

## **3rd General Assembly of the Euromed Trade Union Forum “Towards peace, democracy, economic progress and social justice” Barcelona, 6 – 7 November 2005**

### **Final declaration**

Ten years after the Barcelona Conference in 1995, the trade union organizations are unanimous to realize that the goals declared have not been fulfilled. The Partnership consisted of establishing a link between economic development, peace and democratization. For the trade union movement, the result of the Partnership is disappointing and it is difficult not to mention the relative failures.

Despite all criticisms and concerns, for the trade union movement the Partnership is the right path to be followed. Its foundation maintains all its use and it deserves to be developed. It continues being a suitable regional frame for cooperation in the Mediterranean that includes the democratization and the promotion of human rights, on the condition to guarantee its coherence and to revitalize it with a more firm political commitment. Also the new European Neighbourhood Policy, whose objectives and Action Plans explicitly refer to the mechanisms of social consultation, to the employment policy, to the trade union freedom and to the international agreements on labour right. This opens an interesting perspective for the Euromed Trade Union Forum.

The Euromed Trade Union Forum states:

1. The Mediterranean has not been transformed into a peace zone.
2. The economic and social situation has not improved.
3. The Partnership has not contributed in an effective way to create employment.
4. The migratory question continues being a fundamental problem not solved within the framework of the Partnership.
5. Little democratic advance and absence of social dialogue.

The Euromed Trade Union Forum reaffirms that the peace, the respect of human rights, the respect of labour rights based on the ILO standards, and the economic policies that promote development and social progress are tightly linked.

### **For a renovation of the Partnership**

- a. **For a global and coherent project.** It is necessary to dissipate the ambiguities related to the multiplicity of political initiatives. The projects have to be complementary and not

be in competition. We share the vindication of the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly to see the process revitalized and integrated.

- b. For the reinforcement of the multilateral and the regional integrations.** A renewed Partnership should reinforce the principles of the process, which are: equality, co-responsibility, solidarity and cooperation in the multilateral framework. The ENP can not drain the Partnership of its regional character. The Euromed Trade Union Forum considers that the new European Neighbourhood Policy should include among its priorities the impulse of both regional integration and south-south sub-regional integration. It has, therefore, to promote a logical idea of regional cooperation and true south-south cooperation, with the goal of settling the bases of a wider market that is able to attract foreign investments and to develop scientific, technical and cultural co-operations.
- c. For the co-development.** The Euromed Partnership has not improved the standard of living of workers and populations. That is why it can not be reduced to a simple zone of free change and it must be transformed into a privileged framework to promote development and democracy. We estimate that free change is not the only answer to development. Other complementary solutions are needed to create an efficient framework of stability and at the same time reduce inequalities in the standard of living, and this demands collective responsibilities of all associated members and be conditioned to the respect of international labour standards.
- d. For a redefinition of the financial tools.** The Euromed Trade Union Forum emphasizes the need to reinforce and redefine the different tools of the European financial aid to the EPC (European Bank of Investments, Meda, FEMIP) favouring incentives for European investments in the south region and alleviating the burden of the foreign debt, especially through its reinvestment in development projects. The new financial tool of the ENP (2007-2014), called to replace MEDA, must guarantee the necessary financial means for the Mediterranean; currently it does not imply any share of the budgets between this region and the eastern countries.
- e. For an active employment policy.** The trade union organizations consider that employment creation has to be a transversal element of the Partnership and it has to become one of its priority objectives. In this sense they are asking to initiate actual measures that favour this priority. An evaluation should be made in order to take into account the impact of the Partnership policies on the employment.
- f. For the rights of migrants.** It is required a joint and global answer that allows to fight in the destination countries, both in the north and the south, for the equality of the rights of migrants and for encouraging in the origin countries the sustainable development and the employment creation. The Trade Union Forum requests that the different States ratify the UN Convention for the Protection of the Rights of all Migrant Workers and members of their Families.
- g. For a Partnership based on human rights and gender equality.** The Trade Union Forum denounces the systematic violation of human rights, the lack of press freedom, the lack of transparency and the corruption, and it considers to be essential that the Euromed Partnership and the ENP are based on the respect of the fundamental rights in its universality and its indivisibility, that is, civil and political liberties and economic, social and cultural rights. Social progress cannot be reached without equal opportunities for men and women.
- h. For a fair, global and lasting peace.** The trade union organizations condemn all the forms of xenophobia and racism, of extremism and fundamentalism, of terrorism and

authoritarianism, and of military occupation. The overcoming of these problems demands the surrender of all arms of massive destruction, the reconstruction of a shared social project, the democracy, the respect of the international law and the intercultural dialogue between the peoples. On this subject we welcome and support the initiative of the United Nations for an "Alliance of Civilizations". The trade union organizations request that the governments solve the active conflicts in the region according to international law and to the United Nations resolutions and the proposals of its General Secretary. In this frame, the resolution of the Middle East conflicts can only be carried out through the respect of the international legality, the application without any objections of the resolutions of the UN, the withdrawal of the troops from all territories that were occupied in 1967 and the recognition of the Palestinians and their right to establish an independent State next to the State of Israel. The trade union organizations insist on a prompt end to the occupation of Iraq, as well as the fundamental role that the UN must have in the process of recovery of the sovereignty, the reconstruction and the guarantee of unit of this country. Also, they support the efforts made by the CIO SL, the WCL and the CISA to help to the reconstruction and the unit of the trade union forces in Iraq, on the base of democracy and independence, so that they can fully play a role in the defence of the interests of the workers and participate effectively in the reconstruction of a free, sovereign and democratic Iraq. The Trade Union Forum demands all the truth to be known about the assassination of the former Prime Minister of Lebanon and those found guilty to be judged. Nevertheless, this question must be kept to the respect of the international law and not respond to political ends with the purpose of establishing sanctions on Syria, what would pose a threat of increasing the destabilization in the region.

- i. **The Trade Union Forum and the civil society.** The Trade Union Forum celebrates that since 1999 the cooperation with the NGO's structures has been consolidated and strengthened, always maintaining and reciprocally respecting our identities and our autonomies. We want to proceed with our participation as Trade Union Forum in the activities of the Non Governmental Euromed Platform.
- j. **Solidarity and trade union cooperation.** The trade union organizations of the north and the south, reunited in the Euromed Trade Union Forum, want to reinforce their cooperation and their commitment so that the Euro-Mediterranean relations progress. We will continue to be committed to the economic and social progress, the human rights and democracy. In this sense, we vindicate a consultant status for social agents in the Partnership framework.

## **Guideline document and Working Plan**

### **Demands and Proposals**

Employment and economic and social rights are in the basis of the following proposals, which are structured on three principles:

- a) the main single challenge that the EPC and the European countries have to face jointly in the next few decades is how to guarantee employment of quality both in the North and South of the Mediterranean, as well as the realisation of fundamental social rights for all citizens.
- b) to do so, the creation of employment and improvement of economic and social rights in the EPC must be included as one of the explicit objectives of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, with the subsequent need to take direct action in this area with specific financial resources.
- c) the principle of co-responsibility which lies at the heart of a true Partnership implies the sharing of responsibility between the EU and EPC countries in relation to matters of common interest (and employment and the economic and social situation are beyond a doubt just that). This means that it is essential to find joint solutions and eventually design common strategies and employ shared resources to carry them out.

#### *In the institutional field*

- 1) To convene a large Euro-Mediterranean Conference on Employment in 2006, with the participation of national governments, Euro-Mediterranean and Community institutions, social agents and experts, along the lines proposed by the European Commission for Conferences on Human Rights and Democratisation and on Gender Equality planned for 2006.
- 2) To convene regular Euro-Mediterranean Conferences of Ministers of Labour in order to tackle the question of employment in the region.
- 3) To generalise the creation and operation of "Working Groups on Social Affairs" that should meet on a regular basis within the bilateral Association Councils of the EU and EPC.
- 4) To create stable spaces for dialogue and social concertation at Euro-Mediterranean Partnership level, with the participation of social agents from the EU as well as from the EPC and Euro-Mediterranean institutions.

#### *On procedures*

- 5) To establish mechanisms for the multilateral monitoring and evaluation (surveillance) on a Euro-Mediterranean level of the economic and social situation in general, and particularly of employment.
- 6) To incorporate into all the decision-making and management procedures of Euro-Mediterranean institutions, policies, programmes and actions (Free Trade Areas, MEDA Programmes, Action Plans ...), the systematic and thorough study of its impact on employment and the economic and social situation.

*On the substantial content of Euro-Mediterranean actions and programmes*

- 7) To demand to be fully associated to the present and future initiatives on training and employment.
- 8) To move towards the definition of a Euro-Mediterranean Employment Strategy with specific objectives for each country and the specification of commitments and instruments to achieve them. The objective is to oblige the member countries of the EMP to establish an integrated system of statistics and a system of information, and to carry out a joint analysis of the employment policies.
- 9) To establish institutionalised safeguard and compensation mechanisms in relation to the social consequences of Euro-Mediterranean actions and policies when the established benchmarks indicators exceed certain minimum thresholds.
- 10) Within the framework of the Neighbourhood Action Plans and of the MEDA Programmes, to adopt specific programmes and actions:
  - a. To promote social dialogue and concertation at national level in the EPC;
  - b. To reinforce trade union freedom and effective respect for the autonomy of trade union organisations, as well as Euro-Mediterranean trade union co-operation;
  - c. To encourage worker representation in companies and effective legal protection for workers' representatives;
  - d. To develop actions for ensuring the protection and effectiveness of fundamental rights collected in the core ILO conventions, among them the rights to strike, collective bargaining and social dialogue, specifically through measures which ensure the effectiveness of labour law (labour inspection, etc).

*Specifically on the ENP*

- 11) To give more importance to employment and social rights in the Action Plans. This concern should be expressed in official positions and be reflected in the Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (2007-2014).
- 12) To create formal mechanisms of consultation with social agents which guarantee the effective application of Action Plans in all applicable areas, especially on employment and economic and social rights.

*On trade union Cooperation*

- 13) To invite all the Euro Mediterranean trade union organizations and their structures to coordinate their activities in the region, putting in common the wherewithal available and defining common action programmes in the framework of the Forum. The Trade Union Forum demands the ILO, and particularly ACTRAV, to extend their cooperation to the Forum.