

Union for the Mediterranean

2009/2215(INI) - 20/05/2010 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution on the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) in which it calls on the heads of state and government within the UfM, who will meet in Barcelona on 7 June 2010, to do their utmost – after two difficult years – to **make this meeting a success**, with a view to setting up the UfM's institutions, implementing major projects and making progress on all the components of Euro-Mediterranean cooperation.

Clear definition of the EU's Mediterranean policy: Parliament remains concerned by the absence of a clear definition of the EU's Mediterranean policy or of a long-term strategic vision for the development and stabilisation of the region. It calls for the Euro-Mediterranean integration process to become a **political priority** for the EU once more. In particular, it calls on the governments of the UfM member countries to deeply revise and step up political dialogue. It emphasises that mutual respect and understanding are essential elements of that dialogue and reaffirm that the promotion of and respect for democracy, the rule of law and human rights must be clearly enshrined in the objectives of this new initiative.

Transcend political tensions and regional conflicts: Parliament takes the view that political tensions and regional conflicts in the Mediterranean basin must not hinder tangible progress towards multilateral cooperation in specific sectors, and that it is through the implementation of major integration projects and open political dialogue that the UfM will help to develop a climate of trust conducive to pursuing common justice and security goals in a spirit of solidarity and peace. It stresses, however, that the UfM will not be fully successful unless the various regional conflicts are settled, in accordance with international law, making the Mediterranean a single shore of peace. Parliament stresses the urgency of achieving a fair and lasting solution to the conflict in the Middle East and calls for the firm commitment in this regard of the EU and of all UfM member countries. Plenary also regrets that the decolonisation process of Western Sahara is not yet finished;

Clear definition of the EU's Mediterranean policy: Members remain concerned by the absence of a clear definition of the EU's Mediterranean policy or of a long-term strategic vision for the development and stabilisation of the region. They call for the Euro-Mediterranean integration process to become a **political priority** for the EU once more. In particular, they call on the governments of the UfM member countries to deeply revise and step up political dialogue. They emphasise that mutual respect and understanding are essential elements of that dialogue and reaffirm that the promotion of and respect for democracy, the rule of law and human rights must be clearly enshrined in the objectives of this new initiative.

Transcend political tensions and regional conflicts: Members take the view that political tensions and regional conflicts in the Mediterranean basin must not hinder tangible progress towards multilateral cooperation in specific sectors and that the UfM will not be fully successful unless the various regional conflicts are settled, in accordance with international law. For this reason, they stress the urgency of achieving a fair and lasting solution to the conflict in the Middle East with the help and commitment of the EU and all the UfM member countries.

Institutional structure: according to Members, the institutional and operational structure of the UfM constitutes an absolute priority. It should be along the following lines:

- a secretariat with the necessary resources, both financial and statutory:

- a decision-making mechanism for approving, funding and implementing major projects and specifically setting the priorities for the next 3 years;
- appropriate representation on the European side (Member States, Council and Commission) in accordance with the Lisbon Treaty, and the active participation of all Mediterranean third countries;
- democratic legitimacy of the UfM by confirming the EMPA as an integral part of the institutional structure and by involving the European Parliament, the EMPA and the national parliaments in the decision-making process;
- **‘variable-geometry’ cooperation** arrangements open to countries and multilateral institutions wishing to work together;
- smooth cooperation between the secretariat and the Commission, and clearly defining their respective remits;
- greater visibility of the UfM’s activities;
- dialogue with all the stakeholders (local authorities and Civil Society Organisations) and making sure they are involved in the decision-making process concerning the major projects.

Funding appropriate to the issues at stake: Members recall that the Paris Summit identified six main horizontal strategic sectors: i) civil protection, ii) maritime and land highways, iii) de-pollution of the Mediterranean, iv) the Mediterranean solar energy plan, v) the Mediterranean Business Development Initiative and vi) the Euro-Mediterranean University. They call for the swift implementation of these priority projects and ask that the funding of the planned projects be guaranteed by project funding by means of a combination of public and private funds. They also call on UfM members to allocate project funding commensurate with the issues at stake, without compromising any Euro-Mediterranean regional programmes under way or planned.

Parliament stresses the need to **increase substantially the funds** allocated to the southern dimension of the European Neighbourhood Policy and EU contributions to UfM projects in the EU’s forthcoming financial perspective for 2014-2020. 2014-2020, while taking into account the effects of the economic and financial crisis. The assistance would have to be coordinated closely with the facilities offered by the EIB as well as the investment funds, such as InfraMed.

Overall, Parliament calls for improvements in the economic and legal environment in third countries, with particular priority being given to setting up viable and credible sub-regional financial institutions able to attract foreign investment. There also needs to be an improvement of access to credit for SMEs and of the provision of credit options and microcredit.

Strengthening South-South trade: Members consider there is a vital need to develop South-South trade, which accounts for just 6% of world trade. This shows the interest these countries have in stepping up their relations and their trade so that they form a united, strong economic area which is attractive to investors. In parallel, Members highlight the need to accelerate efforts towards the creation of a **Europe-Mediterranean Free Trade area** in accordance with the WTO.

Types of projects and fields of cooperation: Parliament views it as regrettable that socio-economic, commercial and energy aspects, such as direct foreign investment, employment, energy efficiency, the informal economy and poverty reduction, were overlooked in the Paris declaration, and calls for this to be remedied at the Barcelona Summit. It asks that the UfM selects projects mainly as a function of social and economic needs and takes into account the importance of the low environmental impact of these projects. It reviews the fields in which projects would take place and stress the following points:

- **agriculture:** Members emphasise the strategic importance of issues such as agriculture, rural development, and rational water and energy use in Mediterranean countries and call for **cooperation in the farming sector** to be made a political priority. They underline the need to establish a regional agricultural policy in line with the Euro-Mediterranean Road Map for Agriculture, to preserve local food production and **food security**;

- **migration:** Members recall that migration policies are one of the priorities of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership. They call on the UfM members to simplify transfers of funds from migrants to people in their home countries, in particular by endeavouring to reduce the costs incurred;
- **environment:** Members reaffirm their support for the environmental dimension of the UfM, in particular with the launch of the second phase of the investment programme for the de-pollution of the Mediterranean. Efforts need to be made to encourage projects in the areas of terrestrial and sea transport favouring a policy of sustainable transport, the reduction of greenhouse gases, and promoting energy efficiency and intermodality;
- **improvement of infrastructures:** Members underline the importance of developing maritime highways in order to encourage modal shifts and create safe, clean and sustainable commercial shipping routes. This may help to promote economic growth and trade between Euro-Mediterranean countries. Enhancing port and land transport infrastructure may also help to promote economic growth and trade;
- **energy:** Parliament insists the need for the immediate promotion of development plans to encourage the diversification of energy supply sources and routes, thus making a decisive contribution to energy security in the Mediterranean region. It recalls the high potential of sources of renewable energy (e.g. the DESERTEC initiative) and cites, in particular, the ‘Solar for Peace’ initiative. They also support the promotion of trans-Euro-Mediterranean interconnections in the electricity, gas and oil sectors in order to improve energy supply security;
- **climate:** Parliament stresses that the 20-20-20 climate objectives will affect gas demand significantly, therefore the creation of an LNG action plan for the UfM member countries would improve diversity and security of supply, especially for countries relying on sole suppliers;
- **civil protection:** Parliament emphasises the urgency of developing stronger cooperation in the field of civil protection in the Mediterranean region to combat natural disasters, particularly earthquakes, floods and forest fires;
- **training:** Members call for new projects focusing on education, school and university exchanges and research as ways of bringing the peoples on both sides of the Mediterranean closer together and fostering a genuine Euro-Mediterranean higher education, science and research area. Members welcome the creation of the Euro-Mediterranean University (EMUNI) and calls for an **ambitious Euro-Mediterranean junior ERASMUS** to be set up, as a way of stepping up school exchanges between UfM member countries;
- **culture:** new projects should be set in place to encourage cultural exchanges and mutual understanding between societies on the two sides of the Mediterranean. Parliament is in favour of projects such as a Euro-Mediterranean TV channel, and the repetition of successful initiatives such as the Arab Week and EuroMedScola;
- **SMEs:** Parliament underlines the importance of establishing industrial policies to improve economies of scale, while supporting small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and strengthening high-technology sectors;
- **gender equality:** the UfM should ensure that steps are taken to promote *de jure* and *de facto* equality between women and men, to combat violence against women and to respect the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of women as well as men. They call for concrete steps to be taken in this direction.

Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly (EMPA): Members consider that the UfM will see its democratic legitimacy strengthened thanks to the EMPA. They consider that the name of the EMPA should be changed to Parliamentary Assembly – Union for the Mediterranean (PA-UfM). They emphasise the need for the EMPA to immediately take on more significant responsibilities by being involved in consultation and democratic supervision in respect of defining the areas of work, regularly monitoring the projects undertaken, and budget implementation. This higher level of responsibility must go hand in hand with improvements in the operation and working methods of the EMPA, including granting the necessary

human and financial resources. Members stress that the UfM must do its utmost to involve **civil society**, the social partners and the numerous professional and socio-professional networks developed as part of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership in its activities and projects.

Lastly, Parliament calls on the Council, the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the Commission and the newly-established European External Action Service to take the necessary steps to **ensure coherent EU participation in the UfM**, and to involve Parliament in framing EU policy.