economic freedom. Such an evolution requires profound changes and wide acceptance of these changes by the populations concerned. To that end, it is extremely important to prepare younger generations for these general values through exchange programmes at school and universities. This will help to improve mutual understanding and networking between both sides of the Mediterranean.

10. Euro-Mediterranean business communities welcome the initiative of the European Commission to prepare and launch an **information and communication programme** designed to raise awareness both in the EU Member States and in the partner countries about the Barcelona process and the advantages of a Euro-Mediterranean free-trade area. The business community underlines the necessity for the **MEDA** programme to be made more visible to economic operators in SMCs and the EU, and they undertake to contribute actively to this information campaign in their respective countries.
 11. The organisations representing Euro-Mediterranean business congratulate the European Commission for the lucid analysis of Euro-Mediterranean partnership presented in the Communication "**Reinvigorating the Barcelona process**" and invite the Marseille Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference to address the main obstacles identified to the success of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership with courage and pragmatism. The Euro-Mediterranean business community calls for a clear action programme accompanied by a realistic timetable which will make it possible to assess progress in the process and to define adjustments and new measures where necessary.
 12. For their part, the Euro-Mediterranean business organisations will intensify their cooperation to strengthen their joint action. They will **pursue dialogue with the administrations concerned and other players in the Barcelona process** who wish to develop together a Euro-Mediterranean area of shared prosperity. At the next Euro-Mediterranean industrial summit, to take place in Istanbul, they will assess the progress made in implementation of their recommendations by the administrations on both sides of the Mediterranean and decide appropriate action to move the Euro-Mediterranean partnership further forward
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