



EURO-MEDITERRANEAN PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY



Brussels, 27 March 2006

RECOMMENDATION

of the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly

on the outcome of the Barcelona Summit and the outlook for the Euro-Mediterranean partnership

adopted on the basis of the draft tabled on behalf of the Committee on Political Affairs, Security and Human Rights

by Ms Tokia Saïfi, Chairwoman

The Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly:

- having regard to its resolution on "the future of the Barcelona Process", adopted in Rabat on 21 November 2005, as well as to the Declaration by its Presidency, adopted at the same time and addressed to the Summit of Heads of State and Government held in Barcelona on 27 and 28 November 2005,
- having regard to the Presidency Conclusions of the Fifth Conference of Speakers of Euro-Mediterranean Parliaments, adopted on 26 November 2005 in Barcelona,
- having regard to the five-year work programme and to the Euro-Mediterranean Code of Conduct on Countering Terrorism adopted at the end of the Barcelona Summit,

As regards freedom of expression and respect for religious beliefs

1. Expresses its grave concern about the situation triggered by the publication in a Danish newspaper of cartoons that caused offence to Muslim religious sentiment and condemns likewise all tendencies to incite xenophobia and hatred and the outbreak of violent demonstrations, which have unfortunately led to loss of life, and the attacks carried out against European representations in a number of Muslim countries.
2. Condemns strongly any offence against religious values and principles relating to morals and beliefs; calls for freedom of expression to be used responsibly and at the same time roundly condemns the use of violence; urges governments to assume their responsibilities to ensure respect for religious beliefs and symbols in the fight against incitement to religious hatred, xenophobia and racism and actively to promote the values of tolerance, freedom and multiculturalism;
3. Reiterates the common position of the rejection of the identification of terrorism and violent extremism with any religion or belief, culture, ethnic group or nationality;
4. Recalls that freedom of expression is an essential part of any democratic, pluralistic, tolerant and open society, and at the same time emphasises that exercising one's right to freedom of expression brings with it certain obligations and responsibilities towards the rights of others; recalls, in this connection, that the Barcelona Declaration of 1995 lays down the principle of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, including freedom of expression, of thought and of religion, and the principle of respect for diversity and pluralism and the promotion of tolerance, principles shared by a majority of our peoples who reject any concept of a conflict between civilisations; regrets the fact that these rights seem to have been disregarded; underlines the need to activate relevant forums to foster these values and address shortcomings, and with the involvement of relevant European Union institutions, the Organisation of Islamic Conferences, the League of Arab States and the NGOs concerned;
5. Recalls that freedom of expression, freedom of thought, freedom of conscience and freedom of religion are enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; defends freedom of expression as a fundamental value and considers that it must be exercised within the boundaries laid down by the law, should coexist alongside personal responsibility and should be founded on respect for the rights and values of

others; recognises that the balance between these concerns must be the subject of permanent debate in a democracy;

6. Is convinced that an open and transparent dialogue and mutual respect are the right ways of dealing with the current situation and preventing such things from happening again; points out that EMPA is the appropriate forum for working together to foster dialogue; supports the initiatives to hold a dialogue between religions, cultures and societies with a view to establishing an alliance of civilisations;
7. Calls on governments and political leaders to refrain from making any declaration or speech which might bring to mind the expressions ‘clash of civilisations’ and ‘conflict of civilisations’;
8. Takes the view that freedom of expression and respect of religions, including freedom of religion, are fundamental rights for all and must therefore be respected by all, and that such an attitude excludes all discrimination; calls on political leaders and the media to avoid and oppose provocation of all kinds aimed at the religions and beliefs of others;
9. Calls on the Euro-Mediterranean partners to provide firm support for an action plan to be carried out promoting information in order to enlighten Euro-Mediterranean societies with a view to acting jointly against Islamophobia and actions against other religions and other beliefs;
10. Is convinced that dialogue is the only way of dealing with the current situation and preventing such things from happening again; points out that EMPA is the appropriate forum for working together to foster dialogue between religions, cultures and societies;

As regards assessing progress made on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the Barcelona Declaration

11. Recalls that the Summit of Heads of State and Government marking the 10th anniversary of the launch of the Barcelona Process was an opportunity to reaffirm a common commitment to partnership, despite persistent difficulties and the limited results of the Summit;
12. Welcomes, however, the adoption of the five-year work programme and the Euro-Mediterranean Code of Conduct on Countering Terrorism; believes that implementation of the Code must involve monitoring and the adoption of practical steps; asks, consequently, to be kept informed in advance and on a regular basis as regards such action; welcomes also the proliferation of initiatives and projects from civil society that marked the 10th anniversary of the Barcelona Declaration and which may revitalize the Barcelona Process;
13. Believes, in view of the need to kick relaunch the Euro-Mediterranean partnership, that the interparliamentary dialogue is a vital additional tool for solving problems that arise at intergovernmental level;
14. Welcomes, in this respect, the support for EMPA’s activities expressed by the Fifth Conference of Speakers of Euro-Mediterranean Parliaments held in Barcelona on 26 November 2005, as well as the fact that the Conference recognised EMPA as being the practical expression of the parliamentary dimension of the Barcelona Process;

As regards the outlook for the partnership

15. Recommends that the implementation of association agreements and the European Neighbourhood Policy, as well as the establishment of action plans under that policy, should complement and boost the Barcelona Process, forge even stronger links between partner countries and further foster South-South cooperation with a view to establishing cooperation that is truly multilateral and interregional;
16. Points out that the Euro-Mediterranean policy should be given a budget to match its ambitions and reaffirms the need to monitor the level of appropriations allocated as of 2007 so as to guarantee that all the aims set out in the five-year work programme adopted in Barcelona on 28 November 2005 are effectively achieved;
17. Takes the view that EMPA parliamentarians must be closely involved in the work of the Conference on human rights, democratisation and civil society which the Commission is planning for 2006 and which is organised by the EUROMESCO network and the two Euromed ministerial conferences on gender equality and migration; believes also that such involvement can only strengthen EMPA's role and visibility;
18. Calls for the Euro-Mediterranean Charter for Peace and Stability to be made more dynamic and for it to include certain Arab concepts and requirements on security and peace in the Mediterranean region, as it places emphasis on future conflict prevention while failing to acknowledge the settlement of current conflicts, which is out of keeping with the letter and the spirit of the Barcelona Declaration;

As regards the Middle East peace process

19. Welcomes the peaceful conditions in which the Palestinian general elections took place, as well as the democratic transparency involved and the high voter turnout; highlights the important role played by international observation missions and in particular by the European Union; takes note of the outcome of the elections;
20. Calls on the new Palestinian and Israeli governments to make good previous commitments and continue along the road to peace marked out by the Roadmap; calls on the international community to respect the will of the Palestinian people, to avoid prejudices and to adopt an evolving approach to the democratically elected Palestinian leadership;
21. Is concerned about unilateral initiatives taken in the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and condemns the recent events in Jericho which threaten peace and endanger the Barcelona process;
22. Is confident that the forthcoming general elections in Israel will take place under the best possible conditions, and hopes that the outcome will foster dialogue with the Palestinian Authority in the context of the Roadmap;
23. Calls on the parties involved in the Middle East peace process to further their commitment to a peaceful two-state solution; calls also for a renunciation of unilateral initiatives that are out of keeping with the Roadmap and international law, in particular based on electoral considerations;

24. Calls on the international community to continue to support the Palestinian people, whose weakened economy cannot meet basic needs; is alarmed at the chaos that could result from lack of support and the illegal withholding of revenue to which it is entitled by law;
25. Reaffirms that, as the parliamentary institution of the Barcelona Process, EMPA is available and willing to make its contribution to peace talks in the Middle East;

As regards EMPA's activities in the future

26. Welcomes, in the light of EMPA's activities over the two years since it came into being, the positive results of its political work, the changes made to its rules of procedure and financing arrangements, and in particular the contribution it has made to boosting the parliamentary dimension of the Barcelona Process;
27. Points out, however, that further efforts must be made to take full advantage of EMPA's activities and to provide the Barcelona Process with an even stronger parliamentary dimension, in particular as regards continuing the dialogue within EMPA and cooperation with other institutions involved in the Barcelona Process, as laid down in the five-year work programme adopted by the Barcelona Summit; calls for EMPA's activities to be intensified on the basis of regular activities within its bodies; hopes to involve socio-economic players and civil society in its work;
28. Instructs its President to forward this recommendation to the Council of Ministers of the European Union, the European Commission, the parliaments and governments involved in the Barcelona Process and the European Parliament.