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H. E. Ambassador
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*European Union – Middle East:
Developing Societies
for Peace*

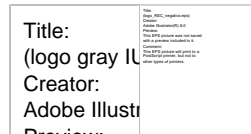
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Distinguished Lecture

by **Ambassador Miguel Ángel Moratinos Cayaubé**
(European Union Special Envoy for the Middle East Peace Process)

European Union - Middle East: Developing Societies for Peace

Badia Fiesolana
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LECTURE

by

Ambassador Miguel Ángel Moratinos Cayaubé,
European Union Special Envoy
for the Middle East Peace Process

European Union - Middle East: Developing Societies for Peace

Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all, I would like to express my gratitude to the European Institute, particularly to its President Mr Masterson, and to the organisers of this conference, the Program of Mediterranean Studies of the Institute, and especially to its Director, Mr Yves Meny, and to Mr Imco Brower, for this invitation to address the first activity of the Program in an institution widely respected and admired. I do not need a very strong alibi to come to this marvellous city, but I could not easily find a better one to do it with great pleasure.

Imagine I had a dream, in which I was Alphonse Lamartine, who spent three years as a diplomat in Florence from 1825 to 1828. He called it “the Athens of the Middle Ages”. He was the first to fight against - what he considered - the loss of influence of the Old Europe in favour of the American continent. His advice to his Minister in Paris was to look more to the South, as Florence is “un bon poste d’observation de tout ce qui se passe en Méditerranée”. I am sure that the European Institute today has built on this heritage, and with its program on Mediterranean studies is following Lamartine’s advice.

INTRODUCTION

My lecture today is related not only to the whole Mediterranean, but also to its Eastern shores and beyond – to the Middle East - and here specifically focuses not only on the policies and actions of the governments, but more on what we call today the civil society.

Let me start by saying that for the first time in history of the twentieth centuries, a peaceful Middle East is at the horizon. The countries of the region, with the support of the international community, are trying to put an end to years

of violence and to overcome the injuries of five wars, five decades of confrontation and more than sixty peace plans.

The catalyst of this effort in favour of peace is, the Middle East Peace Process. This trademark, used by politicians, officials and the media refers to the set of negotiations and agreements, which have been developed, and the ones, which are or will be carried out under the aegis of the Madrid Conference in 1991. It is almost ten years now since this international gathering took place, and many crucial achievements have been reached.

As the European Union Special Envoy to the MEPP, I understood this Process, from the very day I took over, as something more ample and rich. I have always considered that the political dialogue will not, by itself, bring peace automatically to the region. An enormous work should be done in the social realm if we wanted to effectively support the talks and to be able to implement the future treaties in a spirit of real reconciliation.

Today, I would like to talk about my vision of how societies should tackle historic challenges, and about how Europe has considered it could be useful in this regard and its hope to be useful in the future. This is an open Process, so feel free to make any suggestion or ask any question during our dialogue after the lecture. All in all, it is always through exchange of ideas that the best concepts and proposals are developed.

In the Middle East today, it seems easy to think of peace, although just short time ago we were confronted with a situation of extreme violence during the “intifada” years and the continuous war of attrition in Lebanon. Not long ago, five consecutive wars during half a century marked different generations of Arabs and Israelis, with a huge impact in the international relations.

But we all know that Peace is not easy, and even less the conclusion of treaties. These are difficult because the reality is extremely complex. Doubtless, the ensemble of treaties constitutes a first and fundamental step in the building of peace. However, it can often prove an easy step when compared to the task of a real settlement between societies.

Treaties are intended to regulate the relations and provide basic and balanced solutions –sometimes being ambiguous- for most of the problems of the Middle East. However, it goes without saying that these accords will not, by themselves, bring the reconciliation of the peoples. This is, in my opinion, and in the opinion of the EU, the key factor for peace. Therefore our policies are not only aimed to assist the parties and the US as main broker of some of these

agreements, but rather at the titanic effort of creating a credible environment for the implementation and the endorsement by the societies.

This task cannot wait until all pending treaties will be signed. Since 1991 –and even before- the Union considered it essential to start developing these policies.

We are talking about a comprehensive, just and lasting peace. Many ingredients will be necessary, but one above all: real compromise between societies. Peace must be comprehensive, including all countries but also all sectors of societies; it must be just to all actors, including minorities and tendencies in each society, and thus it will be lasting.

We do not want to impose models or to be prescriptive. Let us say very clearly that it is our will to support these societies in their unequivocal search for peace. We have been asked to contribute and we have responded. There is a huge demand in the region for more European involvement and more ideas and experiences about a our model that they see as successful and which most of the regional actors find inspiring for the future evolution of the Middle East.

But, before entering in this debate, maybe some of you will think that, in the kaleidoscopic Europe of today, there is no such European paradigm. For someone like me, always attentive to social movements and evolution, this is indeed a very interesting debate, perhaps one of the most interesting when analysing the topic of the “European model for the Middle East”. We are tackling the issue of helping societies to prepare themselves for real peace following a European Model, but can we talk of such a European model?

Two parallel debates about models of societies are in place, both in Europe and the Middle East.

In Europe, we can see two different social archetypes and none prevails over the other: the society of information with its *solitaire* internet navigators, versus the society of *solidarity*, open to the problems of the third world, the society of stock options and market brokers and the one of Non Governmental Organisations and volunteers. Nonetheless, to my opinion these are not social models, but the manifestation –a sort of social richness- that reflects a profound social model of tolerance and acceptance of the differences. I think that we have developed a basic and sound structure, the welfare state, which is today accepted by all political options.

In philosophical terms, the French thinker Alain Renault has expressed it in his interesting work “The future of the ethic”. An idea which fits well in my vision of today’s successful Europe: in our modern democracies, a new relationship has been established with the world of philosophical values, based on the modern definition of individual subjectivity as awareness and will. But, at the same time, the ethic of discussion, dialogue and exchange is still, to some extent, prevailing, and the balance is today established between a healthy individualism –which explains the social differences- and this ethic of discussion provides social values, valid to most of the members of a society.

Expressed in other words: this balance between individualism and social ethics or principles is what permits us to talk about a “European model” of political and social tolerance.

This view can also explain the strong reaction of concern throughout Europe after the Austrian Government included amongst its members some politicians of a far right party. Tolerance is accepted up to a certain limit: when something threatens this social peace, all sectors react.

Very probable, this is what the people of the Middle East, living in very complex societies and lacking a common code, find attractive and inspiring. They are interested not only in the European institutional or constitutional model, but also in today’s social development of solidarity and responsibility.

In the Middle East the social debate mirrors the stance towards peace. In the last fifty years different models have been competing in all countries of the region: minority groups, willing to promote peaceful relations and understanding with neighbours, versus hostile and inward looking ones. After years in which official language of animosity could coincide with initiatives emanating from the civil society in search of regional peace, it has now become obvious that all governments of the region accepted to establish peace through negotiations.

As a matter of fact, the Peace Process has permitted many visionaries to develop initiatives even before peace agreements have been signed.

The Union has been supporting the most important proposals and projects focusing on co-operation and reconciliation. The principle is obvious: peace agreements by themselves are not a guarantee for peace. European history is a good example. On the contrary, the experience of the European Union as the maturation of a new society embodying former enemies, in which a network of solidarity and common interest has developed, inspired many projects and proposals for the region. They have given the civil societies the strength and self-confidence it needed to oppose politicians not willing to go forward. We

could offer many examples of how civil societies have taken the leadership on the way to peace. When societies are convinced that peace and co-operation are the only desirable models, they will not allow governments to oppose this view.

Building on these ideas, the EU has developed an ad hoc strategy for the region, parallel to the wider project of the Barcelona Process. It includes the basic terms of reference for us, and is the only important agreement subscribed to by all governments of the region. It has been an umbrella for the specific Middle East strategy to prepare societies for peace.

Having all that in mind, I would like to focus my intervention today on some of the main elements of the EU strategy to assist the Middle East societies in their quest for peace and how these interact with my work as Special Envoy.

- First of all, I will dwell on the current efforts in the two bilateral negotiations tracks: Palestinian-Israeli and Syrian-Lebanese-Israeli negotiations, which need particular EU involvement in order to advance and consolidate their gradual progress.
- Second, I will address several initiatives that have to be promoted in parallel even before the end of the negotiations. I will refer to two international and regional strategies in which the European Union, aware its capabilities to develop co-operation between civil societies, has taken a leading role: the People to People projects and the Multilateral track.
- Third, a majority of the analysts have expressed the belief that the likely outcome of the Israeli/Palestinian negotiations will be a Palestinian state. However, Palestinian statehood needs some preparation and that is what is driving our efforts on strengthening Palestinian institutions. This might serve as one of the best examples on how the EU can assist the civil society to embrace the cause of peace.
- Fourth, I will give some thought to two new modern concepts on security and economic co-operation that will facilitate a better handling of the Peace Process.
- Finally, I would like to say a few words about the future. The EU vision for a new post-peace Middle East.

THE CURRENT EFFORTS IN THE BILATERAL TRACKS

My own work as EU Special Envoy to the MEPP mirrors our will to develop a comprehensive policy that equally addresses the negotiations as well as the effort to improve the overall environment surrounding the Peace Process.

On the *Syrian Track*, we received encouragement at the end of the last year, when the resumption of talks was announced. We had worked very hard on this track, especially during the time in which the public contacts between both governments were simply non-existent. Our priority then was to avoid an escalation between both sides, to prevent a deterioration of the situation and to work for a possible –albeit almost impossible by that time- peace agreement. Unfortunately, the contacts started last year, were interrupted after two rounds without entering really into substantial issues.

Since the decision to break off negotiations, we have been shuttling very actively between Israel and Syria. Both the atmospherics and the nature of the issues to be negotiate required increased effort. The summit between President Clinton and President Assad is good news. We hope that all the work the Americans and the Europeans have invested will bear fruit.

In this context allow me a word on the importance of atmospherics. Public statements, violence, controversial high level decisions, contradictions, etc, have a perverse effect not only in the prospects of two governments engaging in peace talks, but also in the public opinions that have to support and implement the result of the official talks. During the last weeks we have tried hard to minimise misunderstanding and misinterpretations by both governments.

In terms of substance, I believe that both sides can bridge their differences. The EU has felt throughout this specific process that it has a special responsibility. Subsequently, we will contribute to the political negotiations to come and will prepare ourselves to consolidate the would-be peace deal between Syria and Israel.

On the *Palestinian Track*, after some months of stalemate, we have recently seen progress. Three meetings between President Arafat and Prime Minister Barak reinvigorated their relations. Today both parties are negotiating in Washington. We have also put a lot of work and persuasion to help both sides overcome their disagreements. We have offered ideas and an intense diplomatic activity.

This week negotiations started on the third redeployment and a framework agreement that is due to pave the way for a final and comprehensive agreement on Permanent Status issues by next September. It is a historic, and hence

extremely complex task. The first rounds of talks, featured by tactical moves by both sides, showed how intricate the exercise could be. We are working closely with both negotiation teams in order to provide ideas and exchange views.

Besides our permanent presence in the region to assist the parties in their efforts, we have created, under the structure of my team, two Task Forces on refugees and water. They are not addressing the negotiations directly, although they have become excellent fora for discussion and dialogue between the fifteen - an informal “think tank” for the Peace Process.

PEOPLE TO PEOPLE PROJECTS

The People-to-People programmes on permanent status issues supports activities undertaken by civil society organisations that primarily come from the countries participating in the Middle East Peace Process. These activities are intended to encourage civil society co-operation in different sectors, and progress on the issues connected to the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations. These activities have positively influenced the peace process by strengthening the peace movements in the countries involved, eventually encouraging their leadership to adopt more pro-peace policies.

The concept of People-to-People (PTP) contacts is rooted in the European post-war- experiences as an essential element for developing peace between nations who were at war. This concept has also been included in the 1993 Oslo accords between Palestinians and Israelis. A sizeable number of meetings and dialogue projects between Palestinian and Israeli NGOs have been supported in recent years under the conflict-resolution component of the MEDA Democracy Programme. The objective is to satisfy the increasing demand for such activities that focus on core issues as human rights and democracy. Therefore, the European Union decided to set up a separate PTP programme.

Subsequently, more than 90 Israeli, Palestinian and regional NGOs have articulated their interest in the current program. Out of these, 17 projects are already under way. The most visual one is the Athens dialogue, where members of the Knesset and the Palestinian Council gather to promote a better coexistence.

THE MULTILATERAL TRACK

South – South co-operation is a priority of the Community's foreign policy. In this context, sub-regional co-operation in the southeastern Mediterranean, i.e. among the core countries of the Middle East peace process, is of particular relevance. Such co-operation will be crucial to consolidate and sustain the peace

agreements. The MEPP, as it was conceived in the Madrid Conference in 1991, is shaped along two levels: the bilateral tracks (Israeli-Palestinian, Israeli-Syrian, etc) and the multilateral tracks.

The multilateral track is the framework to foster regional co-operation. Five working groups were established, dealing with regional issues such as economic co-operation (REDWG), water resources, refugees, environment and arms control and regional security.

The European Union has supported many activities in all five working groups with the aim of preparing the future of the region – a post-peace future. Areas addressed relate to:

- Civil Society Co-operation
- Water Infrastructure (Regional Data Banks, Projects in the Jordan-Israeli Peace Treaty, etc)
- Regional Development in the Gulf of Aqaba and the Southeast Mediterranean
- Transport and Energy Infrastructure
- Regional Veterinary Co-operation
- REDWG (the Regional Economic and Development Working Group) Secretariat

Progress in all these areas –except in transport- has been maintained, although more slowly than originally planned, due to the political difficulties that have affected the Process over the past years.

The late nineties were featured by difficulties and reinterpretations of the Israeli commitments, together with violence and mutual reprehension. All this resulted in a stalemate of the Process. In 1997 the Arab League decided to halt all co-operation with Israel. The five multilateral working groups left largely dormant. The same happened to many of the regional projects started within the framework of the multilateral peace talks. The European Union –and especially my team- has played an essential role in revitalising the Multilateral track. Together with the Russian government the EU has been instrumental to a ministerial level meeting in Moscow early February that brought this mechanism back on track. We are also working towards adapting the Multilaterals to the current and future challenges. The co-chairs and regional parties have agreed

that the European Union should play a leading role in defining the new priorities and reshaping of structures.

Regional Economic Development Working Group (REDWG)

Let me explain in some detail the objectives and work of REDWG, which is the most relevant contribution of the Union to the Multilateral track.

The EU acts as chair or "gavel holder" of the REDWG. The Monitoring Committee of the REDWG, consisting of the four regional Core Parties and the EU, established in 1995 a permanent Secretariat in Amman.

The intensity of the Secretariat's activities has depended on the political situation in the Middle East Peace Process. Despite the mentioned deadlock in the late nineties, all parties felt that the Secretariat should continue its activities as a major long-term contribution to regional co-operation in the Middle East. Therefore, activities such as continuing dialogue with regional parties, establishing a database on regional co-operation, preparation of seminars, institutional development, and liaison with other initiatives related to multilateral track, etc, have been carried out.

Regarding Institutionalisation, the Secretariat has re-organised itself and prepared all necessary instruments for it to become a "permanent, regional economic institution". The recent Multilateral Steering Group in Moscow has endorsed this decision. The idea is to develop the REDWG Secretariat into a pioneer institution for future regional economic co-operation in the Middle East.

The Union is working now on the post peace challenges, which should be addressed by the regional parties. In addition a reshaping of REDWG needs to take into account the recent developments in the international environment (globalisation, World Trade Organisation), as well as inter-regional (Barcelona) and intra-regional (Arab Free Trade area).

STRENGTHENING THE PALESTINIAN INSTITUTIONS.

If a society is due to enter in a process of historic reconciliation, it must, first of all, feel at ease within itself. This is very true for most, if not all, of the societies in the Middle East. We all know that the existence of an external factor of cohesion acts as catalyst to overcome internal social rupture. We want to assist Middle East societies to overcome this, to accept the "ethics of discussion" which I referred to at my introductory remarks.

The Palestinian society demands particular support from the international community. Years of exile, political and military struggle, in a divided land and abroad, occupation, lack of political culture and education, have marked a society which now has to develop institutions and political bodies. The Palestinian Authority and the EU have understood the challenge from the very beginning. Only a democratic and healthy Palestinian society will be able to honour the Peace agreements. This is why we have supported the elections, contributed to the creation and maturation of its institutions, and assisted the Palestinian Authority in its effort to consolidate a culture of democracy, respect of human rights, and good governance.

The Palestinian Authority was established in 1994 after signing the Declaration of Principles (DOP) with Israel in September 1993 and the Cairo Agreement in May 1994. It was authorised to be the executive body in the Palestinian areas and also the "maker" of policy decisions.

I had the chance to discuss this concern with many Palestinians from the administration and the society at the moment their new social identity was in the making. We understood that there was an urgent need for action. The Palestinian institutions had to be strengthened. In coordination with the US Council on Foreign Relations a special task force was established in 1998 and under its umbrella a study initiated that was mainly financed by the European Union. The study resulted in a report, published last year, which contained many constructive recommendations for improvements. I discussed personally the report with President Arafat, and from there we engaged on several actions which have been started by the PA along the lines proposed in the study. The task force has had meetings with the PA, with strong participation from the EU, in order to follow up on the report findings. The PA has presented a work plan for the year 2000/2001 based on the recommendations in the report.

I also deem it very significant that President Arafat, in his meeting with the General Affairs Council last January undertook to announce a moratorium on the capital punishment in the Palestinian Territories. I feel very confident about the democratic future of Palestine, and I think all Europeans must share certain pride for our overall contribution to the development of a human rights culture in a difficult environment.

I would like also to say a few words about our security cooperation with the Palestinian Authority, through the EU – Palestinian Security Committee. Its purpose is to facilitate progress on security issues of the MEPP that are required by the political level, and to maintain open the lines of communication among the parties. The PSC gently tackles security perceptions held by both sides. The PSC achieves this through a programme of specific projects which both are of

value to the Palestinians in meeting their security commitments, but which also address the main issues of security in the Process (terrorism, terrorist infrastructure, incitement and illegal weapons). There is also an important aspect in helping the Palestinian security services to evolve their role as a professional and public service, and to convey this perception to the society they serve. This is the old problem defined by Lord Keynes of changing long-term expectations in the short-run.

We have so far analysed our on going projects to consolidate peace negotiations. Let us concentrate now on current initiatives regarding the immediate future, which are intended to develop a new culture of peace and co-operation among and within the Middle East governments and societies.

NEW SECURITY AND ECONOMIC CONCEPT

There is a new political and security concept that has to be adopted in the Middle East:

At the beginning of the next millennium the traditional ways to address the political and security challenges have to be reviewed and enriched. Politically speaking we, have already advanced in the process of reconciliation and normalisation between Arab countries and Israelis. Still important "rendez-vous" has to be reached in order to overcome the historical controversy. The "Land for peace" formula continues to be the key and essential element for any equation for peace. Nevertheless, once this principle will be implemented we should look for appropriate new means and ways to consolidate the new situation. The new political concept to be defended in the region should abide by the respect to the rule of law and the development of human rights. This political framework will be the best guarantee for a lasting and real commitment of all peoples to back and defend the fragile peace.

On the other hand, a new concept of international relations is appearing, fostered very particularly by the EU. It is a conception of security for the new millennium, rooted in the post-Cold War thinking of security that inspired the European Communities. Security should not and cannot be addressed solely in military terms.

The threats to the international community are changing. We do not talk much these days about inter-state conflict. Our societies perceive a threat coming from new phenomena such as internal disintegration, migration flows, environmental degradation, human rights, economic development, and so on. We know that developing military capabilities and deterrence strategies, forging

alliances is no longer a solution to address the different challenges I have just mentioned.

Co-operation seems to be the only way to tackle these threats. After the success of the EU, there is an international trend to develop new frameworks of "co-operative security", which should deal with the root causes of conflict and to promote strategies of reassurance and confidence-building, rather than those of deterrence or containment. I am afraid that we are still in front of a rather shy materialisation of these ideas. But states within specific regional areas are progressively working towards finding solutions to their security concerns in a regional framework.

Besides this new political and security concept there is a need to apply a new regional economic concept:

All countries need to develop and to improve their standards of living by reducing poverty. This is part of the most legitimate aspirations of any country. We have already talked about regional co-operation as a source of security. But there is a need to go beyond this by creating a common network of interest, by making economies more inter-dependent in the region and between the Middle East and Europe. This will not weaken our economic development. On the contrary, we are making conflict more unlikely by helping to create larger markets that are more able to compete in the globalised world economy and thus avoid the vicious circle of conflict-poverty.

This is at the very heart of the new economic idea. Let us make the economy a source of wealth, and, in parallel, a source of stability. Both poverty and an old-fashioned concept of interests will be overcome. Bearing this in mind, the European Union has developed the same philosophy to build a Community that inspired the Economic Union from which we developed a politically integrated Europe. We are still conceptualising this new economic notion, but we have already advanced significantly.

We have already said that the Euro-Mediterranean partnership was to be based on a free trade area. The Barcelona Declaration set the target date for the gradual establishment of this area at 2010 and stated that it would be implemented through a framework of new agreements not only between the Community and the Mediterranean partners but also between the partners themselves, what we call the south – south co-operation. In order to facilitate the establishment of the free trade area, co-operation between the parties would focus inter alia, on harmonising rules and procedures in the customs field, in particular with a view to the progressive introduction of cumulation of origin.

The European Union considered that the preferential treatment accorded by the different agreements forming the area would be based upon identical rules of origin and a system of cumulation providing the necessary linkage between the agreements.

The Barcelona process proposes to develop the relationships created by the bilateral customs agreements and financial protocols of the 1970s and 1980s towards a "stability pact".

The notion of linking the European Union with the Southern Mediterranean states was conceived through the creation of a free trade zone and through a programme aiming at reinforcing political and socio-cultural relations, and the synergies emerging from trade and investment. To this end, the European Union committed very important economical and political resources.

The Peace Process, whose evolution has also contributed to progress in the Barcelona process, also addressed this revolutionary concept. Many of the issues under discussion within the Euro-MED framework, such as water management, tourism, environment, or trade mirror those in the multilateral talks. However, the Union used its special position and relations to include Syria and Lebanon in that framework. Both countries have until now refused to attend any of the meetings of the multilateral working groups, claiming that regional co-operation should not be discussed until a political settlement in the bilateral tracks will have been reached with Israel. But in 1995, Syria and Lebanon decided to take their seats around the table with Israel and placed their signatures on the Barcelona Declaration.

These features of the Barcelona philosophy reflects the social vision expressed in its Declaration, To conclude, I would like to recall this vision, as expressed in the Declaration, for which I think we Europeans can be proud and to which I am personally so related:

“The participants recognise the traditions of culture and civilisation throughout the Mediterranean region. Dialogue between these cultures and exchanges at human, scientific and technological levels are an essential factor in bringing their peoples closer, promoting understanding between them and improving their perceptions of each other. They reaffirm that dialogue and respect between cultures and religions are a necessary precondition for bringing the peoples closer”.

THE EU VISION FOR THE FUTURE

This Process of reconciliation, together with the development of the Mediterranean partnership, will not be accomplished in the short term. This is

why we are already working in a long-term strategy, which, building on the above-mentioned principles, will set the new policy of the Union for the region.

In this light, the General Affairs Council of 24th January has requested the High Representative for the CFSP, the Commission and me, to write a vision Paper for the future of the region once peace has been achieved and what role and contribution that the Union can play and provide. Most of the ideas I have presented today will be used for this vision. Having this mandate in mind, we intend to focus our paper on three main objectives:

- First, to foresee the future of the region taking into account the present realities, and future challenges.
- Second, to outline a strategy in order to contribute to make peace work.
- Third, in order to facilitate an efficient role of the EU it seems necessary first to identify our interests in the region, to draw our own vision of its future and to propose a set of recommendations since it should be a practical policy paper.

At this stage, I cannot be very precise, since I am summoned to present the paper in the next General Affairs Council. However, I can explain some of its guidelines, in order to acquaint you on the future role of the Union in the Middle East.

These three main objectives should form an integral part of the general EU strategy for the Mediterranean and the Middle East.

With the aim to put this exercise in a time framework the paper focuses on the perspective of target date 2010 as mentioned in the Barcelona Declaration for establishing a free trade area in the region.

One of the problems that arise in this kind of initiatives relates to the definition of its geographic scope. The near future of the Middle East could not be understood without taking into consideration its own geopolitical dynamics. Therefore, any projection of the future of the region should enlarge the traditional geographic concept hitherto used and include neighbouring areas and countries.

The EU undertakes this exercise in a crucial juncture. Peace has not been achieved. Nevertheless, if the EU wants to be ready to respond to the request of the parties and the needs of the region, it should prepare itself based on a clear awareness of the challenges, in its own vision of the future and the knowledge of its capabilities. This is the goal of this exercise.

It is clear that peace has a price, a hefty price tag. The first estimations have come out with a set of figures of a great magnitude. The “astronomic” figures have to be seen in regard of what will be achieved by pacifying the Middle East. The cost of war, in terms of human lives, hatred and spiritual disruption, well assessed by five wars since 1948, and its devastating political and economic consequences, and the possibility of an endless conflict, has by all means a much higher price.

CONCLUSIONS

I would like to conclude by gathering some points:

1. I think that there is indeed a “European model” of reconciliation, co-operation, sharing of resources and common work. I believe that the Middle East is very much interested in this model and we should promote our policies bearing this in mind.
2. This vision must also be applied to the environment of peace talks, since good atmospherics are a precondition for successful negotiations. This is one of the EU priorities for the Peace Process.
3. The activities and policies which we have developed in the last years, such as People to People projects, or the ones within the Multilateral track, show the right way to follow in the future. They are also a good inspiration to elaborate on the New Economic and Security concepts we are working on, in which societies must play a leading role.
4. For peaceful relationship between societies it is of utmost importance to promote democracy, human rights and good governance.
5. The Barcelona Declaration, which embodies and inspires most of these principles, is the model we should follow in the European new diplomacy for the future. A diplomacy open to all social realms, and cultural, economic and political domains. The Union has successfully integrated this approach in international relations.

I would like to finish by recalling the life and work of one of my favourite Italian writers. You know, to work in this complex activity one needs a lot of optimism and positive thinking, and for this one of my masters is the poet Horace. As you remember, he was involved as a young man in politics, although he abandoned quite soon this early activity with a sense of bitterness.

Surprisingly, the moment that marks his retirement of politics is a peace agreement. He was asked by Octavio's advisers to go along with them to Brindisi to prepare the conference that would produce the Tarento Agreement and the reconciliation between Octavio and Antonio. This man, who produced some of the best pieces ever written in the history of literature about friendship, who was well known in his lifetime for his profound devotion to his friends, did not want to go back to politics and to transfer there his admirable concept of human relations.

I think we have to combine both experiences. I still believe it is worth to work on international relations and in politics, but with a sense –a Mediterranean sense- of reconciliation and friendship. If the European Union is able to unfold successfully its policies towards the Middle East, I am sure that new perceptions and relations will flourish in the eastern Mediterranean.

Thank you very much.

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