

EUROPEAN UNION



Committee of the Regions

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**111th MEETING OF THE BUREAU
OF THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS**

– 7 OCTOBER 2008 –

ITEM 6

**THE COR AND THE BARCELONA PROCESS: UNION FOR THE
MEDITERRANEAN
setting up of a Euro-Mediterranean Regional and Local Assembly**

Submitted by the secretary-general

FOR DECISION

A strong engagement for local and regional authorities in the Barcelona Process (Union for the Mediterranean)

This document is based on the recent developments in EU external policy adopted by the European Council of 19-20 June 2008¹, the results of the Summit of the Euro-Mediterranean Heads of State and Government in Paris on 13 July 2008 and the Extraordinary European Council of 1 September 2008². It provides a proposal for the setting up within the CoR of a **Euro-Mediterranean Assembly of Local and Regional Authorities** meeting once a year in plenary session, starting from 2009.

The Committee of the Regions acknowledges that local and regional authorities' strong engagement in the Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean would enrich the existing process, providing it with new channels for dialogue between citizens and between communities, thereby addressing the political limits represented by a system of purely intergovernmental cooperation in the Euro-Mediterranean dialogue.

The Euro-Mediterranean Heads of State and Government met in Paris on 13 July 2008 to develop the existing Euro-Mediterranean partnership through the creation of the "Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean". They confirmed that "the new process: Union for the Mediterranean, building on the Barcelona Declaration and its objectives of achieving peace, stability and security, as well as the acquis of the Barcelona Process, is a multilateral partnership aimed at increasing the potential for regional integration and cohesion"³.

In the final declaration, "the Heads of State and Government underscore the importance of the active participation of civil society, local and regional authorities and the private sector in the implementation of the Barcelona process"⁴.

This declaration represents a success resulting from the mobilisation of the Committee of the Regions, and the associations, networks and other actors working in the Euro-Mediterranean field, including the Forum of Local and Regional Authorities of the Mediterranean that took place on 22 and 23 June in Marseille.

The Paris declaration and the recognition of the importance of local and regional authorities create the momentum for the CoR to contribute to the re-launch of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, as stressed by President Sarkozy in a letter to the CoR President as follows: "...the proximity that the local and regional level represents for citizens and regional experience of specific projects certainly help to boost the new momentum of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership established at the Paris summit".

¹ Presidency Conclusions, European Council, Brussels, 19-20 June 2008, 11018/08.

² Presidency Conclusions, Extraordinary European Council, Brussels, 1 September 2008, 12594/08.

³ Cf. Joint Declaration of the Paris Summit for the Mediterranean, Paris, 13 July 2008, p. 8.

⁴ Cf. Joint Declaration of the Paris Summit for the Mediterranean, Paris, 13 July 2008, point 3, p. 9.

By creating an Assembly of Euro-Mediterranean local and regional authorities as part of the Barcelona Process, as already suggested in several opinions on this topic and during recent debates held at external Bureau meetings during the Portuguese and Slovenian presidencies⁵, the CoR could complement the partnership by giving it a territorial dimension, thus ensuring that local and regional authorities are adequately represented and have a say in the main governance of the Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean.

The **Euro-Mediterranean Regional and Local Assembly** shall be a permanent political body representing local and regional authorities, with the goal of being recognised as a consultative body of the Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean. This approach reflects the approach taken by the European Parliament which created the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly (EMPA).

The aim of the Assembly shall be to bring a local and regional dimension to the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and to participate in the political dialogue when the territorial dimension is at stake and the local and regional authorities are involved. In particular, its aim is to:

- raise the awareness of the local and regional authorities and involve them in the governance of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership;
- ensure that local and regional authorities are represented at the Euro-Med Ministerial Conferences and on the constituent bodies of the Barcelona process: Union for the Mediterranean;
- promote local democracy, multi-level governance and decentralised cooperation;
- promote the North-South and South-South dialogue between the local and regional authorities;
- promote, by involving the networks and national, European and the Euro-Mediterranean associations, the exchange of best practice, knowledge transfer and technical experience of specific questions/projects;
- develop and support innovative projects to promote regional integration and cohesion, particularly with regard to spatial planning, sustainable development and urban development.

The Assembly shall, by consensus, adopt reports and resolutions on various aspects of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership and shall make recommendations to the Ministerial Conference and the other constituent bodies of the Barcelona process: Union for the Mediterranean. It shall draw up an annual report on the state of the territorial dimension of the Barcelona process: Union for the Mediterranean.

As for its membership, the Assembly shall comprise an equal number of delegates representing the EU (composed of CoR and associations' members), and delegates representing the southern and eastern Mediterranean partner countries. Direct representation of associations of regional and local authorities shall also be encouraged for the delegates representing the southern and eastern Mediterranean. Delegates shall be appointed for a period of two years. The Assembly shall be chaired

⁵ R/CdR 150/2007 item 8b.

by a co-presidency, representing the EU and the southern and eastern Mediterranean partners, respectively. The inaugural meeting shall take place in May 2009. During this first meeting, the Assembly shall adopt its rules of procedure and elect its co-presidents.

A draft structure of the Assembly is annexed to this document for information, which has been discussed and tentatively agreed with the other partners and stakeholders involved. On 12 September the president of the Committee of the Regions met the ambassadors and representatives of 14 out of 17 of the states of the South and the East of the Mediterranean. During that information meeting the latter undertook to consult their authorities and provide the Committee of the Regions with comments or suggestions where appropriate whilst several of them have already expressed full support for the political initiative taken by the CoR.

PROPOSAL:

Bureau members are asked to decide on the setting up of a consultative "Euro-Mediterranean Regional and Local Assembly" within the CoR, composed of Members of the CoR, and EU representatives of regional and local authorities' associations working in the field of Euro-Mediterranean cooperation, and an equal number of delegates representing regional and local levels from the southern and eastern Mediterranean partners of the Barcelona process: Union for the Mediterranean.

The President is asked to lead negotiations with the relevant actors in order to finalise working methods and the final composition of the Assembly; the Secretary General is asked to provide the necessary administrative support, with a view to holding the Assembly's first plenary session in the first half of 2009.

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APPENDIX

Structure of the Euro-Mediterranean Regional and Local Assembly

Nature

The Euro-Mediterranean Regional and Local Assembly (ARLEM) is a consultative political assembly of local and regional authorities. It aims to become a consultative body of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership and to contribute to the institutional and multi-level governance of the Barcelona process: Union for the Mediterranean.

Objectives

This assembly aims to bring a regional and local dimension to the Barcelona process: Union for the Mediterranean, and to participate in the political dialogue when the territorial dimension is concerned and the local and regional authorities involved. Its purpose is therefore to:

- raise the awareness of the local and regional authorities and involve them in the governance of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership;
- ensure that local and regional authorities are represented at the Euro-Med Ministerial Conferences and on the constituent bodies of the Barcelona process: Union for the Mediterranean;
- promote local democracy, multi-level governance and decentralised cooperation;
- promote the North-South and South-South dialogue between the local and regional authorities;
- promote, by involving the networks and national, European and the Euro-Mediterranean associations, the exchange of best practice, knowledge transfer and technical experience of specific questions/projects;
- develop and support innovative projects to promote regional integration and cohesion, particularly with regard to spatial planning, sustainable development and urban development.

Membership

The 38 EU members shall be apportioned as follows:

- 28 CoR members;
- ten who are regional and local elected representatives from European and international associations involved in Euro-Mediterranean cooperation.

Members from the southern and eastern Mediterranean partner countries shall be appointed in consultation with the governments of the partner countries and in cooperation with the European, international or national associations representing local and regional authorities.

- 38 members from the Barcelona process: Morocco (3), Algeria (3), Tunisia (3), Egypt (3), Jordan (2), Israel (2), Palestinian Authority (2), Lebanon (2), Libya (2), Syria (3), Mauritania (2), Turkey (3), Albania (2), Croatia (2), Bosnia-Herzegovina (2), Montenegro (1) and Monaco (1).

ALTERNATIVE PROPOSAL for the southern and eastern Mediterranean countries:

- *25 members pro rata to the countries' populations: 3: Egypt and Turkey; 2: Morocco, Algeria, Syria, Tunisia; 1: Jordan, Israel, Palestinian Authority, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Albania, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro, Monaco.*

The remaining 13 seats to be divided between local and regional elected representatives from the associations of the southern and eastern Mediterranean countries and international organisations involved in Euro-Mediterranean cooperation.

Competences

The Assembly shall, by consensus, adopt reports and resolutions on various aspects of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership and shall make recommendations to the Ministerial Conference and the other constituent bodies of the Barcelona process: Union for the Mediterranean. It shall draw up an annual report on the state of the territorial dimension of the Barcelona process: Union for the Mediterranean.

The Committee of the Regions shall act as a link between the Assembly and the European institutions with a view to the implementation of the recommendations made.

The decisions of the Assembly shall not be legally binding.

Presidency and Bureau

The Assembly shall be co-chaired by two co-presidents representing the two delegations (the EU delegation and the southern and eastern Mediterranean partners). The co-presidents shall be chosen by consensus.

The EU nominee for co-president shall be the current CoR president.

The Presidency shall be assisted by an eight-member Bureau drawn equally from the two delegations. Their appointment shall be submitted to the Assembly for approval. The Bureau shall be responsible for coordinating the work of the Assembly and for interinstitutional relations.

Organisation of debates

The Assembly shall meet once a year at a place to be determined by the plenary session on the basis of a proposal from the Bureau. The plenary session agenda shall be drawn up by the Bureau and the Euro-Mediterranean associations may add items to it.

The Assembly plenary session shall make provision for the holding of a debate on the state of the Barcelona process: Union for the Mediterranean, to be attended by representatives of the institutions concerned (Council of the Union, European Commission, European Parliament, EMPA). The international and financial institutions and certain NGOs shall be invited to attend the plenary session as observers.

Following the debate on the state of the territorial dimension of the Barcelona process: Union for the Mediterranean, an annual report shall be adopted, along with resolutions and recommendations intended for the Ministerial Conference and the governance bodies of the Barcelona process: Union for the Mediterranean.

Account shall also be taken in the annual political debate of the work of the various Euro-Mediterranean partnership networks and of the conclusions of a thematic meeting devoted to resolving major sectoral problems, including:

- economic development and job creation policies;
- investment in education, training and research;
- damage to natural resources and landscapes, particularly in coastal areas, and protection of the Mediterranean;
- integrated water management;
- local problems in the areas of health and social policies;
- migration policy and intercultural dialogue;
- urban policy;
- demography.

Debates and decision-making procedures

The Assembly shall take its decisions by consensus.
