

CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES OF EUROPE

Recommendation 67 (1999)¹ on the 5th Conference on Mediterranean and Black Sea Basins

*(Extract from the Official Gazette of the Council of Europe
– June 1999)*

The Congress,

Bearing in mind the proposal of the Chamber of Regions,

1. Taking note of the report submitted by Mr Mehmet Buldanli, member of Izmir Provincial Council and of the Congress, on the “5th Conference of Mediterranean and Black Sea Basins: Interparliamentary and interregional co-operation for peace, democratic stability and sustainable development”, held in Marmaris (Turkey) from 25 to 27 February 1999;

2. Gratifed by the success of the conference, which was organised jointly by the Parliamentary Assembly, the Congress and the Turkish local, regional and parliamentary authorities, and welcoming in particular the active participation of a large number of representatives from the southern and eastern shores of the Mediterranean in this initiative;

3. Having regard to the conclusions presented at the end of the proceedings by the Working Group responsible for the preparation of the conference (see appendix), and in particular:

a. the working group’s proposal that the Parliamentary Assembly and the Congress draw up, working closely with the partner countries concerned, a charter for sustainable development in the Mediterranean and Black Sea basins, to which the Congress would invite municipalities and regions from countries around the two basins to accede;

b. the specific role that the Congress, in accordance with the terms of reference of its Working Group on “Euro-Med” Co-operation on Local Democracy, wishes to play in encouraging direct co-operation between local and regional authorities around the Mediterranean basin that lays particular emphasis on the promotion of decentralisation and local self-government, democratic administration and the training of the staff and elected representatives of these authorities;

4. Recalling:

a. CLRAE Resolutions 162 (1985), 200 (1989), 256 (1993) and 36 (1996) on the four Conferences of Mediterranean Regions that have been organised jointly by

1. Debated and approved by the Chamber of Regions on 16 June 1999 and adopted by the Standing Committee of the Congress on 17 June 1999 (see doc. CPR (6) 6 draft Recommendation, presented by Mr L. Cuatrecasas on behalf of Mr M. Buldanli, Rapporteur).

the Congress and the Parliamentary Assembly since 1985, and the final declarations appended thereto, as well as Resolution 69 (1998) on decentralised co-operation and migration in the Mediterranean Basin;

b. Parliamentary Assembly Recommendation 1359 (1998) on sustainable development in the Mediterranean and Black Sea basins, in particular the sections of the recommendation concerning the promotion of co-operation between local and regional authorities around the Mediterranean;

c. the reply by the Committee of Ministers (CM/Del/Dec(98)621/3.1) to the above-mentioned Parliamentary Assembly recommendation, welcoming the fact that co-operation in the Mediterranean and Black Sea basins continues to develop under the umbrella of the Council of Europe, as well as the sections of the reply concerning:

– the Committee of Ministers’ readiness to consider requests to take part as observers in certain activities of the Council of Europe from states such as Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Syria and Tunisia as well as the Palestinian Authority;

– the Committee of Ministers’ support for the establishment of links between local authorities in different countries in pursuance of the European Charter of Local Self-Government.

5. Emphasising:

a. the significant work carried out by the Congress and the Parliamentary Assembly since the organisation of the first Conference of Mediterranean Regions in Marseille (1985) with the aim of fostering dialogue, confidence and a genuine desire for interparliamentary and inter-regional co-operation with countries on the southern and eastern shores of the Mediterranean which are not members of the Council of Europe, on order to promote sustainable development, peace and democracy in the region;

b. its interest in strengthening the Council of Europe’s policy on the Mediterranean, which, building on the experience acquired from the five Conferences of Mediterranean (and Black Sea) Regions, particularly encourages direct co-operation between local and regional authorities from Council of Europe member states and non-member Mediterranean countries;

6. Noting that:

a. in spite of the existing international declarations and treaties on the environment in the Mediterranean and Black Sea basins¹, the ecological situation in the two basins remains a cause of great concern and is characterised by such features as:

– a real deterioration of the cultural heritage, natural resources and landscape, caused in particular by the

1. In particular, the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL, 1973 and 1978), the Convention on the Protection of the Mediterranean against Pollution (Barcelona, 1978) and its protocols, the Convention on the Protection of the Black Sea against Pollution (Bucharest, 1992) and the Ministerial Declaration on the Protection of the Black Sea (Odessa, 1993).

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sometimes uncontrolled development of tourism, especially in the Mediterranean basin ;

– the high level of pollution in the Black Sea, which seriously endangers its biodiversity and marine resources and is partly caused by the discharge of water from the Danube and the Dnieper into its basin and by the density of sea traffic in the Straits and the sea of Marmara, a potential source of shipping accidents which would have even more disastrous consequences for the environment ;

– the relative lack of public awareness of the need for environmental protection and the insufficient involvement and co-operation of local and regional authorities in the countries of the Mediterranean and Black Sea basins in practical measures to promote sustainable development in the two basins ;

b. in spite of the recent increase in relations based on decentralised co-operation between certain local and regional authorities in the countries around the two basins, this form of co-operation is currently limited, in particular by the low level of autonomy and resources granted to local and/or regional authorities, especially in some southern and eastern Mediterranean countries ;

c. a genuine desire for co-operation in these fields between parliaments, municipalities and regions in the countries of the Mediterranean and Black Sea basins has nevertheless been expressed on various occasions, for example at the 5th Conference.

7. Considering, in the light of the foregoing, that :

a. questions relating to sustainable development in the Mediterranean and Black Sea basins concern all the countries around the two seas, and that, consequently, finding a solution to these problems necessarily requires collective, co-ordinated action on the part of these countries ;

b. existing instruments to promote sustainable development in the Mediterranean and Black Sea basins do not take sufficient account of the importance of interparliamentary and interregional co-operation in this field ;

c. the establishment of local democracy and peace in non-member states in the southern and eastern Mediterranean basin is also of direct concern to the Council of Europe, in that developments in these countries have a variety of consequences for the entire continent of Europe, as is illustrated by the situation in Algeria and the difficult task of bringing about the reconciliation of Israel and the Palestinians ;

d. a more decisive involvement on the part of the Council of Europe in the process of Euro-Mediterranean co-operation, focusing on areas such as local self-government, decentralisation and co-operation between local and regional authorities, which are among the Organisation's specific fields of expertise and have received relatively little attention in this process, is not at variance with the priority given to central and east European countries but should complement it, especially by including the Black Sea ;

8. Convinced that :

a. the Council of Europe, having acquired a wealth of experience during the five Conferences of Mediterranean (and Black Sea) Regions, should launch a decisive initiative in the field of interparliamentary and intergovernmental co-operation to promote sustainable development in the two basins ;

b. the most tangible manifestation of this initiative should be the drawing up, by the Parliamentary Assembly and the Congress, working closely with the partner countries concerned, of a charter for sustainable development in the Mediterranean and Black Sea basins, as referred to in paragraph 3.a of this recommendation ;

c. one of the fundamental aspects of the Council of Europe's policy on the Mediterranean involves strengthening direct links between local and regional authorities on the northern, southern and eastern shores of the Mediterranean and developing decentralised co-operation between these authorities, in order to create partnerships that are more effective, more efficient, closer to the citizens and based on development needs expressed at local level ;

d. such a form of co-operation should nevertheless be developed within an ad hoc legal framework in the form of an intergovernmental outline agreement on decentralised co-operation in the Mediterranean and Black Sea basins signed by the governments concerned, authorising municipalities and regions to conclude agreements along the lines recommended in the Council of Europe's Outline Convention on Transfrontier Co-operation between Territorial Communities or Authorities (Madrid Convention, 1980) and the two protocols thereto ;

e. the non-member countries on the southern and eastern shores of the Mediterranean not only want the Council of Europe to be more actively involved in the region but would also like the opportunity to be more regularly involved in the Organisation's activities, especially those of the Congress, in particular as observers ;

9. Recommends that the Committee of Ministers :

a. on the one hand, take all appropriate action to urge countries which have not yet done so to sign and ratify, as quickly as possible, any Council of Europe conventions that may help attain the objectives of the 5th Conference, whether in the field of the environment, transfrontier co-operation or local self-government, and on the other, specify the practical arrangements for opening these conventions to Mediterranean countries that are not members of the Council of Europe but have clearly expressed their desire to sign and ratify them ;

b. invite the Secretary General of the Council of Europe to forward to the Committee of Advisers on the Development of Transfrontier Co-operation in Central and Eastern Europe the proposal to include in the intergovernmental programme for transfrontier co-operation the drawing up of a draft intergovernmental outline agreement on decentralised co-operation in the Black Sea, along the lines of the above-mentioned Madrid Convention and the two protocols thereto ; a draft outline agreement of this kind

could also subsequently be adapted in order to be opened to non-member Mediterranean countries ;

- c. take follow-up action, through its Rapporteur Group on Co-operation in the Mediterranean Basin (GT-MED), on Congress Recommendation 50 (1998) and thus give its political support to the Interregional Observatory on Mediterranean Migration proposed by the Apulia Region ;
- d. consider extending the scope of its Rapporteur Group on Co-operation in the Mediterranean Basin to cover the countries of the Black Sea basin ;
- e. positively encourage participation in certain Council of Europe activities, in particular those of the Congress, by the non-member Mediterranean partner countries mentioned in paragraph 4.c of this recommendation, for example by asking the Secretary General to arrange periodic information meetings for representatives of these countries ;

10. Invites the Parliamentary Assembly to :

- a. co-operate closely with the Congress in following up the 5th Conference of Mediterranean and Black Sea Basins and, in particular, drawing up a draft charter for Sustainable Development in the Mediterranean and Black Sea Basins ;
- b. set up as soon as possible, in conjunction with the Congress, a working group responsible for the preparation of the 6th Conference of Mediterranean and Black Sea Basins ;
- c. encourage the granting of observer status with the Assembly to non-member Mediterranean countries, along the lines of the observer status that has already been granted to the state of Israel ;
- d. open certain committee meetings to participation by the equivalent committees of the parliaments of non-member Mediterranean countries, in accordance with paragraph 10 (i) of its Recommendation 1149 (1998).

11. Recommends that the governments of member states :

- a. undertake to comply strictly with the obligations arising from international treaties on protection of the marine environment, in particular the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL, 1973 and 1978), the Convention on the Protection of the Mediterranean against Pollution (Barcelona, 1978) and its protocols, the Convention on the Protection of the Black Sea against Pollution (Bucharest, 1992) and the Ministerial Declaration on the Protection of the Black Sea (Odessa, 1993) ;
- b. acknowledge the fundamental role which local and regional authorities and parliamentary bodies now play in promoting sustainable development, peace and democratic principles, in particular by developing local and regional self-government and by guaranteeing the right of local and regional authorities to co-operate with their counterparts in member states and Mediterranean non-member states and by providing local and regional authorities with the appropriate financial resources for this ;

12. Recommends that the European Conference of Ministers responsible for Regional Planning (CEMAT) give consideration to the problems connected with

sustainable development in the Mediterranean and Black Sea basins when drawing up the “Guiding principles for sustainable regional/spatial development in Greater Europe” in preparation for the Hanover Conference in September 2000.

Conclusions of the 5th Conference of Mediterranean and Black Sea Basins

The participants in the 5th Conference of the Mediterranean and Black Sea Basins, held in Marmaris, Turkey from 25 to 27 February 1999, thank the Council of Europe and in particular its Parliamentary Assembly and Congress of Local and Regional Authorities for organising this Conference.

They also express their sincere gratitude to the Turkish Parliament, the Governorate of Mugla and the Municipality of Marmaris for their welcome and their hospitality.

They take note with interest of the conclusions presented by the Working Group responsible for the preparation of the Conference, and decide to transmit them for further action to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe.

The Working Group responsible for the preparation of the 5th Conference of Mediterranean and Black Sea Basins considering that :

1. The process of co-operation between the countries on the Northern, Southern and Eastern shores of the Mediterranean and Black Seas has operated for several years in the context of intergovernmental moves such as the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership launched by the European Union in Barcelona in 1995, the co-operation between the Black Sea countries (PABSEC) or the initiatives taken by other international organisations ;
2. It is plainly crucial that this co-operation process should be substantially strengthened, particularly with regard to sustainable development, peace and democratic stability, and pursued not only at intergovernmental level but also at interparliamentary level as well as among the local and regional authorities of the countries in the Mediterranean and Black Sea Basins ;
3. Moreover, in view of the obstacle to co-operation raised by disparity between the countries fringing the two basins in the organisation and empowerment of local and regional authorities, interparliamentary co-operation forms a vital supporting instrument for the introduction of structures and machinery to ensure true democracy and local self-government ;
4. The Mediterranean and Black Seas are interconnected and consequently share many serious environmental problems and, from an ecological standpoint, form one and the same system. Thus, despite the distinctive features of each basin, these two seas warrant comprehensive action covering the entire region ;

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Also aware that, with regard to:

The Mediterranean Basin

5. This region is characterised by large human and natural resources and thus strong development potential, but also by disturbing social, economic, demographic and ecological imbalances which may constitute a threat to the future of the societies dwelling there and intensify the migration flows which the countries north of the basin no longer have the capacity to absorb;
6. The severe environmental degradation in the Mediterranean Basin has many causes, notably tourism which, despite its undeniably positive effects on economic growth and employment, is nonetheless to blame for a tangible deterioration in the cultural heritage, natural resources and scenery;
7. Grave obstacles, or sometimes lack of clearly stated resolve, persist and are specifically linked with the political structures of certain countries; consequently, they impede effective co-operation between the Northern, Southern and Eastern shores of the Mediterranean; these political hindrances also have repercussions on interparliamentary and interregional co-operation in the Mediterranean Basin;

The Black Sea

8. Its environment is in a very serious state owing to grave impairment of its biodiversity, fisheries resources and landscape, and necessitates concerted action by the riparian countries which, following the geopolitical changes that have occurred in the region, can enter into co-operation founded on democratic and participatory processes;
9. Such co-operation, implemented at various levels, is furthermore the imperative means to remedy the principal causes of this decline, including pollution from land-based sources and carried by rivers, uncontrolled tourism and intensive, potentially hazardous navigation;
10. As literal "genetic bridges" between the Mediterranean and Black Sea Basins, the straits and the Sea of Marmara are subjected to some of the world's densest sea traffic. The resultant pollution severely affects the ecosystem of the straits. Moreover, the traffic creates risks of shipping accidents which would have disastrous consequences for the environment;

The entire region

11. Having regard to the various causative factors of environmental degradation in both the basins, including pollution from large rivers such as the Danube and the Dnepr, it is plainly apparent that the riparian countries are not the only ones responsible for this situation, ascribable to quite a number of other countries not actually on the seaboard but contributing to marine degradation by generating land-based and river-borne pollution;
12. Given the geographical scale and the geopolitical and historical significance of the area, it is essential that the Council of Europe express its interest in the region and its commitment to the discovery of new balances and the

assertion of a new identity for the region with a view to preserving its values and assets;

13. The Mediterranean and Black Seas must accordingly become a frame of reference for Europe and a prime setting for relations between their riparian states as well as between these states and others;

In the light of the foregoing, the Working Group states its conviction that:

14. One of the priority channels for solving the problems that beset the region may be found through effective, intensified international co-operation relying on practical actions which are themselves founded on clear political commitments;
15. The Council of Europe, notably with the enlargement of its membership since 1989, provides the appropriate framework for enhanced interparliamentary and interregional co-operation in the area, and can be a genuine platform for dialogue among the national and regional institutions concerned;
16. Significant resources must be deployed in order to encourage, actuate and co-ordinate genuine co-operation on the issues of peace, democratic security and environment in the Mediterranean-Black Sea region between parliaments and local and regional authorities, with which citizen organisations would be associated;
17. The national parliamentary committees responsible for the issues raised during the conference and especially for legislative reform could benefit from the Parliamentary Assembly's experience in this sphere;
18. Strengthening decentralised, specifically Euro-Mediterranean, co-operation would secure some of the prerequisites for liberalisation of exchanges (in particular by modernising local and regional government systems and consolidating infrastructures), and would foster more complete intercultural knowledge and understanding by developing direct interterritorial and intercommunity relations;
19. The insufficiency of the autonomy granted to local, and above all regional, authorities in certain countries of the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean hampers decentralised co-operation in the region; it was precisely to encourage such co-operation and to enhance decentralisation and local autonomy, democratic administration, information and training of municipal staff and elected representatives in the Mediterranean partner countries not belonging to the Council of Europe, that the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe in 1997 formed the Working Group for "Euro-Med" co-operation on local democracy, whose activity deserves to be stepped up;
20. In this context, it is proper to welcome the contributions and achievements of other agencies and to take account of activities implemented:
 - firstly by parliamentary assemblies such as the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), which should receive full support in its initiative concerning the Conference on Security and Co-operation in the Mediterranean (CSCM),

and the Parliamentary Assembly for Black Sea Economic Co-operation (PABSEC), in conjunction with which the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly organised the first Interparliamentary Conference on the Environmental Protection of the Black Sea (Istanbul, 1996);

– secondly in the framework of organisations representing local and regional authorities, such as the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions of Europe (CPMR) and especially its Inter-Mediterranean Commission whose opening to local and regional authorities of the countries in the south and east of the Mediterranean Basin should be encouraged, and the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) whose activity to promote twinings and partnership through the ECOS-Ouverture Programme should be stepped up, and the Association of European Regions (AER) which represents both Mediterranean and Black Sea regions;

Invites the conference to call upon:

The countries concerned:

21. To undertake to abide strictly by the obligations arising from current international treaties on protection of the marine environment, in particular the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL, 1973 and 1978), the Convention on the Protection of the Mediterranean against Pollution (Barcelona, 1978) and its protocols, the Convention on the Protection of the Black Sea against Pollution (Bucharest, 1992) and the ministerial Declaration on the Protection of the Black Sea (Odessa, 1993);

22. To acknowledge the major role of local and regional authorities and parliamentary bodies in the furtherance of sustainable development, peace and democratic stability, and undertake in particular to consider the possibility of strengthening the role and powers of local and regional government, being guided by the principles of the European Charter of Local Self-Government, as well as in decisive areas for sustainable development such as environmental protection, resource management, tourist policy and education;

23. Especially the countries on the southern and eastern shores of the Mediterranean Basins to envisage, on the basis of a more explicit commitment on their part, closer co-operation with the Council of Europe, for instance by stating their intention to involve themselves in the activities conducted under legal instruments or in the framework of bodies open to their participation, such as the Berne Convention (1979) on the conservation of European wildlife and natural habitats, the European Centre for Global Interdependence and Solidarity (“North-South Centre”) and the Co-operation Group for prevention of, protection against, and organisation of relief in major natural and technological disasters;

24. To adopt a spatial planning policy consistent with sustainable development, under which coastal areas in particular must be protected against excessive urbanisation;

25. To take concrete action to promote the role of the Council of Europe as a forum of dialogue between Mediterranean and Black Sea countries with the view to strengthening co-operation for peace, human rights, democratic stability and sustainable development;

The Parliamentary Assembly and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe:

26. To prepare, in the spirit of Resolution 1149 (1998) of the Parliamentary Assembly and in close association with the non-Council of Europe partner countries concerned, a charter for sustainable development of the Mediterranean and Black Sea Basins whereby national parliaments, cities and regions would pledge their resolve to undertake more intensive co-operation and their commitment to certain key principles that should guide them in any interventions likely to affect the ecological balance of the two basins;

27. As part of their respective activities, to plan actions for awareness-raising, information and education directed at all citizens, the younger generation in particular, to instil respect for the environment, as well as a spirit of peace and co-operation among neighbouring countries;

28. To carry on their efforts to further, respectively, interparliamentary and interregional dialogue in the Mediterranean and Black Sea Basins by regularly allowing parliamentarians and local and regional politicians, especially those of Council of Europe non-member states on the Mediterranean coast, to participate in their committees or working groups concerned with environmental protection and the furtherance of devolution, local and regional autonomy and the democratic administration of local and regional communities, and, in general, to make all arrangements that come within their remit for implementing the recommendations and proposals put forward in these Conclusions;

29. To transmit these Conclusions to the national and European bodies concerned;

30. To invite the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe:

– to take all appropriate action for speedier signing and ratifying, by countries not yet having done so, of those Council of Europe Conventions that can help attain the objectives of the conference, whether in the field of environment, transfrontier co-operation or local self-government, and furthermore to open these Conventions to non-member states of the organisation having clearly expressed willingness in this regard;

– accordingly, to pay special attention to the following Council of Europe Conventions and Agreements:

- Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (Berne Convention);

- Convention on Civil Liability for Damage resulting from Activities Dangerous to the Environment (Lugano Convention);

- Convention on the Protection of the Environment through Criminal Law;

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- Partial Agreement on the European Centre for Global Interdependence and Solidarity (“North-South Centre”);
- Partial Agreement on the Co-operation Group for the prevention of, protection against, and organisation of relief in major natural and technological disasters;
- to open to the same non-member states any programme of education for democratic citizenship envisaged within the framework of the political declaration to be adopted on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Council of Europe;

and to request it with insistence to re-examine the proposal for a “Mediterranean and Black Sea Protection Year”;

31. To invite the European Conference of Ministers responsible for Regional Planning (CEMAT) to accommodate the sustainable development problems of the Mediterranean and Black Sea Basins when preparing the “Guiding principles for sustainable regional/spatial development in Greater Europe” in preparation for the Hanover Conference in September 2000;

The Parliamentary Assembly :

32. To take account of the proceedings of other parliamentary assemblies such as the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and the Parliamentary Assembly for Black Sea Economic Co-operation (PABSEC), and to associate them with the preparation and implementation of the charter;
33. To support the process of the Conferences on Security and Co-operation in the Mediterranean (CSCM) initiated by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and examine with the IPU the scope for becoming more closely involved in the process;
34. To encourage regular relations between its committees and representatives of the corresponding parliamentary

committees in the riparian countries on subjects lending themselves to practical co-operation;

35. To undertake, in co-operation with the national parliaments and in respect of the countries concerned, a comparative study of current legislation in the fields discussed by the conference, notably the water management, so as to improve legislative co-ordination and convergence and identify possible new needs;

The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe :

36. To co-operate with other bodies working in this field (particularly the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions of Europe (CPMR), the Council of European Regions and Municipalities (CEMR) and the Assembly of European Regions (AER) in ensuring that the charter for sustainable development of the Mediterranean and Black Sea Basins is promoted and acceded to by the towns and regions of the countries in the two basins;

37. To implement, in its own sphere of competence, all appropriate measures for aiding the dissemination of the principles of local self-government and democratic administration of local communities, notably through their associations, and to consolidate the training of local and regional elected representatives in the Southern and Eastern countries of the Mediterranean Basin;

38. To continue, in consultation with those concerned, the studies on the state of devolution and local autonomy in the non-member Mediterranean countries, and to aid direct contacts between local and regional authorities in the countries of each basin.

The participants welcome the invitation from the Bulgarian authorities to hold the next Conference in Varna in October 2000.