Mediterranean policy: follow-up to the Barcelona Conference 1995

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The Council took note of a Joint Report from the Presidency and the Commission on the follow-up to the Barcelona Conference and adopted the following conclusions : "On the basis of a joint report from the Presidency and the Commission, the Council carried out an assessment of the multilateral activities conducted within the framework of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership during the second half of 1996. The Council welcomed the consolidation of the "Barcelona spirit", the positive developments in the partnership during this period and the satisfactory balance and complementarity which has been maintained between its thee components : - in the political and security partnership, work on implementation of the principles in the Barcelona Declaration will continue, notably through the Action plan. A number of confidence and security building measures habe been agreed and are being implemented and others are under discussion, with a view to the conclusion of a Euro-Mediterranean Charter/pact as an overall framework for work in this area; - in the economic and financial partnership, a number of activities were successfully undertaken on a joint basis. Mutual endeavours will continue to be developed in order to facilitate the establishment of the free trade area and to improve the efficiency of economic and financial cooperation; - in the social, cultural and human partnership, different initiatives are under active consideration. Joint activities already under way, in particular in the field of cultural heritage, will be developed further. The participation of civil society shoud be enhanced. The Council acknowledged the continuing important role of the Euro-Mediterranean Committee for the Barcelona Process in evaluating all aspects of the partnership and updating the work programme. The Council considered that the number and range of activities which have taken place in all three areas throughout the year since the adoption of the Barcelona Declaration constitute substantial progress in the development of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership, and welcomed the plans to consolidate this further through the programme of work scheduled for the coming months. The Council welcomed the adoption of the MEDA regulation and the Guidelines for the Indicative Programmes, as well as the Indicative Programmes themselves which pave the way for the implementation of economic and financial cooperation with the mediterranean partner countries. The Council underlined the priority it attaches to the Mediterranean region and reaffirmed its will to develop the Euro-Mediterranean partnership further. To this end, it looked forward to the opportunity of the Second Meeting of Foreign Minister in 15-16 April 1997 to assess to overall progress made, an d to set specific priorities and objectives for the futures."