

# EUROMED Trade Union Forum



ICFTU INTERNATIONAL CONFEDERATION OF FREE TRADE UNIONS  
ETUC EUROPEAN TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION  
USTMA TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION OF THE ARAB MAGREB WORKERS  
ICATU INTERNATIONAL CONFEDERATION OF ARAB TRADE UNIONS

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## 3rd General Assembly of the Euromed Trade Union Forum “Towards peace, democracy, economic progress and social justice” Barcelona, 6 – 7 November 2005

### Final declaration

Ten years after the Barcelona Conference in 1995, the trade union organizations are unanimous in realizing that the results envisaged in the beginning have not been reached. The Partnership consisted on establishing a link between economic development, peace and democratization. For the trade union movement, the balance of the Partnership is disappointing and it is difficult not to mention the relative failures.

Despite all criticisms and concerns, for the trade union movement, the Partnership is the right path to be followed. The purposes of its foundation should be maintained and developed. It continues to be a suitable regional framework for the cooperation in the Mediterranean, to ensure more democratization and real promotion of human rights, to guarantee its coherence and to revitalize a more firm political commitment. The same applies to the new European Neighbourhood Policy, whose objectives and Action Plans explicitly refer to the mechanisms of social consultation, to the employment policy, to trade union freedom and to the international agreements on labour law. This opens an interesting perspective for the Euromed Trade Union Forum.

The Euromed Trade Union Forum realizes that:

1. The Mediterranean has not been transformed into a peace zone.
2. The economic and social situation has not improved.
3. The Partnership has not contributed in an effective way to create employment.
4. The issue of migration, though extremely important, is still an unsolved problem within the framework of the Partnership.
5. Little democratic progress has been made and there is an absence of social dialogue.

The Euromed Trade Union Forum reaffirms that peace, the respect for human rights, and the respect for the workers' rights, based on the ILO standards, are tightly connected to economic policies that promote development and social progress.

### For a renewal of the Partnership

- a. **For a global and coherent project.** It is necessary to dissipate the ambiguities related to the multiplicity of political initiatives. The projects have to be complementary and not opposing. The Forum shares the demand of the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly for a revitalized and integrated process.

- b. For the reinforcement of the multilateral dimension and regional integrations.** A renewed Partnership should reinforce the principles of the process in terms of equality, co-responsibility, solidarity and cooperation in the multilateral framework. The ENP can not drain the Partnership of its regional character. The Euromed Trade Union Forum considers that the new European Neighbourhood Policy should include among its priorities the boosting of both regional integration and south-south sub-regional integration. It has, therefore, to promote a logical idea of regional cooperation and true south-south cooperation, in order to settle the basis for a wider market, able to attract foreign investments and to develop scientific, technical and cultural co-operation.
- c. For the co-development.** The Euromed Partnership has not improved the living standard of workers and populations. As a consequence, it cannot be reduced to a simple zone of free trade, but it must be transformed into a privileged framework to promote development and democracy. We think that free trade is not the sole answer to development. Other complementary institutional solutions are needed to create an efficient framework of stability and, at the same time, reduce inequalities in the living standards. This demands for the co-responsibility of all the partners as well as the respect for international labour laws.
- d. For a redefinition of the financial tools.** The Euromed Trade Union Forum emphasizes the need to reinforce and redefine the different tools of the European financial aid to the EPC (European Bank of Investments, Meda, FEMIP) favouring incentives for European investments in the south region and alleviating the burden of the foreign debt, especially through its reinvestment in development projects. The new financial tool of the ENP (2007-2014), due to replace MEDA, must guarantee the necessary financial means for the Mediterranean. Currently, it does not imply any share of the budgets between this region and the eastern countries.
- e. For an active employment policy.** The trade union organizations consider that employment creation has to be a transversal element of the Partnership and it has to become one of its priority objectives. In this sense, they are asking to initiate actual measures that favour this priority. An evaluation should be made in order to take into account the impact of the Partnership policies on employment.
- f. For the rights of migrants.** A joint and global answer is required that will enable to fight for the equality of the migrants' rights in the destination countries, both in the north and the south. At the same time, the sustained development and the creation of jobs in the origin countries must be encouraged. The Trade Union Forum requests the different States to ratify the UN Convention for the Protection of the Rights of all Migrant Workers and their families.
- g. For a Partnership based on human rights and gender equality.** The Trade Union Forum denounces the systematic violation of human rights, the lack of freedom of the press, the lack of transparency and the corruption. The Forum finds it essential the Euromed Partnership and the ENP to be based on the respect for the Human rights in its universality and its indivisibility, that is, civil and political liberties and economic, social and cultural rights. Social progress cannot be reached without equal opportunities for men and women.
- h. For a fair, global and lasting peace.** The trade union organizations condemn all the forms of xenophobia and racism, of extremism and fundamentalism, of terrorism and authoritarianism, and of military occupation. The overcoming of these problems demands for the dismantlement of all weapons of massive destruction, the reconstruction of a supportive social project, democracy, respect for the international

law and the intercultural dialogue between the peoples. The Forum and Trade Union organizations welcome and support the initiative of the United Nations for an "Alliance of Civilizations". The trade union organizations request the governments to solve the existing conflicts in their region, among others, the conflict in Cyprus and western Sahara, according to international law and to the United Nations resolutions as well as the proposals of its General Secretary. Within this spirit, the resolution of the Middle East conflicts can only be carried out through the respect for the international law, through the unconditional application of the resolutions of the UN, the withdrawal of the occupational forces from all territories occupied since 1967, and the recognition of the Palestinian people's right to establish an independent State, next to the State of Israel. The trade union organizations emphasize the need for a prompt end of the occupation of Iraq, as well as on the fundamental role that the UN must have in the process of recovery of the sovereignty, the reconstruction and the guarantee of unity of this country. Also, they support the efforts made by CISL, WCL and CISA to help in the reconstruction and unity of the trade union forces in Iraq, on the basis of democracy and independence, so that they can fully have a decisive role in the defence of the workers' interests and participate effectively in the reconstruction of a free, sovereign and democratic Iraq. The Trade Union Forum demands for all the truth about the assassination of the former Prime Minister of Lebanon to be known and those found guilty to be judged. Nevertheless, this question must be kept within the respect for the international law and not to be used with a political intention, that could mean sanctions on Syria, and therefore, a threat of increasing disrupt in the region.

- i. **The Trade Union Forum and civil society.** The Trade Union Forum rejoices for the fact that since 1999 the cooperation with the NGO's structures has been consolidated and strengthened, always maintaining and reciprocally respecting identities and autonomies. The Forum wants to proceed with its participation as Trade Union Forum in the activities of the Non Governmental Euromed Platform.
- j. **Solidarity and trade union cooperation.** The trade union organizations of the north and the south, gathered in the Euromed Trade Union Forum, want to reinforce their cooperation and their commitment so that the Euro-Mediterranean relations may progress. The Forum will continue to be committed to the economic and social progress, to the human rights and democracy. In this sense, the Forum demands for a consultative status for the social partners in the framework of the Partnership.

## **Guidelines and Working Plan**

### **Demands and Proposals**

Employment and economic and social rights are at the basis of the following proposals, which are structured on three principles:

- a) the main challenge that the EPC and the European countries have to face together, is how to guarantee economic and social rights, quality employment both in the North and South of the Mediterranean, as well as to guarantee fundamental social rights for all citizens.
- b) to do so, the creation of employment and improvement of economic and social rights in the EPC must be included as one of the explicit objectives of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership. It is, therefore, necessary to take direct action in this area sustained by specific financial resources.
- c) the principle of co-responsibility which lies at the heart of a true Partnership, that is the sharing of responsibility between the EU countries and EPC in relation to matters of common interest (employment and the economic and social situation are undoubtedly those). This implies the need to find joint solutions and eventually define common strategies and also use shared resources in order to carry them out.

#### *At the institutional level*

- 1) To call for a large Euro-Mediterranean Conference on Employment in 2006, with the participation of national governments, Euro-Mediterranean and European institutions, social agents and experts, following the model proposed by the European Commission for Conferences on Human Rights and Democratisation and on Gender Equality, already planned for 2006.
- 2) To call for regular Euro-Mediterranean Conferences of Ministers of Labour in order to tackle the question of employment in the region.
- 3) To generalise the creation and functioning of "Working Groups on Social Affairs" that should meet on a regular basis within the bilateral Association Councils of the EU and EPC.
- 4) To create stable environments for dialogue and social concertation at Euro-Mediterranean Partnership level, with the participation of social agents, not only from the EU but also from the EPC and Euro-Mediterranean institutions.

#### *Procedures*

- 5) To establish follow-up and multilateral monitoring mechanisms at a Euro-Mediterranean level to monitor the economic and social situation in general, and particularly of employment. This is mainly to promote specific formation programmes directed to the young and to women, so as to facilitate their integration in the work market.
- 6) To incorporate a systematic and rigorous study on their impact on employment and the economic and social situation, in all the decision-making and

management procedures of Euro-Mediterranean institutions, policies, programmes and actions (Free Trade Areas, MEDA Programmes, Action Plans ...).

#### *Content of Euro-Mediterranean actions and programmes*

- 7) To demand for full integration into the present and future initiatives on training and employment.
- 8) To move towards the definition of a Euro-Mediterranean Employment Strategy with specific objectives for each country, and the specific commitments and instruments to achieve them. The objective is to oblige member countries of the EMP to establish an integrated system of statistics and systems of information, and to carry out a joint analysis of the employment policies.
- 9) To establish institutionalised safeguard and compensation mechanisms in relation to the social consequences of Euro-Mediterranean actions and policies, when the established social indicators exceed certain minimum requirements.
- 10) Within the framework of the Neighbourhood Action Plans and of the MEDA Programmes, to adopt specific programmes and actions:
  - a. To promote social dialogue and concertation at national level in the EPC;
  - b. To reinforce trade union freedom and effective respect for the autonomy of trade union organisations, as well as Euro-Mediterranean trade union co-operation;
  - c. To encourage workers' representation in companies and effective legal protection for workers' representatives;
  - d. To develop actions that ensure the protection and effectiveness of fundamental rights envisaged in the core ILO conventions, such as the right to strike, collective bargaining and social dialogue, specifically through measures which ensure the effectiveness of labour law (labour inspection, etc).

#### *The ENP*

- 11) To give more importance to employment and social rights in the Action Plans. This concern should be expressed in official positions and be reflected in the Neighbourhood and Partnership policy (2007-2014).
- 12) To create formal mechanisms of consultation with the social agents which guarantee the effective application of Action Plans in all applicable areas, especially on employment and economic and social rights.

#### *Trade Union Cooperation*

- 13) To invite all the Euro Mediterranean trade union organizations and their structures to coordinate their activities in the region, making available means and defining common action programmes in the framework of the Forum. The Trade Union Forum asks the ILO, and particularly ACTRAV, to extend their cooperation to the Forum.