



Political declaration of Local and Regional Authorities of the Mediterranean gathered at their 3rd FORUM on 3 & 4 April 2013 in Marseille (France)

Preamble

We, Mediterranean local and regional elected officials, gathered in Marseille this 3 & 4 April 2013 on the occasion of the 3rd Forum of Local and Regional Authorities of the Mediterranean wish to address heads of State and Government, international fund donors, members of parliament and all the different actors of civil society.

Five years after the 1st Forum of 2008, our assessment of the situation is categorical: the Mediterranean region is ailing. Conflicts proliferate and our peoples suffer. All through the three shores, escalating unemployment weighs particularly on the youth and essential questions related to a just and sustainable development are being sidelined to address immediate and brutal economic crises. The insecurity and poverty are more severe, extended and expanding into new groups and population segments, at the risk of becoming chronic.

We support the mobilisation of the citizenry South and North, with the youth and women on the front line, aspiring to other models of social justice and liberty. In the South, this massive mobilisation led to the Arab revolutions, to the social revolutions and the political changes we all know. In the North, the “Indignants” expressed their despair from being isolated and forgotten through this crisis that deeply affects them.

The mobilisation continues in many countries as a clear expression of the people’s aspirations for States that will uphold the law, the principle of solidarity and the respect for democratic processes. We note today that these high hopes for a renewal of democracy have only been partially fulfilled.

We, local and regional elected officials, are directly confronted to this loss of confidence in political actions. In the North and in the South, we strive daily to meet local needs. But we must devise and promote together a new model, new ambitions that will measure up to the legitimate needs of respect, dignity and equality voiced by our peoples.

The Barcelona Process and the Union for the Mediterranean, each at their own moment, embodied and spearheaded this common project. Today, we must go even further and open new roads for future prospects. The extent of the challenges to be faced and the complexity of the situation call for responses adapted to the different realities. We expect a stronger and deeper Euro-Mediterranean Partnership from European institutions for 2014-2020.

We need the support of all leading international fund donors to back up our development, not only old actors but also new ones, such as the major emerging countries.

As partner local and regional authorities of the three shores of the Mediterranean, we chose to focus the debates and challenges of this 3rd Forum on “**democratic governance**”.

Without true democratic governance, there is a serious risk of spreading dissatisfaction and misunderstanding among populations and neighbouring territories. Our people cannot wait any longer. It is up to us, together, to give them answers that will meet their expectations.

Declaration

We, local and regional elected officials of the Mediterranean, gathered this 4 April 2013 in Marseille:

1. Stress the need to replace peace and reconciliation at the heart of our deliberations. Long-standing conflicts in Palestine, more recently in Libya and currently in Mali and in Syria should convince us of the absolute necessity to tear down the walls of egoism and violence.
2. Ask the international community to bring to bear as much pressure as possible to help stop de war in Syria and to assist neighbouring local governments in Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey in managing the influx of migrant families from Syria, and to give them rapid financial support.
3. Reaffirm our will to contribute to the creation of a Mediterranean space of peace and solidarity, and projects that will deliver concrete results for our citizens.
4. Wish that the review of the Millennium Development Goals and the development of a new Global Development Agenda post-2015, together with a set of Sustainable Development Goals - become the occasion to establish a specific modality for the Mediterranean with means that will match the social, economic and environmental issues at stake. To this end, we call for the implementation of the principles of the Busan declaration in the Mediterranean basin. The Busan declaration proposes to improve the coordination in the field of bilateral and multilateral aid and to enhance the participation of local and regional governments in the process. Support to decentralisation should be an integral part thereof.
5. Call for stronger convergence in the policies implemented by the principal fund donors in the Mediterranean: UN instruments (particularly UNDP and UNEP), the World Bank, the OECD, the European Union and bilateral cooperation initiatives, including decentralised cooperation. We also wish Mediterranean specificities will receive special attention during the Habitat III Summit. We ask that democratic governance be considered as a major priority of these programmes and that it is promoted at all the different levels of government, including the local and regional governments. Particular efforts are also needed in the areas of employment and capacity building, as well as in sustainable development fields that are particularly meaningful for Mediterranean basin populations, including the depollution of the Mediterranean Sea, water, and climate change.
6. Regret the weak political impetus of the European Union in the Mediterranean, even though we welcome the new tools proposed in the bilateral programmes of the European Neighbourhood Policy of 2014-2020 in favour of local and regional authorities. We therefore encourage the States to seize the opportunities to support decentralisation and deconcentration that are included in the proposals of the European commission: “the promotion of cultural dialogue and local governance” and the “promotion of socio-economic development and enhancement of territories”. The concept of economic, social and territorial cohesion should be a priority in these interventions.
7. Ask European institutions to go even further by adapting intervention modalities to each national situation so that the European Neighbourhood Policy may enter a new stage that emphasizes, as close to the field as possible, programming local and regional actions.
8. As declared in 2010, we also eagerly hope for the optimisation of local and regional cooperation tools:

- In the Euro-Mediterranean partnership as a whole, through the reinforcement of decentralised cooperation policies (following on programmes such as Non-State Actors and Local Authorities, CIUDAD, Euromed Heritage, etc.).
 - At Mediterranean basin level, through the concept of macro-region integrated strategy that should strengthen the programme for cross-border cooperation by sea basin associating ERDF and ENPI funds. On this last point, we invite Mediterranean States to intensify consultations at the highest level, with the support of the Union for the Mediterranean, in order to set up a global programming that should include local and regional authorities right from the start in the definition of priorities and foresee appropriate resources for the start-up of the strategy.
9. Welcome the initiative of the new co-presidency of the UfM to organise sectoral conferences starting in the summer of 2013 and we ask the co-presidency, partner States and the Secretariat to associate local and regional governments to these actions.
 10. Are convinced that the reforms taking place in most Mediterranean States, whether they focus on modernisation, deconcentration or decentralisation, will contribute to identify concrete answers to meet the needs voiced by the people for broader participation of men and women in democratic life. We ask that Local and Regional Authorities be included in all respects in these processes and propose to share our experience and good practices to identify structured responses for institutional capacity building (institutional twinning, training for local executives, mutual commitments, promotion of cross-border cooperation, etc.).
 11. Eagerly hope new forms of political mobilisation will be promoted enabling us to avoid the deadlock that would be inevitable in non-democratic governance situations.
 12. Welcome the initiative of the President of the European Parliament to organise over the next few days in Marseille the Summit of Presidents of Parliaments of Euro-Mediterranean countries, making thus possible concomitant major events of members of parliament, local and regional elected officials and the civil society of the Mediterranean. We support the action of the Parliamentary Assembly of Mediterranean that should continue to play a key role to strengthen these ties.
 13. Need the support and good will of all Euro-Mediterranean local and regional actors to promote inter-regional democracy capable of federating efforts into common projects. This is why we encourage EMRLA to continue the dialogue with the UfM, in order to assure its territorial dimension, the EU institutions and, in close collaboration with the Committee of the Regions, to maintain its capacity to offer operational solutions to those actors who may request them. In this sense, we welcome the agreement recently signed between the EMRLA and the UfM, which aims to foster their cooperation, promote synergies and contribute with concrete initiatives and projects to the development of an area of peace, stability and prosperity in the Mediterranean.
 14. Civil society is the most direct expression of the people's aspirations. Political messages need to be renewed at all levels, and representatives of civil society should help us accomplish this task. We are glad the Anna Lindh Forum coincides so closely with the FLRAM and are very pleased with the work we have started today together with their youth representatives, which should continue in the future. We invite these representatives of Mediterranean youth and civil society to continue these exchanges on the occasion of our 4th Forum so that together we may take stock of the progress accomplished.
 15. Highlight the key role that Mediterranean women should play in favour of a democratic space and of economic, social and cultural development. In this respect, the equal participation of women in all decision-making mechanisms at local and at Mediterranean levels appears as essential. It will facilitate their political participation and their economic empowerment.

16. The “Political Council” of the Mediterranean Commission of UCLG will monitor advances targeted in terms of democratic governance, the core issue in the search for peace, stability and prosperity in our territories. The **Political Council of the Mediterranean Commission of UCLG** was specifically created to be able to engage in a permanent dialogue with States, fund donors and international institutions.

We request that the Forum’s results be conveyed to all member States of the UfM, as well as to international institutions and organisations active in the Mediterranean. Let us all convene again at the 4th Forum of Local and Regional Authorities of the Mediterranean.