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It is great honour and pleasure to attend this hearing of the Commission on Security and Co-operation in Europe and to share views on how we can work together in order to make the Mediterranean Partnership of the OSCE even more effective by enhancing its bright potentials and fostering the ties between the organization and our common Mediterranean neighbourhood. In this regard, Greece as an OSCE Participating States of the Mediterranean attaches great importance to the strengthening of relations with our Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation and to the promotion of their engagement with OSCE activities and mechanisms.

My appointment is underlining the strong will of the Greek chairmanship to further upgrade these ties as it acknowledges the strategic importance of the region for the Euro-Atlantic security. I would like thus to share some reflections and to present some ideas to be thought upon by the partners anchoring our contribution on the triptych of Synergy, Symmetry and Strategy.

Our times are marked by the most profound technical revolution in global communications which transcends national and cultural boundaries. At the level of the common people, television soaps from Hollywood, Bombay and South America are beamed into every home and followed with passionately. International patterns of mass consumption with global brand names have become symbolic. Market oriented reforms and improvements in the business and investment climate are facilitating these changes.

In the MENA region the role of market forces and the private sector in the economy is expanding. Governments are privatizing state-owned corporations in the banking, telecommunications, and utilities sectors. Foreign participation is on the rise, and public-private partnerships with foreign companies are becoming more common. Trade systems are opening and restrictions on foreign exchange transactions are being eased. In financial markets, legislative, supervisory, regulatory, and payments system frameworks are being modernized. Laws relating to labour practices, foreign investment, corporate governance, and transparency are being updated.

Moreover, in response to these changes, development indicators are beginning to improve. Extreme poverty (people living on less than \$1 a day) fell by 20 percent between 2002 and 2004. Over the past 15 years, life expectancy has increased from 64 to 70 years, while the total fertility rate has fallen by 1.8 births per woman, the largest decline of any region in the world.

Nearly 90 percent of children completed primary education in 2005, up from 77 percent in 1990. About 90 percent of the population now has access to electricity and improved water sources.

At the technical and institutional levels the Internet is conquering ever more frontiers: even repressive and isolationist regimes are looking into ways of participating with controls. Additionally the enormous explosion in tourism, travel, commerce, international media and the translation/publishing industries arrive at impressive cross-cultural transactions and mixes. Side by side with this cultural globalization, we have the most xenophobic and intolerant manifestations of narrow-minded nationalisms and religious revivals

According to a study by the Joint Project of The Dubai School of Government & The Wolfensohn Center for Development at Brookings “the economic revival between 2002 and 2008 had a positive impact on job creation in many Middle Eastern countries. In Egypt, Morocco and Jordan, for example, total unemployment rates were reduced between 3 and 6 percent over this period. In many cases, however, job creation has favored older and more established workers or, in some cases, migrant laborers over young, new workers. In Jordan, for example, of the 55,000 additional jobs created annually between 2001 and 2007, 63 percent went to expatriate workers. In turn, labor market prospects for young people remained depressed, wherein young people in several countries within the region reported a sense of weakening employment prospects.

The same study points out that the situation seems more complicated more so since education is not a guarantee against unemployment in the Middle East—in fact, unemployment rates in some countries are highest among those youth with relatively high levels of educational attainment. In Egypt the unemployment of university graduates reaches 25 % whereas among illiterates and those of intermediate education is 5 and 10% respectively. The same more or less tendencies can be traced in Jordan and Lebanon. Furthermore, employment prospects for youth in urban areas remain particularly bleak. Nearly 76 percent of unemployed Moroccan youth live in urban areas. Urban unemployment nearly doubled between 1982 and 2000, rising from 12 to 22 percent. In 2007, this rate dropped down to 15 percent; however, it was still nearly four times higher than the rural unemployment rate.?

Around 60-70% of the youth in Egypt, Jordan thought this is a bad time for seeking a job in the MENA region and perhaps this is the beginning of thinking of migration as a serious alternative. In both banks of the Mediterranean, mass higher education produces, instead of conditions of prosperity, a proletarianized, impoverished intelligentsia, deprived and resentful, directing its 're-sentiment' against the elites as well as the 'other', in the face of the migrant or the 'different', which is seen as the agent of cultural invasion.

The most startling effect of mass education and information is the collapse of earlier hierarchical notions of religious authority based on claims to the mastery of fixed bodies of religious texts, even in countries with state appointed religious authorities. No one group or type of leader in contemporary societies possesses a monopoly on the management of the sacred. This diversification and absence of homogeneous religious discourse disputes theories of civilization clashes and stories about “civilisational bloody frontiers”. The erosion of

traditional religious authorities allows a wider debate on religion and science, democracy, modernity, gender, religious and ideological tolerance. The same absence of authority gives, however, the opportunity to radical and terrorist networks, personalities and institutions to hijack religious discourse and falsely undertake the role of champion of the true believers around the world.

Mediterranean societies have been shaped, to a large extent, by a complex cultural and social texture created by the combination of elements of modernity and tradition. Moreover, identities in the Mediterranean have been, and are being, shaped through the construction of separate bodies of knowledge in the legal, educational, religious, political, economic and other scientific fields.

An intercultural dialogue would thus be brave enough to discuss recent changes in the make-up, activity and the strategies of resurgent religious movements in the Islam. It should tackle the role of migration communities in shaping an intercultural dialogue in the Mediterranean and all over the world. Such a dialogue should cope with the new process of pluralism and multiculturalism emerging in the great cities of Europe and should explore the dynamic interaction between conflict and co-existence in multi-cultural cities in the Mediterranean and Europe. It should, last but not least, cover the role of established religious institutions, education mechanisms, history narrative and mass media in progressing an intercultural dialogue in the Mediterranean.

There is great importance in the role of press and mass media in supporting mutual understanding, the role of non-state actors in shaping ideological visions that affect state policies in the region. The media have a serious impact on how ethnic, national identities and social patterns influence regional co-operation in the Mediterranean and, hence they can be most useful tools and means to reconcile these identities and patterns with an all-inclusive Mediterranean vision.

Moreover, the means of information technology and wired society combined with mass education are capable of involving Mediterranean people in the discourse and debate about the role of state and non-state actors and thus create the institutional and legal prerequisites for the development of an open and interacting Mediterranean Civil Society.

The role of Gender in the development of such a Civil Society and intercultural Dialogue is indispensable. Especially, the role of women as primary socialisers for youths and children, and the importance of women participation and activism in walks of life. Women empowerment can not only increase the households' income but it can become a remedy for social dislocation and a most useful tool for equitable growth and social cohesion. It should not and could not, however, come as an imported potted recipe from other parts of the world but it should be home grown based on genuine social forces and the rich cultural tradition of the area.

Last but not least the Arab-Israeli conflict and especially the Israeli-Palestinian track influences the Mediterranean Partnership of the OSCE a great deal. OSCE framework could not, of course, solve these issues but it could exploit the momentum given by the initiatives of

the new US leadership in order to expand the model of Helsinki, to expand a culture of dialogue, tolerance, comprehension and human rights, despite essential political differences. At this particular juncture expanding membership is not simply to add new countries but to expand a paradigm of confidence building and conflict resolution. Now it is more necessary than never.

Summarising the basic principles and guidelines running through all recent discussions and papers we can discern three main principles or arrows

- Flexibility
- Visibility
- Tangible results

Flexibility

It is beyond any doubt that flexibility is increasing effectiveness, overcoming sensitivities and various practical obstacles. It has been a well taken point in both the Egyptian and the Moroccan paper that we can concentrate in fewer items. In doing so, there can be a choice of issues that combine more than one dimension allowing for certain synergies and inter-linkages. For example, integrated water management as regional CSBMs, which combines environment and security. Another example given by the vision paper of Morocco might be migrants as cultural bridge, combining the human dimension with economy and security. Greece and personally H. E. the Foreign Minister Mrs. Bakoyannis has worked very effectively on Women Empowerment through local and regional entrepreneurship in the Mediterranean and the Middle East, an issue that combines human dimension and economy. We can also review the format of the Conference as far the Civil Society representatives is concerned by allowing Young Leaders of the Med partners to participate without on the other hand diminishing the importance of the Conference which upgrades the partnership In the eyes and functions of the OSCE.

Visibility

It is important to increase the visibility of the OSCE Med partnership in the societies of the partners. Research Institutions networking is an excellent idea. We also believe that Young Leaders Forum would also provide the Partnership with a reservoir of prominent young people in all walks of life who can promote OSCE Mediterranean Partnership values and aims in their countries and regions. Moreover, both low key and high level events, including the Mediterranean Partnership Conference, should take place in the countries of the Mediterranean Partnership so as both the state officials and the societies to become accustomed to the OSCE vision and aims and the added value of being member of this Partnership.

Tangible results

Concentration on certain issues and cross-dimension items can produce recommendations and results which might lead to micro-projects funded partly by the fund and partly by the Mediterranean Governments aiming to promoting the findings of the Conference in the

Mediterranean societies as well as in the OSCE member-states societies and thus uphold a high level of awareness on issues such as CSBMs, environment, tolerance, migration, women empowerment etc. It is going without saying that the decisions and the discussions of the Conference and of the Mediterranean Partnership in general should be reported to the PC and become an item of serious consideration in the OSCE in the formulation of policy guidelines and strategies.

Last I would like to share a personal reflection. Our Mediterranean Basin can provide us with materials of dual use. We can use them to erect walls of division but we can with same materials build bridges of understanding. We all opt for the latter.