



**COUNCIL OF  
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

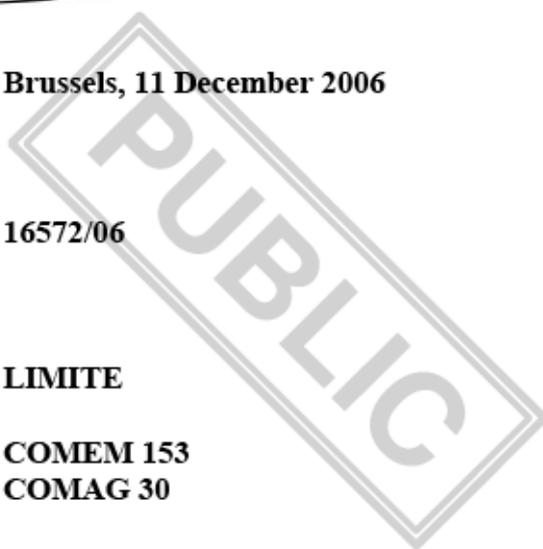
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- Interim Report December 2006

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Further to the mandate given by the European Council at its meeting on 17 and 18 June 2004, the Council has approved the Interim report December 2006 on the European Union's Strategic Partnership with the Mediterranean and the Middle East (see Annex). The Council invites the European Council to take note of the report.

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**THE EUROPEAN UNION'S STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP WITH THE  
MEDITERRANEAN AND THE MIDDLE EAST**  
**Interim Report December 2006**

**1. Introduction**

The Council of the European Union agreed in June 2004 that a report on the implementation of the EU Strategic Partnership with the Mediterranean and the Middle East (EUSPMME) would be presented at the June 2005 European Council and thereafter on a six-monthly basis. The December 2005 European Council, on the basis of the report prepared during the UK Presidency, underlined its commitment to support political, social and economic reform in the Mediterranean and the Middle East. The Council emphasised the importance it attached to full implementation of the EUSPMME.

The primary objective of the EUSPMME is to promote the development, through partnership, of a common zone of peace, prosperity and progress in the Mediterranean and the Middle East.

The principles of the EUSPMME include partnership and dialogue; understanding the different nature of partner countries; working together toward peaceful stabilisation and reconstruction in Iraq; resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict with the understanding that the resolution of the conflict cannot be a precondition for confronting the urgent reform challenges of the EU partner countries, nor vice versa; the primary political concerns for the EU include human rights, democracy, the rule of law, good governance, gender, respect for minorities, co-operation on non-proliferation, counter terrorism, conflict prevention and resolution, and economic development; central role of education for youth, male and female, in creating a knowledge society; promoting understanding between the peoples of the European Union and the Mediterranean and the Middle East, especially through fostering mutual respect for their cultural diversity; offering an opportunity to all partners to move at a pace in accordance with their willingness to engage;

partners progressing a reform-related agenda more quickly should have greater opportunities to avail of the wider benefits of the partnership; building on existing structures; shared security concerns should be tackled in a spirit of partnership, recognising a broad concept of security and finally recognising that the presence in Europe of significant populations with origins in the partner countries is an important factor in the relations.

The EU continues to be committed to achieving a just, comprehensive and lasting solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict consistent with the terms of reference of the Madrid Conference and its principles, including land for peace and based on the relevant UNSC resolutions and the Road Map. The EU takes note of the importance of recent regional developments and initiatives and calls for the reinvigoration of efforts to promote progress in the Middle East Peace Process on all its tracks. The Ministers participating in the 8th Euro-Mediterranean Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Tampere on 27 - 28 November 2006 welcomed the positive role played by the EU in the Middle East, particularly during the latest escalation in the region. They also encouraged the parties to continue on the path of direct dialogue and negotiation in the fulfilment of the vision of two states, a safe and secure Israel and a viable, sovereign and democratic Palestine, living side by side in peace and security. Final status issues, including border issues, have to be agreed by the two parties.

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The analysis is based on reports by EU Heads of Mission as well as other EU sources of information such as the ENP, Association Councils, Committees, sub-committees and Barcelona process reporting.

The report is divided into two main sections: the Mediterranean region and the countries east of Jordan.

## **2. The Mediterranean region**

### **2.1. Introduction**

The EU has a number of instruments available for its relations with the Mediterranean and the Middle East. The Barcelona process, complemented by the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), provides the central multilateral as well as country-by-country framework for relations with the Mediterranean countries. It allows for both a multilateral and a country by country approach, tailoring the EU's relations to specific concerns regarding individual countries, to the countries' needs and interests and to progress made.

### **2.2. State of Play**

One year after the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Summit of the Barcelona Process, significant steps have been taken in bringing the process forward by starting the implementation of the 5-year work programme that was adopted at the Summit. In 2006, the key achievements included the following:

Strengthening of co-ownership and co-operation: The Ministers participating in the 8<sup>th</sup> Euro-Mediterranean Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Tampere on 27 - 28 November 2006 reaffirmed their commitment to the objectives of the Process, reviewed the progress made and adopted the Euro-Mediterranean Work Plan for the year 2007. The Ministers agreed to hold a regular Meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs at the end of each year in order to strengthen the partnership. The Meetings will, i.a., aim at agreeing on the priorities of the Work Plan for the following year.

Promotion of human rights, democracy, gender equality and strengthening of civil society: During 2006, many events took place to strengthen co-operation in the fields of human rights, democracy, gender equality and civil society. Those included the Second Ordinary Plenary Session of the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly (Brussels, 26-27 March), Joint Senior Officials and EuroMeSCo Colloquium on Cultural Diversity and Fundamental Rights (Tampere, 20-22 July), EuroMed Annual Conference: Paths to Democracy and Inclusion within Diversity (Istanbul, 5-7 October), the Civil Forum (Marrakech, 4-7 November), the EuroMesco sub-regional seminar on civil society, human rights and democracy (Meknes, 21 -23 September) and the first Ministerial Conference on Strengthening the Role of Women in the Society (Istanbul, 14-15 November).

Implementation of the Code of Conduct on Countering Terrorism began.: To support the implementation of the Code of Conduct, the EuroMed Ministers of Foreign Affairs agreed in Tampere to hold in 2007 a Euro-Mediterranean seminar on the role of the media in preventing incitement to terrorism through effective and professional communications. They also agreed to hold in 2007 a regional Euro-Mediterranean seminar on ensuring respect for human rights in the fight against terrorism in accordance with international law.

Intercultural dialogue continued to be a priority. The EuroMed Ministers of Foreign Affairs reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening the dialogue between cultures, including through the work of the Anna Lindh Foundation. The Foundation was invited to contribute to the preparations of the '2008 EU Year of Intercultural Dialogue'. The Ministers also agreed to intensify the action against racism and xenophobia and to promote a culture of dialogue in a spirit of respect and freedom of religious and other beliefs, rejecting extremist views which attempt to divide Euro-Mediterranean peoples and incite violence or hatred. Other areas of priority included strengthening of youth exchanges, including the launching of a scholarship scheme for the academic year 2007-2008, and the possible creation of a EuroMed Youth Parliament. Furthermore, the Ministers invited EuroMed Ministers of Culture to hold a meeting to discuss the Barcelona Process intercultural agenda, examine the results of work during the first three years of the Anna Lindh Foundation and consider how to co-operate with other initiatives such as the follow-up to the adoption of the UNESCO Convention on the protection and promotion of the diversity of cultural expressions and the Alliance of Civilisations.

Strengthening of co-operation in higher education and research: The signing of the Constitution of the EuroMed Permanent University Forum at the EuroMed University Rectors' Conference in Tampere in October 2006 was a significant step forward in strengthening co-operation in the fields of higher education and research. The Ministers for Foreign Affairs decided to invite competent authorities to convene a Ministerial Conference on Higher Education and Research in 2007. The Conference would examine higher education and research cooperation and standards of university education. It would also support the efforts of all countries in the region to meet the Millennium Development Goals in the areas of education, vocational training and of gender equality, given the importance of human development and knowledge-based societies to modernisation.

Co-operating in the field of migration:

- The Europe-Africa Regional Conference on Migration and Development was held in Rabat in July 2006, and resulted in the Rabat Declaration, in which representatives of European, West and North African countries committed to creating a close partnership between the countries of origin, transit and destination in order to control migratory flows and to prevent illegal migration.
- Libya hosted an EU-Africa Ministerial Conference on Migration and Development on 22-23 November, 2006. The participants signed a declaration committing themselves to cooperate on a range of concrete steps to tackle the challenges of illegal migration, migration and development and refugee protection, working closely with third countries and international organisations. The Conference also adopted the Ouagadougou Action Plan to combat Trafficking in Human Beings, especially women and children.
- These two conferences enabled the EU and Africa to come together at ministerial level to agree to work together in a spirit of partnership to manage migration between Africa and Europe more effectively.
- Also the EuroMed 5-year Work Programme foresees the holding of a ministerial meeting on all issues pertinent to migration. In this regard, the EU and the Mediterranean partners have prepared the ground for a concrete cooperation framework within the EuroMed Partnership on all migration issues by holding two expert meetings (June and October 2006) conducive to a possible Ministerial meeting in 2007. The work has been focused on three themes: legal migration, migration and development, as well as the fight against illegal migration and trafficking in human beings.

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Further experts meetings will take place as necessary in the first half of 2007.

- The work of the FRONTEX agency and the exploration of a Mediterranean Coastal Patrols Network involving all relevant members of the EuroMed Partnership remain important issues, as does the need to develop cooperation in social integration, justice and security issues as agreed at the Barcelona Summit.

Bringing forward economic & trade co-operation:

- The Trade Ministers' Conference, held in Marrakech on 24 March 2006, reiterated the commitment to achieving a Euro-Mediterranean free trade area by 2010 through progressive liberalisation of trade in services and right of establishment, liberalisation of trade in agriculture, processed agricultural and fisheries products, strengthening of regulatory convergence, and establishing a dispute settlement mechanism in the area of trade.
- The Conference of Ministers of Economy and Finance in Tunis on 25-26 June 2006 welcomed the considerable progress made in the Mediterranean countries in improving the business climate and reiterated the need to continue along the same road. There is a critical need to improve access to credit, contract enforcement and investor protection, labour market rigidities and procedures to start business.
- Furthermore, Conference of Ministers for Industry held in Rhodes on 21-22 September 2006 stressed the need to reinforce cooperation on competitiveness, market access, innovation, textiles & clothing sector and investment, underlined the importance in tackling non-tariff barriers to trade and agreed to step up efforts to accelerate regulatory convergence. Further progress in the implementation of the Euro-Mediterranean Charter for the Enterprise was encouraged and the EU's Competition and Innovation Programme (CIP) was opened also to the Mediterranean partner countries.

Supporting sustainable development: The Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on Environment, held in Cairo on 20 November 2006, adopted the timetable which sets out the steps for implementing "Horizon 2020", the Mediterranean de-pollution initiative and underlined the importance of mainstreaming environmental concerns into other relevant sectors in order to contribute to the development of sustainable production and consumption across the region.

MEPP: The EU has reiterated the necessity of a political perspective and reinvigorating the Middle East Peace Process through re-launching negotiations. To support the objective of a future independent, democratic and viable Palestinian state based on the rule of law, the EU has continued to actively work, also within the Quartet, to get the Middle East Peace Process urgently back on track in order to make progress towards a comprehensive settlement and a two-state solution on the basis of the Roadmap, relevant UNSC resolutions and the commitments made at Sharm el-Sheikh in 2005. The EU is committed to help the Palestinian people and continues its considerable assistance, also via the Temporary International Mechanism. The EU also continues its missions in the area, EU BAM Rafah and EUPOL COPPS, and supports efforts in the implementation of the Movement and Access Agreement.

#### Implementation of Association Agreements/European Neighbourhood Policy :

The Barcelona Process and the European Neighbourhood Policy have advanced during 2006. The EU has been monitoring the implementation of the existing ENP Action Plans with partner countries in the framework of the Association Councils, Association Committees and sub-committees. The following meetings took place in 2006:

- Association Councils with Lebanon on 11 April and Algeria on 16 May (first Association Council after both Association Agreements entered into force), Israel and Egypt on 13 June and Jordan on 14 November;
- An enhanced political dialogue with Morocco is scheduled for 14 December;
- Several sectoral sub-committees with Morocco, Tunisia, Jordan and Israel have taken place. The EU-Israel Association Committee met on 17 May, the EU-Jordan Association Committee on 28 June and the EU-Morocco Association Committee on 17 November. The first meeting of the Moroccan sub-committee for Human rights, democratisation and governance took place on 16 November.

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The Commission issued the ENP Communication and progress reports on 4 December

It is crucial that the EU's funding to the Mediterranean from 2007 through the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument is targeted to support the achievement of objectives set in the European Neighbourhood Policy Action Plans and the EuroMed Summit Five-Year Work Plan. To this end, in addition to bilateral envelopes for assistance, the EU will establish a substantial Governance Facility to support willing Mediterranean partners in carrying out their reforms.

#### Observer countries

##### Libya

Libya is currently an observer of the EuroMed Partnership. In line with the October 2004 GAERC conclusions, the EU recognises the importance of a policy of engagement with Libya.

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### Mauritania

Mauritania witnessed a coup d'etat in August 2005. The coup took place without any violence. Mauritania is now ruled by a 17-member Military Council, which has installed a transitional government to oversee the return to democracy. The Council has promised free and fair elections for this and next year. A new constitution was approved by a large majority in June 2006. The first round of parliamentary elections were held on 19 November and the second round on 3 December, 2006. Presidential elections are scheduled for March 2007. Following the coup, the EU began consultations with Mauritania under article 96 of the Cotonou Agreement in late 2005. **DELETED**

### 2.3. The role of the EUSPMME in supporting reforms

The EUSPMME principles of action as defined in June 2004 are the guiding principles of co-operation within this initiative. Most of them were already part of the Barcelona Process and are included in the country-specific ENP Action Plans. The challenge remains, however, how the EU could deepen dialogue on issues of concern with those countries that are not full members of the Barcelona Process or ENP partners.

## **3. Countries east of Jordan**

### 3.1. Introduction

Implementation of the EUSPMME has been more challenging in the countries east of Jordan than in the Mediterranean region. The EU has a less visible role and presence in some of the countries east of Jordan than in the Mediterranean region although some co-operation and dialogue mechanisms are available. **DELETED**

### 3.2. State of play

#### Gulf Co-operation Council

Co-operation with the GCC countries has focused on economic and commercial co-operation, as well as on political dialogue.

The EU-GCC Free Trade Agreement (FTA) negotiations continued in 2006. **DELETED**

## Iraq

The Iraqi government is committed to bringing forward and implementing political, social and economic reforms. **DELETED**

The Iraqi government has expressed the wish for a closer co-operation with the EU on key reform areas. The EU has supported political and economic transition in Iraq, also with considerable financial assistance. Negotiations have recently started on a Trade and Co-operation Agreement.

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## Iran

The EU reiterates that the evolution of a long-term relationship between Iran and Europe will depend on action by Iran to address effectively all the EU's areas of concern **DELETED**

## Yemen

**DELETED** The Yemeni government is interested in closer relations with the EU and has also shown commitment to political, social and economic reform. The September 2006 elections, to which the EU deployed an election observation mission, represented another step in this direction.

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3.3. The EUSPMME's role in supporting the countries' reform efforts

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#### **4. Conclusions**

4.1. In the Mediterranean Region most of the EUSPMME principles were already part of the Barcelona Process and are included in the ENP Action Plans. **DELETED**

4.2. **DELETED**

4.3. **DELETED**

4.4. There is room for strengthening dialogue with the United Nations, the G8 and other relevant actors in supporting the developments of the countries concerned. This should be done on a country-by country basis, recognising that there is no "one size fits all" solution in supporting the countries' reform agendas.

4.5. The EU has made good progress in enhancing its relations with the countries of the Mediterranean and the Middle East. It is important that the 2007 - 2013 Financial Perspective supports the objectives of the EU in the relevant countries.

4.6. The implementation of the EUSPMME and especially its reform priorities in the political, economic and social fields is a long-term process that requires strong political will and constant commitment of the partners. **DELETED**

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