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Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe
Chamber of Regions

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**THE 4th CONFERENCE ON MEDITERRANEAN REGIONS
(Nicosia-Limassol, Cyprus, 20-22 September 1995)**

Rapporteurs: Mr. Demetriades (Cyprus) et Mr. Eymard (France)

EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM

I. INTRODUCTION

Thanks to an exceptional environment combined, ever since Antiquity, with multiple contacts and exchanges between different peoples, cultures and religions, the Mediterranean is a uniquely endowed area in terms of historical, natural and landscape assets. The variety and diversity of these contacts and exchanges have helped to shape civilisations constituting a model of economic, political and social integration.

However, this diversity, once a basis of wealth and prosperity, is nowadays very often a cause of disparity, exclusion and disequilibrium. The Mediterranean Basin is at present, in fact, a considerable source of instability, as the disparities in economic development between the two shores are growing, the migratory movements due to demographic and socio-economic imbalances are increasing and the inappropriateness of political structures in certain countries is further aggravating these problems. The two shores of the Mediterranean Basin find it hard to communicate with each other, and democracy and peace are having difficulty in becoming established in several southern Mediterranean countries. Moreover, the Mediterranean's natural environment, cultural heritage and landscape, already often subject to heavy pressure in coastal areas on the southern side, are now deteriorating on the northern side too.

Europe, in view of the geographical and historical importance of its Mediterranean dimension, is showing more interest and determination in seeking new equilibria and establishing a new identity for the Mediterranean with a view to preserving its values and assets. As a result, the Mediterranean is once more becoming a point of reference for Europe and a key area for its riparian states relations.

In this context, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, wishing to foster the creation of conditions permitting the balanced development of the Mediterranean populations as a whole as well as the preservation of the Mediterranean Basin's cultural and environmental assets, have organised a regular series of "conferences of Mediterranean regions" since 1985.

These conferences enable the Mediterranean regions and cities to exchange their experience and co-operate together at European level with a view to finding common solutions to the above-mentioned problems in a transfrontier, indeed interterritorial, framework. Following on from the conferences that took place in Marseilles (1985), Malaga (1987) and Taormina (1993), the 4th Conference of Mediterranean Regions was held in Nicosia and Limassol from 20 to 22 September 1996 on the theme "The sustainable development of the Mediterranean Basin: environment, demography and migration".

The results of this conference, which are the subject of the present report and are set out in the conference's final declaration, enabled a recommendation and a resolution to be drawn up which, together with this report, may be adopted by the CLRAE's Standing Committee and thus reflect, at European level, the resolve of territorial authorities in the Mediterranean area to co-operate together in a more organic, co-ordinated and regular manner in the interests of genuine sustainable development.

II. THE CONFERENCE'S PROCEEDINGS

The conference opened in Nicosia, the Capital of Cyprus, on 20 September 1995 and was adjourned to Limassol, where it continued for the next two days. During the stay in Nicosia, the participants were accompanied by the Mayor of the Green Line in the old city of Nicosia which is the buffer zone still cutting the town and the island in two, following the intervention of the Turkish army in 1974.

The conference's theme enabled the participants to investigate in depth the problems which need to be solved in order to establish new balances enabling the Mediterranean Basin to become once more a nerve centre of cultural and economic exchanges and political dialogue as well as a link between East and West, North and South and the peoples and regions of Europe, Africa and Asia.

Some highly interesting discussions followed the presentation of the technical reports on demographic and migration problems as well as questions concerning water and forestry resources. These discussions were supplemented by a round table on intolerance, racism and xenophobia, which gave the political representatives of Mediterranean regions and cities an opportunity to examine common solutions. The President of the Region of Puglia (Italy) formally invited the Congress to hold a conference in Bari in 1996 on the theme of intolerance in the Mediterranean Basin.

Before the final declaration was adopted, a round table was held for summing-up purposes, followed by a lively debate on action by local and regional authorities to promote the sustainable development of the Mediterranean Basin.

1. Migration and demographic problems in the Mediterranean Basin

The participants noted that there were contrasting demographic situations in the Mediterranean Basin: the northern side is characterised by an ageing of the population and a falling birth rate, whereas on the southern side there is a very high proportion of young people. The demographic and migratory trend in the southern Mediterranean countries is liable to give rise in the near future to socio-economic, political, environmental and cultural problems not only for the southern Mediterranean countries themselves but also for the northern Mediterranean countries and indeed for the whole of Europe.

The reports submitted to the conference showed that the present difficult socio-economic situation in the southern Mediterranean countries was resulting in a high level of unemployment affecting all social strata - particularly young people, who are mostly qualified - as well as in a strong propensity to emigration. These countries are thus losing part of their workforces, including their intellectual resources, as many qualified young people in the south are migrating to the north in search of higher incomes and opportunities to apply their skills.

The participants emphasised the importance of the conference on demographic problems in the Mediterranean Basin (Palma de Mallorca, 15-17 October 1996), organised by the Council of Europe's CDPO. Their discussions also highlighted the need to implement the project proposed at the 3rd Conference of Mediterranean Regions, held in Taormina in April 1993, for setting up a foundation for Mediterranean migration in Sicily.

2. Management of water and forestry resources in the Mediterranean Basin

2.1 Management of water resources

The participants observed that the problem of water resources affected all Mediterranean countries but was particularly serious on the southern side, where the demand for water has far exceeded capacity in several countries; population growth and rapid urbanisation will necessitate the use of unconventional resources, such as fossil ground water, sea water and treated sewage.

In their final declaration, the participants emphasised the need to regard the integrated management of water, the protection and conservation of resources, user participation and the development of new resources as important political aspects of the problem of sustainable development. Accordingly, choices of economic, agricultural and energy policies should pay serious heed to their consequences for water resources.

From a political point of view, the conference recommended that co-operation between territorial authorities and the various bodies responsible for managing and exploiting resources be developed and strengthened in a practical manner. In view of the importance of water for the Mediterranean region, centralised planning should be accompanied by a system of decentralised management at all levels.

2.2 Management of forests

The participants noted that the deterioration of Mediterranean forests, mainly as a result of fires on the northern side and deforestation practices on the southern side, constitutes one of the main environmental problems of the region, as it often results in rapid soil erosion and even desertification.

The technical reports presented made it clear that there is also a link between deforestation, desertification, sustainable development and migration. The alarming environmental situation is contributing to rural depopulation, thus inducing uncontrolled urbanisation and heavy emigration.

The combating of forests fires presupposes the adoption of an environment policy covering all the risk factors. This involves fire risk data collection, surveillance, direct fire-fighting, preventive planning aimed at reducing the inflammability of forests and a study of the causes of fires. In particular, the participants called for the establishment of a network of forest research centres for the purpose of pooling relevant studies and experience, as well as the adoption of co-operation agreements on the combating of forest fires.

3. Intolerance, racism and xenophobia

Intolerance, racism and xenophobia are phenomena connected with demographic issues. Measures of solidarity may be considered essential as a means of dealing with the critical situation in which emigrants and their host countries find themselves. The participants acknowledged the need to tackle these phenomena by seeking solutions not only of an ethical and ideological nature but also of a political, legal, institutional and informational kind.

The conference's proceedings also highlighted the fact that a society's strength was based on respect for its members' diversity and on an acknowledgement of the importance of solidarity. The time has come to act in a practical manner at political level, and an action plan was accordingly proposed to local and regional authorities which are the main protagonists in the promotion and creation of a multicultural society. The participants expressed their support for the activities conducted as part of the Council of Europe's Campaign against Racism, Xenophobia, Anti-Semitism and Intolerance, which are facilitating the social integration of immigrants in their host countries.

III. CONCLUSIONS

The reports presented and discussed at the 4th Conference of Mediterranean Regions in Cyprus, showed once more that population and migration problems, threats to peace, the problem of intolerance and questions concerning Mediterranean water and forest resources cannot be resolved without the establishment of development co-operation for the benefit of the southern Mediterranean countries' populations, as part of a system for the rational, coordinated management of the natural, cultural and landscape resources of the whole Mediterranean Basin.

The Cyprus Conference repeatedly emphasised the need to initiate a process of interterritorial co-operation as part of a Council of Europe Mediterranean strategy, which should, according to the participants, cover the Council of Europe's main fields of action such as the rule of law, human rights, minorities and legal co-operation. From the standpoint of the conference, this process of co-operation and its underlying strategy should be integrated into the action programme drawn up at the European Union's Euro-Mediterranean Conference in Barcelona in November 1995.

With regard to the local dimension in particular, the participants expressed the view that Mediterranean regions and cities should be provided with an international legal framework for the purposes of their co-operation. They accordingly requested the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers to open for signature the Convention on Interterritorial Co-operation proposed by the CLRAE in 1993 as a complement to the Madrid Convention on Transfrontier Co-operation.

At the next Conference of Mediterranean Regions, to be held as soon as possible, the Congress will report on action taken on the basis of the valuable proposals presented in Cyprus.

ADDENDUM TO THE EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM

according to Rule 31, paragraph 3
of the Rules of Procedure of the Chamber of Regions
submitted by Mr Tunalioglu
Member of the CLRAE Working Group
Member of the Chamber of Regions

I was unable to participate in the 4th Conference on Mediterranean Regions. Mr M. BULDANLI intended to replace me in this Conference. He was not able to participate either, because the Cypriot authorities did not let him through the Ledra Palace Cross Point in Nicosia.

Therefore, I could not put forward my opinions on the Working Group's Report. For this reason:

I have reservations on the Report, according to the Rules of Procedure of the Chamber of Regions, Rule 31 - paragraph 3:

1. on draft Recommendation CPR (2) 7 Part I Rec.
Page 5, Point 10) Part III b.¹

"creating at Limassol (Cyprus) a bureau for liaison with the Middle East countries, which would be responsible for centralising information concerning interterritorial co-operation in that Region, with its special aspects".

It is definitively not possible for Turkish participants to be able to participate in liaison activities with Middle East countries if this office is located in Limassol. Turkey is the only member State of the Council of Europe in this region on the mainland.

Without the participation of Turkish delegates, it would be impossible to organise interterritorial co-operation in that region.

2. I also have reservations on the "Explanatory Memorandum" - CPR (2) 7 Part II
Page 3:²
 - II. The Conference Proceedings
first paragraph
3. I also have the same reservations on:
Appendix to the 4th Conference on Mediterranean Regions -
CPR (2) 7 Part I Appendix
Page 4, the contents of point 23³.

The City of Limassol would be the least appropriate city for a liaison bureau to maintain links with the countries of the southern shore of the Mediterranean and the Middle East.

¹ The new reference of this document for the 3rd Plenary Session is:
CPR (3) 2 Recommendation - page 4, point 10), part III.b.

² The new reference of this document for the 3rd Plenary Session is:
CPR (3) 2 Part II - page 3.

³ The new reference of this document for the 3rd Plenary Session is:
CPR (3) 2 Recommendation - page 6, the contents of point 23.