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**SOME PROPOSALS ABOUT DEVELOPING DIALOGUE
BETWEEN WEU AND MEDITERRANEAN COUNTRIES**

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Paper presented at the conference on
"WEU's role in the Mediterranean and the Euro-Mediterranean partnership"
Rome, IAI, 4-5 December 1998

IAI9841

ISTITUTO AFFARI INTERNAZIONALI

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Since its institutionalization in 1992, WEU's Mediterranean dialogue has constituted a unique multilateral Euro-Mediterranean exchange in security and military matters. Concrete measures within this dialogue are not perhaps sufficiently well-known, but they represent an interesting experience in information sharing and confidence building. Even in its present format, WEU's Mediterranean dialogue may prove to be very useful as a supplement to the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership launched at Barcelona in 1995, when the time comes to give a more substantial content to its political and security chapter.

Further development of WEU's Mediterranean dialogue may consist in its broadening (introducing more Mediterranean partners) and/or its deepening (envisaging new measures). This is a decision that the WEU Council would have to consider in the light of the evolution of two external variables.

First, the political and security aspects of the Barcelona process may not see any substantive progress, or alternatively they may see some meaningful advances, especially through the drafting of a Mediterranean Charter. If some kind of Euro-Mediterranean cooperation in military issues is foreseen within the Barcelona process, it is evident that WEU will be called upon to contribute to its realization. As stated in the Treaty on European Union and the Amsterdam Treaty, WEU is an integral part of the development of the Union, providing the EU with access to an operational capability, which is well known to the EU's Mediterranean partners. To the extent that the integration of WEU in EU proceeds, every aspect of the EU's CFSP, including the Barcelona process, will consequently be supplemented by WEU's expertise and capabilities.

Second, although WEU is an integral part of the development of the Union, the final status of WEU has not been yet sorted out, since the Amsterdam Treaty stipulates that integration into EU has to be decided by the European Council, and ratified by member states. A renewed debate about the possible integration of WEU into EU has just started among the members of the EU.

At any given moment, the evolution of these two variables will inevitably influence the WEU Council's decision about the development of WEU's Mediterranean dialogue. The Council will have to make a balanced assessment of both of these external factors in order to define the next steps in the dialogue and to allocate the appropriate financial and human resources.

In any case, the development of WEU's Mediterranean dialogue might encounter three practical difficulties. The definition of concrete topics for cooperation will be the first

one. These topics must be acceptable to the Mediterranean partners, in the sense that they must represent an added value for them, and at the same time they must constitute feasible measures. Among the topics suggested for organizing academic seminars, multilateral diplomatic meetings, or for starting other kinds of more down to earth contacts are: conflict prevention, peace support operations, control of illicit maritime traffic, and natural disasters and civil emergencies.

The second difficulty would be the different membership of the Barcelona process and of WEU's Mediterranean dialogue. The well-known compositions of both schemes (15 + 12, and 28 + 7) do not coincide, which hampers an expedient rapprochement between them. One way out of this difficulty would be to consider WEU's Mediterranean dialogue as a more specific initiative on security and military issues that will be carried forward by the limited number of states who have opted in. Another alternative is gradually to incorporate every EU Mediterranean partner into WEU's dialogue.

Thirdly, WEU's Mediterranean dialogue should be better coordinated with NATO's Mediterranean initiative and with OSCE's activities in the Mediterranean region. In particular, NATO's Mediterranean initiative and WEU's Mediterranean dialogue are absolutely compatible and consistent. At present, there are fluid contacts between those responsible for these dialogues in both organizations, in line with the general excellent operational relationships which are being established between NATO and WEU. Both Mediterranean initiatives are going to continue in the near future, each one having its specificities. The maintenance of NATO's and WEU's dialogues is a consequence of the current institutional relationship between EU, WEU, and NATO.

Against this background, a number of new practical measures could be envisaged in order both to consolidate WEU's Mediterranean dialogue, and to prepare better this dialogue to complement the political and security chapter of the Barcelona process. The following new measures could be considered.

- Reactivation of multilateral meetings with diplomatic and military experts from WEU countries and Mediterranean partners, on topics of mutual interest.

- Following the briefings and information sessions with WEU Military Staff which have already taken place, WEU's Mediterranean Group could consider whether and how WEU's operational capabilities would be of use and support in the political and security dialogue of the Barcelona Process.

- The Institute for Security Studies organized seminars on Confidence-Building Measures in the Mediterranean in 1996, and on approaches to peacekeeping among the Euro-Mediterranean countries in 1997. Another type of meeting was held in September 1998: an information seminar for high-ranking military officers as a new measure of transparency. The Institute could organize more seminars, including information seminars in the capitals of the Mediterranean partners, if they so wish.

- The Barcelona process has supported networking in the Mediterranean region among very different sectors of society. WEU could explore the possibilities of creating networks concerned with security and defence issues.

- WEU can offer a useful multilateral framework for cataloguing and coordinating the various unilateral and bilateral initiatives and expertise of its member countries in areas which are of interest to its Mediterranean partners (for instance, demining for humanitarian purposes).

- The CSCE/OSCE documents offer a wide range of "softer" and "harder" CBMs such as annual, more specific exchanges of information, improvement of communications, observation, compliance and verification, points of contact, etc. These CBMs have not been exploited in WEU's Mediterranean dialogue, which has so far pursued confidence-building basically through its own unilateral information. However more traditional CBMs might be relevant to the future evolution of the political and security partnership of the Barcelona process, particularly if the work of a Mediterranean Charter continues with this in mind. WEU could start exploratory work on CBMs in the Mediterranean region.

- Having invited representatives from its Mediterranean partners to observe exercises it has conducted so far, WEU could study the possibility, in the medium term of planning joint exercises with non-WEU Mediterranean countries. In fact, some bilateral Euro-Mediterranean exercises with limited aims have already been carried out successfully. It will only be at a more advanced stage of the Barcelona process, that cooperation amongst Euro-Mediterranean armed forces may lead to joint planning of military exercises, in which WEU could play a leading role.