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IN THE MEDITERRANEAN**

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MULTILATERAL POLITICAL COOPERATION IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

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At the end of the 1980s, a number of Southern European and Mediterranean Arab countries paid considerable attention to the possibility of establishing institutions for North-South collective cooperation in the Mediterranean area. This trend culminated in 1990 with two main initiatives. First, in October 1990 nine countries belonging to the Western Mediterranean area established the so called Group of Nine (later to become the Group of Ten, thanks to the inclusion of Malta). Second, in September 1990 Spain and Italy put forward a proposal for a comprehensive Mediterranean institution to be called Conference on Security and Cooperation in the Mediterranean (CSCM).

However, the Gulf War in 1990-1991, the beginning of the Arab- Israeli negotiations at the end of 1991, the UN sanctions on Lybia in January 1992 and the worsening of the Algerian crisis after the cancellation of the December 1991 elections introduced new tendencies in the Mediterranean area and a completely new political landscape. These changes made the above mentioned Mediterranean initiatives for regional multilateral cooperation substantially obsolete.

These Mediterranean initiatives aimed at giving the area a coherent organisation from inside, after the external factors which had provided coherence during the Cold War (the presence of the US within the framework of the East-West confrontation) began to change and disappear. With respect to the aims of these kind of Mediterranean initiatives there are different points of view in Western countries. Some maintain that the Mediterranean area, inherently fragmented, is not as homogeneous as to allow for a coherent regional organisation. Nor needs the West to make any special effort to impress coherence on it. According to this argument, a set of effective bilateral relations coupled with coordinated policies aimed at assuring free trade and access would be sufficient to provide security to the West.

But, according to others, especially from the Southern European countries, risks for good relations and free trade and access come precisely from the fragmentation of the Mediterranean setting. For this reason, a collective arrangement --beside more traditional bilateral and international relations-- would be an important tool to help curbing fragmentation in the area and thus making cooperation and crisis management possible.

After a few years of eclipse, the idea of creating a form of multilateral political cooperation in the Mediterranean is now regaining momentum. New proposals, more pragmatic than the grandiose schemes of the past, are being put forward. Ten countries from Southern Europe and North Africa took part in Alexandria in an inter-ministerial meeting at the beginning of July 1994 with the aim of launching a collective cooperation within the so called "Mediterranean Forum".

Is there a room for a Mediterranean Multilateral Political Cooperation (MMPC) to emerge? What its scope and goals? How could it work and which countries and multilateral institutions could be involved in it? These are the questions this paper tries to respond to.

New focuses in the Mediterranean

The post-Cold War is stirring substantial dislocations in the Mediterranean area, from both a North-South and South-South perspective. New focuses are emerging in the region. This re-focalization contributes to shape new constellations of countries. Fragmentation and incoherence are apparently increasing.

Fragmentation in the Mediterranean is not new. Major loyalties are normally lying outside the area: in the Arab world, in Europe, in the Islamic or Atlantic circle, etc. Furthermore, there are crises and disputes involving varying Mediterranean areas and countries. Nor are crises and

disputes in this area systemically connected to one another. The collapse of the Arab Cooperation Council as a consequence of the splits between its members brought about by the 1990-91 Gulf War, the failure of the Damascus Pact to solidify and, most of all, the freezing of the more structured and ambitious Arab Maghreb Union because of the Algerian and Libyan crises, all have confirmed the record of Mediterranean fragmentation.

Beside this traditional divisions, fresh factors and forms of fragmentation are being fostered by new focuses emerging today as a consequence of the transformations brought about by the end of Cold War. Four such focuses can be easily identified: (a) the process of enlargement of the European Union in combination with trends to re-nationalization in European countries' foreign policies; (b) the crisis in the former Yugoslavia and the wider framework of South-eastern Europe; (c) the Arab-Israeli negotiations in the Middle East (as distinct from North Africa); (d) the Islamist movement.

(a) Despite all its shortcomings, the EC Mediterranean Policy has always represented one of the few significant element of North-South collective cohesion in the area. The enlargement of the European Union to the EFTA countries and the polarization of West European countries and institutions towards the European East have now weakened the European interest towards the Mediterranean and relatively lessened the EC Mediterranean Policy with respect to the broad EU's external relations. An important unifying trend in the area seems therefore declining.

The weakening of collective North-South cohesion in the area is magnified by the tendency of the EU members to emphasize their national security point of view over common policies with respect to the Mediterranean (as well as other areas and issues) in the wake of their post-Cold War tendency to re-nationalize foreign (and economic) policies. The lonely policy France is conducting --wrongly or rightly-- towards Algeria is an example. In countries like Italy and Spain, though collective approaches to the Mediterranean still receive support, there are fresh tendencies to select relations and policies according to narrower perspectives. For example, in Italy there are growing voices which advocate the need to concentrate on Egypt, Libya, Tunisia and Algeria (i.e. countries in which Italy has substantive national interests: gas, investment, expatriated citizens, etc.) and get rid of nationally useless all-Mediterranean policies. As a consequence of this tendency, bilateralism, based on narrow national perspectives, may prevail and contribute to Mediterranean fragmentation.

(b) The crisis in the former Yugoslavia stirred important shifts in the neighbouring countries' foreign policy directions, including neighbours on the Mediterranean sea: Italy, Greece and Turkey.

As for Italy, the emergence of South-eastern Europe has been immediately regarded as an additional direction in the Italian foreign policy which doesn't detract from the Italian traditional commitment to the Mediterranean.

But for Turkey and Greece, developments in the Balkans bring about a new dimension in their dispute. The addition of this new dimension makes the dispute even more absorbing and de-emphasizes the Mediterranean dimension of their respective foreign policies. Furthermore, in the new multi-directional foreign policy Turkey is trying to pursue after the Cold War, the Middle East is regarded as an important partner, beside Central Asia, Russia and Southeastern Europe. For this reason, developments in the Middle East, to the extent they may be related to Turkish foreign policy, are more and more important from the Greek point of view.

Consequently, both Turkey and Greece are becoming more Balcanic than Mediterranean, on the one hand, and look more at the Middle East than to the whole of the Mediterranean, on the other. A certain seclusion from the Mediterranean of the area that is sometime called Eastern Mediterranean (Greece, Cyprus and Turkey) was already in place at the time of the Cold War. This separation seems now getting sharper.

(c) Finally, the Arab-Israeli negotiations are also creating new focuses and displacing old

ones. From a more general point of view, the peace process is establishing a focus inside the Middle East which tends to make Israel and the Arab Mashreq countries more inward-looking and other regional countries marginal --particularly those in the Maghreb. Besides, if security is assumed as a vantage point, the making of the peace tends to entail a much wider region which includes the Maghreb, on one side, as well as Iran, on the other. Thus, negotiations are introducing two kind of areas, both competing with the Mediterranean one: one focusing on the Middle Eastern area and another focusing on a wider area which, after a recent proposal, could be indicated as the CSCME area (Conference on Security and Cooperation in the Middle East).

In order for a Middle East-centered area to be established, the relevant question is: what framework of solidarity should the peace be based on? To my knowledge there are three kind of responses. First, the peace should be accompanied by the setting up of a multilateral economic scheme of Middle Eastern Regional Cooperation, essentially including the negotiating parties. This is the goal being now put forward within the peace negotiations process, especially by the negotiations' international sponsors. Second, the peace should bring about economic liberalization and normalization in the Arab relations with Israel, but inter-Arab relations should be preferred by Arab parties over Arab-Israeli relations and therefore reinforced. This is an argument very popular in the Arab League and non-governmental Arab circles, probably shared by moderate islamist opposition groups. Third, a Mediterranean solidarity should be developed as to make up for the absence of other shared identities, solidarities and backgrounds in the Arab-Israeli relations. This suggestion is made by a few intellectuals, particularly in Israel. It must be said that many Arab circles oppose the Mediterranean dimension argument because they see it as a pretext to evade pan-Arab goals, give priority to the Middle Eastern Regional Cooperation scheme at the expenses of inter-Arab economic cooperation and give Israel an undue or premature chance of integration with the Arab world.

As the peace process proceeds, strongly internationally supported prospects for a Middle Eastern Regional Cooperation are strengthening. As for the Mediterranean solidarity argument, it must be noted that it may prove helpful in reinforcing the rationale for Regional Cooperation because it brings about implicitly a strong cooperative link between the Middle Eastern Regional Cooperation and the European Union. So far, however, the Mediterranean argument remains rather academic: only if adopted by the EU as a policy guideline, it will be able to gain a political impact. In any case, with respect to these two possible solidarities, pan-Arab solidarity is clearly loosing ground. In a context where peace will actually be made, it seems the least probable option.

Whichever solidarity the Middle East will opt for, The Middle East-centered perspective is already affecting Maghreb governments' policies. These governments understand they will be marginal with respect to the evolution which is taking place in the Middle East. They support the negotiations, but are careful in keeping aloof from a process which risks to complicate their already difficult relations with domestic oppositions without giving them any significant advantage. They believe that in the framework of an all-Mediterranean cooperation scheme, side by side with the most strategicly sensitive Middle Eastern countries, they would be even more marginal than they tend to be alone. More international --particularly European-- resources would be diverted to the Middle East. They want their own distinctive relation with the West (and better bilaterally than multilaterally).

For all these reasons, the Maghreb governments' strategy today aims at committing the European Union and some of its Southern members to establish a special relationship with them by strengthening relations and upgrading economic integration both multilaterally (the Group of Ten in the Western Mediterranean) and bilaterally. Despite many disappointments (the special EC Maghreb policy decided by the Lisbon European Council in 199?? failed to materialize so far), they continue to give prominence to the association agreements with the EC; they are cleverly participating into the dialogue initiated with them by the WEU after the 199?? Petersburg

Declaration. In the same policy framework, in November 1993 they welcomed the revival of the Mediterranean dimension of the CSCE advocated by Italy as this country took over the Conference's turn of presidency. And later, they were not very happy with Egypt's idea of organizing the above mentioned Forum in Alexandria, as they saw it as a risk of dissolving the Maghreb-EU relation in the hopeless all-Mediterranean sea.

It seems as if the Arab-Israeli negotiations were to bring about elements of a division between the Western and Eastern part of the Mediterranean, with the Maghreb countries trying to offset the dynamism of the of the Middle Eastern area under the leadership of the United States with a closer relationship with the European Union. Again, new tendencies to fragmentation seem to emerge.

Let's now come to the CSCME-centered perspective on the Mediterranean. The basic suggestion of the CSCME is that arms control in the Mediterranean area is by far more fitting within the South-South than within the North-South dimension. In other words, though not necessarily in competition, efforts should be concentrated first on establishing a CSCME rather than a CSCM.

While the Middle East-centered perspective suggests a Mediterranean West-East divide, the CSCME's provides a North-South line of distinction. It is important to note that the same perspective than CSCME's is included in the Israeli approach to arms control, which is emerging within the multilateral Working Group on Arms Control and Regional Security (ACRS) created in the 1991 Madrid conference. According to Israel, national security is not threatened by the Arab front-line countries only, but also by more distant countries, like Iran or Algeria. Israel's strategic deterrence can be negotiated only against substantial political commitments and modifications in the overwhelming conventional forces of all the countries of this wider area and their pressing drive towards possessing unconventional arms: "Arms control agreements that would affect this deterrent can only be signed as part of formal peace agreements and major changes in force structures, encompassing not only Syria and Jordan, but also radical states such as Iraq, Iran and Libya".

In conclusion, the evolution of the Arab-Israeli negotiations is stirring two different shifts in Mediterranean focus: the Middle East/Mashreq looks like a framework fitting for economic and political cooperation (with the prospect of including such a cooperation in a wider Mediterranean circle); besides, a wider area, from the Maghreb through Iran and the Gulf, seems more fitting for arms control and regional security. Again, we have a fragmented and multi-dimensional Mediterranean.

Finally, with respect to the Mediterranean the Middle East peace process reflects also the lack of cohesion of the Atlantic allies. As already noted, the presence in the Mediterranean of the European Union and its member states is weakening and fragmenting, both in the Middle East and North Africa. Meanwhile, the US focus in the Mediterranean area is shifting and strengthening eastward, to the Near East, where the US is committed to help solving the Arab-Israeli crisis, and to the Gulf, where the American military presence after the Gulf war of 1990-91 definitely increased and stabilized. Unlike what used to happen during the Cold War, in today's Mediterranean the Atlantic allies are acting with different focuses and different strengths. The Mediterranean process of change, and the tensions and challenges which stem from it, are *de facto* encapsulated into two main different international contexts with different priority, responsibility and effectiveness: the Middle East, where the US are strongly committed, both politically and military, and the EU performs only a secondary role in the economic field, on the one hand; North Africa and a weak European Union, on the other. One cannot fail to compare this situation of both divided Atlantic leadership and European irrelevance in the Mediterranean with the effective partnership prevailing in the Western policy towards the European East. The weakness or the absence of the Western multilateral institutions in the Mediterranean area are a not negligible

factor in prompting the current trend towards fragmentation in the Mediterranean area.

(d) Finally, re-focalization stirred by Islamism ought also to be borne in mind. True, this is not a recent event. Even before the end of the Cold War, Islamism went well beyond the Mediterranean area. The upsurge of Islamism in Algeria, a peripheral Mediterranean consequence of the fall of the Communist power in Europe, is new. But political Islam began already to emerge as a consequence of the Arab defeat in 1967 and exploded in the second half of the 1970 with the crises in Afghanistan and Iran. Though it may not be as recent as the other re-focalization processes examined above, Islamism is a powerful pole of attraction, outside the Mediterranean area, which contributes strongly to current Mediterranean fragmentation.

From the point of view of the Mediterranean, Islamism is to be considered as a global or trans-regional rather than as a regional factor. The image of the Mediterranean it raises in our mind is rather similar to the CSCME security-centered area we talked about previously. True, though local factors are always very important in relation to the varying Islamist movements, the intellectual and political core source of Islamist developments today is located rather eastward, in Pakistan and Saudi Arabia (i.e. more in South-west Asia than in the Near East) and it tends to spill over to a worldwide area. Consequently, there are Mediterranean Islamist trends indeed (particularly in North Africa and the Maghreb), but the Mediterranean is included in a wider Islamist circle and, like unconventional proliferation, is rather global than regional in its nature and its reach.

The scope and need for cooperation

The remarks made in the previous section can be summarized according to three main points.

(a) During the Cold War, Western policies were able to impress some sort of coherence to the Mediterranean. With the end of the Cold War, these policies are fading away. NATO's Southern Flank has no reason to exist any more. The presence of the European Community Union in the area is weakening as the EU is attracted by the European East and the EU's member countries are undergoing a trend towards re-nationalization of their foreign policies. The US has shifted its policy focus eastward, towards the Middle East and the Gulf. To some extent, Turkey is also tilting eastward (and so is Greece). Furthermore, the doctrine approved by NATO countries in the December 1991 Atlantic Council says that the threat which used to unify the Mediterranean disappeared. Threats are believed to be replaced by multi-directional and multi-dimensional risks. These risks, by their very multi-faceted nature, prevent NATO from looking at the area as a unitary strategic and political room.

(b) The Mediterranean is divided into two different policy areas. On the one hand, there is a dynamic Middle East, focusing on its own future, which attracts Turkey and Saudi Arabia and involves Iran. On the other hand, there is an area that is trying to appointing itself as a "Mediterranean Forum", which encompasses beside a number of Southern European countries the Maghreb countries, Malta and Egypt, all countries with an interest in that a stronger EU role be developed. Those Israelis who are trying to work out the Mediterranean identity as an Arab-Israeli unifying factor may also have an interest in seeing one notion of Mediterranean to survive.

(c) Finally, if two important specific issues, as unconventional proliferation and Islamism, are taken into consideration, the Mediterranean appears under an inter-regional (North-South) and global perspective. The relevant arms control and regional security arrangement that is needed today concerns what we have called here the "CSCME area" rather than the Mediterranean circle (CSCM). Meanwhile, the Mediterranean area emerges as an important segment of the unconventional proliferation process that is taking place globally. In both cases, the northern and the southern shore of the Mediterranean perform different roles and have different interest. The same is true with respect to Islamism: it brings about a North-South opposition (in which Islamism is taking up the old nationalist, thirdworldist flag) stemming from an unsolved dialectic between

global trends, on the one hand, and the search for identity and authenticity, on the other.

From this picture it emerges that the more urgent challenge of stabilization and cooperation in the area is represented by the area encompassed by the Mediterranean Forum initiative, i.e. the area westward of the Arab-Israeli negotiations circle. First, unlike the Middle East, the "Forum" area is suffering because international cooperation towards it is insufficient or is lacking. As the varying processes of re-focalization that have been noted in the previous section go on, a sort of political vacuum is coming up in this more limited Mediterranean area. It is becoming internationally isolated, also because North African governments are proving less flexible than their Middle Eastern counterparts in dealing with Islamism. The area is being marginalized. It is worth noting that this marginalization is somehow reflected in the Southern European marginal position with respect to the European eastward re-focalization process.

For the vulnerability of the North African/Maghreb area today to be better understood, one has also to bear in mind the particular extent of its westernization and its historical and cultural proximity to European countries and influences. If there were across the Mediterranean a civilizational faultline, like that pointed out by Huntington's "clash of civilization" theory, things would be easier. In fact, they are more complicated and give way to stronger instability factors because in this narrower Mediterranean area cultural elements are powerfully intertwined. Cultural revision processes are taking place on both shores of the Mediterranean, though the intensity of change is by far more evident and important on the southern shore. The reality is not caught by pointing out a clash between southern Islam and northern Christianity (and Judaism), but between secularism and religion, globalism and particularism within both the South and the North of the Mediterranean, though with different intensity and modes. The presence of secular factors in North Africa should not be overlooked, nor should the growing impact of Christian fundamentalism and Muslim communities in Europe, from migrants to "rediscovered" Muslim nations in the Balkans and Transcaucasia. The reality overlapping the gross cultural boundaries that somebody wants to draw on the Mediterranean map is closer to a "leopard skin", which makes cultural relations across the Mediterranean particularly difficult and North African countries particularly vulnerable.

Second, as already noted, while the Mediterranean "Forum" area is internationally marginalized, the Middle East is enjoying a strong international support. In amore distant future, this support will probably succeed to provide stability and security to the Middle East. In the short run, however, Western deep involvement in the area is regarded as an unacceptable interference and is exacerbating oppositions, from traditional nationalist quarters and, especially, from Islamist groups and regimes. For a more or less long while tensions will increase in the Middle East and will spill over in the wider expanse south of Europe which is linked up today by both security and cultural issues, i.e. proliferation and Islamism.

Third, tensions coming from the Middle East have a particularly negative and destabilizing impact on the weak North African countries. For the first time in recent history, turmoil in North Africa and the Maghreb is clearly no less important than in the Middle East --to say the least. Today, North Africa must be considered a particularly risky area, because of inherent weaknesses and its vulnerability to tensions from the Middle East political process and current North-South cultural oppositions.

For all these reasons, the establishment of a MMPC in the weak Forum's area seem urgently needed. The level of international support and of institutional cooperation in the area must be increased with the aim of attaining some stability or avoiding excesses of instability. Furthermore, given the cultural entanglement prevailing in this area, cultural cooperation should be central in any form of MMPC government would opt for.

Assuming these two directions --establishing an MMPC and focusing it on cultural cooperation-- this paper will introduce, first, some comments on major issues and challenges

affecting the implementation of MMPC and, second, a number of points related to the goals and scope of the MMPC institution.

Issues and challenges with Mediterranean political cooperation

Though broadly speaking the institutions of a form of MMPC in the narrower Mediterranean area indicated as the "Mediterranean Forum" in this paper would fit with the search for stability in the Mediterranean and the Middle East, there are issues and challenges which show that the implementation of such an MMPC is not easy. The motives behind both European and Arab countries' search for MMPC make the engineering of cooperation somehow difficult an exercise. At the same time, if these issues and challenges are taken into consideration the need for focusing the MMPC institution on cultural cooperation is confirmed. The thrust of any cooperation policy among Mediterranean countries is bound to lay in their ability to establish a dialectical link between global and particular trends.

As noted above, the Mediterranean vacuum is strongly resented by governments in North Africa as a factor which diverts economic and financial resources elsewhere and as a danger of neglect and political isolation. It must be borne in mind that this is the main reason which pushes their demand for MMPC (these demands have been intense in 1994, in the form of both reviving the association of the Mediterranean countries to the CSCE and re-launching the Mediterranean Forum). Cooperation is regarded by them as an essential ingredient for stability, both domestically and internationally.

Their demand for cooperation is fitted out with a number of domestic concerns, however, especially with the necessity to prevent cooperation from turning into intrusion or from being perceived as an intrusion domestically. Inability to prevent intrusion or its perception would turn cooperation into a factor of instability. In the wake of the 1990-91 Gulf War, the idea of developing the United Nations as a world policeman--the so called "new world order"--in a situation where the West could no longer be contained by the Soviet Union, was regarded by governments south of the Mediterranean as a grave danger. Also, Western governments' attempts --particularly EU's-- to attach conditions to cooperation in terms of progress towards democracy or respect for human rights are normally not accepted.

This is one of the most typical and sensitive field where global and particular tendencies use to clash today. Even if available, governments cannot accept conditionality openly because this would be highly destabilizing domestically. It must be stressed that intrusion is refused not only by islamists but also by secular opposition groups, which believe that democracy is to be attained through an internal debate aimed at enlarging and strengthening the civil society (i.e. including islamists).

Cooperation policy has therefore to walk on a tight rope: it is demanded as a factor of stability, but if used as a leverage to introduce global trends into southern Mediterranean societies, it may turn into a destabilizing factor.

As for Western allies and European governments, their main concern is security, especially in view of the risk that in the middle term non-conventional armaments would proliferate in the region. Islamism, with its determined anti-Western attitude, is regarded as a factor which may step up proliferation and add intentions to capacities (i.e. as an emerging threat), possibly in combination with what remains of aggressive pan-Arab nationalism. Again, the relevant policy seems cooperation in order to attain stability.

But what does stability mean? More and more Western governments understand that Islamism include a search for identity and dignity which earn consensus well beyond Islamist groups and that beside extremists there are relatively moderate Islamist streams of opinion. For this reasons, attaining stability by merely supporting repression and pro-Western regimes could emerge as a self-defeating and short-sighted policy.

European countries face very difficult dilemmas. A policy of neglect would induce instability and turn present risks into actual threats. Moreover, if the argument about the "leopard skin" character of the Mediterranean relations is true, neglect is just unfeasible. A policy of strong and blind anti-Islamist support to southern Mediterranean governments, similar to the support extended by the West to anti-Communist regimes during the Cold War, would reinforce local support to Islamism and radicalize the latter without solving any problem. A policy of strict conditionality would weaken governments in place and probably bring about Islamist regimes more determined to rebuff such an intrusion than their pro-Western predecessors.

One conclusion that can be drawn from this picture is that, in order to establish some form of multilateral political cooperation, one priority-problem to come to terms with is the opposition between global and particular trends. Political cooperation, therefore, should emerge as a framework for a dialogue intended to work out a synthesis between globalization and identities. Of course, the most extreme Islamists as well as Western "fundamentalist rationalists" will not accept it, but such a dialogue would have the important advantage of being acceptable to both secular and moderate religious groups on the southern as well as the northern shore of the Mediterranean. On the other hand, the "leopard skin" nature of the Mediterranean cultural environment is also a factor which compels Mediterranean countries to work out adjustments and accommodations in trying to re-define identities and relations with global trends.

Goals and feature of the MMPC

Having in mind the different analyses conducted in the previous sections of this paper, it is now possible to point out goals and feature of the MMPC in a normative way.

The essential points are the following:

*a framework for cooperation among the Mediterranean countries must be set up and given a light and flexible institutional form in order to ensure better conditions for multilateral cooperation;

*cultural and economic cooperation between the societies and the states in the Mediterranean must be intensified; this should generate greater political interaction, strengthening the mechanism of the (more or less) formal political cooperation underlying this process;

*without closing the door to further membership, cooperation must be launched by those Mediterranean countries that have currently shown a priority interest of doing so, namely Algeria, Egypt, France, Greece, Italy, Malta, Morocco, Portugal, Spain, Tunisia and Turkey;

*Mediterranean cooperation requires a specific institutional framework within which the Community countries of Southern Europe can take on a special responsibility towards both their partners on the Southern Rim and northern European countries. Whatever its degree of institutionalization, this framework must be linked to the European Union's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP);

*the institutions for political cooperation must pursue two main objectives:

a) to increase the coherence between the consensus-building mechanisms in individual countries and international cooperation so that better management of interdependence and global economic, social and cultural processes may be achieved, thus attenuating and solving possible crises and reducing risks;

b) to establish the type of dialogue required to bring the Mediterranean area into the processes of globalization, thereby reducing tensions between globalization and specificities; the human dimension is bound to be predominant in Mediterranean cooperation;

*public and private policies for cultural cooperation and dialogue must be worked out. More solid channels for communication and exchange between the two shores of the Mediterranean will play an all-important role in the implementation of this project;

*more generally, while the role of intergovernmental cooperation is essential in providing momentum and coordination, the concrete development of multilateral cooperation depends largely on the broadening of non-governmental actions and initiatives; constant and effective interaction between the official and the private/non-governmental levels is required;

*economic cooperation among Mediterranean partners must be concentrated on fundamental problems, namely the huge gap separating the South from the North and the latter's responsibility in dealing with the problem with adequate "vision"; this vision must be supported by three fundamental pillars: the opening of the European market, immigration policy, and European responsibility in ensuring sustainable growth and environmental protection;

*alongside the strengthening of non-governmental action and society's various levels of autonomy, the accent in the field of economy must be put on the rebirth of decentralized institutions, competences and actions. A long period of centralization of decision making and resources at state level has hindered the spread of a sufficiently flexible economic structure in society, weakening other important factors (crafts, trade, state property). The current lack of flexibility of the economies in the southern Mediterranean is a significant factor contributing to their underdevelopment.