

EUROMED MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE

ON TOURISM

2 and 3 April 2008, Fez (Morocco)

Agreed Conclusions

In line with the 8th and the 9th Euro-Mediterranean Meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs, held in Tampere and Lisbon, where Ministers underlined the importance of the contribution of tourism to the economies of the EuroMed Partnership, and after a joint initiative from Morocco, Portugal and Slovenia, the first Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on Tourism was held in Fez on the 2 and 3 April 2008.

The Ministers welcomed Morocco for hosting the Ministerial Meeting and underlined the contribution of the preparatory Senior Officials and Experts meetings for the successful outcome, namely the general agreement on the importance of a closer and more active cooperation among Euro-Mediterranean partners in the tourism sector.

The Ministers also took note of the results of the FEMIP Conference on Sustainable Tourism which took place on 6 March 2008 in Berlin and welcomed its efforts in bringing together participants from the public and private sector to share their experiences and views on sustainable tourism in the Mediterranean.

The Ministers recalled that the Five Year Work Programme of the Barcelona Summit 2005 emphasised the need to cooperate to enhance the impact of tourism on job creation, infrastructure development and cultural understanding while ensuring economic, social and environmental sustainability. In this regard, the Ministers noted that intensive cooperation, partnership and consultation among EuroMed Partners on tourism issues can contribute to the achievement of other common goals such as job creation, competitiveness, trade, entrepreneurship and capital investment, economic cooperation, environment, transport, education, training and social development, dialogue between cultures and strengthening the role of women in conformity with the Istanbul Conference in 2006.

The Ministers considered that the Ministerial Conference was an important first step towards a new dimension of the Tourism sector within the Barcelona Process and the Action Plans so far concluded in the framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy.

They consider that global peace contributes to the development of tourism.

The Ministers

1. Underlined the effects of tourism on key macroeconomic variables (jobs, growth and investment), and the cross-linkages between tourism and other sectors of the economy.
2. Noted the importance of tourism for the EuroMed economies as well as the potential for growth in the sector, largely due to the outstanding natural and cultural resources of the region. Tourism-related small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) are as well important for women and young people, to help them strengthening their participation in the socio-economic and cultural life.
3. Noted that the majority of tourists arriving in the Mediterranean Partner countries come from EU Member States. Further development and enhancing economic cooperation could lead to an increased demand for tourism, which will require an adequate and balanced response from the European Union and from its Mediterranean Partners in order to project the industry's economic vitality and prosperity in a way that respects sustainability, and emphasised the importance of developing the tourism related infrastructure of the Mediterranean Partner Countries, specially in the field of Airports, ports, road and transport safety.
4. Recognised the important role that the sustainable development of tourism capabilities can contribute to the sustainable development of national economies at large.
5. Recalled that tourism depends inter alia on climate change and underlined that environmental pressures may severely impact particularly coastal and sea areas in the Euro-Mediterranean region; also according to the most recent reports of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, in particular the Fourth Assessment Report published in 2007, the Mediterranean basin will be one of the most vulnerable regions in the world to the climate change. In this sense, they underlined the need to enhance the awareness among all the stakeholders, and particularly the private sector, on the impact of climate change by promoting measures and actions aiming at developing sustainable tourism in the EuroMed region. Ministers furthermore recognised the role that Integrated

Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) can play in developing sustainable tourism and welcome the recent agreement on an ICZM Protocol to the Barcelona Convention Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean. Ministers, in this spirit, invited to promote cooperation, consultation and dialogue between EuroMed partners in order to strengthen the sustainability of Mediterranean tourism.

6. Underlined the importance of preventing and reducing the negative impacts of urbanisation and non-sustainable land use for tourism infrastructure construction especially at coastal areas.

7. Underlined the importance of strengthening civil protection in a region where the rising trend of vulnerability to natural and man-made disasters can seriously impact the socio-economic development. In this context, Ministers welcomed the regional Euromed Programme on disaster response (PPRD) that should benefit from an improved strategic approach. They also welcomed the entry into force of annex V of the MARPOL Convention for the Mediterranean, which gives to the sea a special status in the sense of the International maritime Organisation.

8. Recalled that the safety and security of tourists is a common concern of all the States of the EuroMed region.

9. Supported the implementation of training programmes for professionals in the field of tourism, in order to raise the quality standards in tourism products and services, whilst guaranteeing a suitable consumer protection.

10. Emphasised the importance of the negotiations on services and the right of establishment in accordance with the objective of achieving a Euro-Mediterranean Free Trade Area by 2010 and in order to encourage the flow of investments across the Mediterranean region, particularly in tourism-related sectors.

11. Welcomed the Euro-Mediterranean Charter for Enterprise, as a useful instrument for enhancing the business climate and for promoting enterprise competitiveness. The Charter could be particularly helpful to connect the EuroMed private tourism sector and business organisations more closely. Connections to existing networks of business support services relating to innovation and entrepreneurship could also be useful.

12. Agreed on the importance to reinforce the identification of investment opportunities, as well as the promotion of joint-ventures in the tourism sector and reiterated the central role of the private sector in this field. Recognised the importance of the flow of

investments to the tourist destinations in Mediterranean Partner Countries to further support and develop this vital sector.

13. Consider the importance of common criteria of hotel classifications, on national and voluntary bases, in the Euro-Mediterranean Region.

14. Encouraged to pursue negotiations for further liberalisation of air transport between the European Union and Mediterranean countries as an instrument to enhance the development of the tourism markets in accordance with internationally recognised good practices, and underlined the importance of ensuring and supporting access to remote Euro-Mediterranean destinations, including coastal areas and islands.

15. Considered that tourism is an excellent tool for cultural understanding, mutual respect and tolerance, recalled the decision made by the EuroMed Ministers of Foreign Affairs in Lisbon to declare 2008 the Euro-Mediterranean year on dialogue between cultures and to hold an EuroMed Ministerial on Culture in Greece in May 2008. They also stressed the importance of cultural tourism, as well as cultural routes, to best promote our Euro-Mediterranean cultural heritage.

16. Recalled the Albufeira conclusions and in particular the need to work towards facilitating people-to-people exchanges and promote faster issuance of visa and look at specific procedures for certain categories of people and promote legal migration opportunities within the Euro-Mediterranean region, taking into account the needs of the respective labour markets.

17. Underlined the need to include the tourism sector within the opportunities offered by the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument.

18. Underlined the need to better profit from the existing TAIEX and TWINNING Programmes to enhance the institutional capacity of national tourism administrations of the Mediterranean partners by developing best practices from the experience of EU Member States; Underlined the importance to enhance the capacity building of the Mediterranean Partner Countries in different fields of the Tourism Industry, inter alia, human resources development and training, hygiene, information technology, quality of services, upgrading and promotional marketing.

19. Recognized the crucial role of education, emphasised in the Cairo declaration of the Ministers of Higher Education and Scientific Research (Cairo – 18 June 2007) to the development, inter alia, of the tourism sector in the Mediterranean countries. In this regard, the Ministers underlined the possible contribution of the EuroMed Permanent

University Forum (EPUF) and the importance of Euro-Med cooperation between tourism schools through the TEMPUS Programme as well as the participation of their students in the Erasmus Mundus Programme.

20. Welcomed the project of the Euro-Mediterranean University in Slovenia, which will facilitate innovation, scientific and research cooperation on tourism, knowledge exchange and encourage Euro-Med universities networking, exchange of tourism students and lecturers and cooperation between universities in the field of tourism postgraduate programmes.

21. Reiterated that reliable statistics are crucial for the tourism sector and recognised the need for further cooperation among EuroMed partners in this area. Bearing in mind that the technical assistance to the statistical services in the Mediterranean countries being provided through MEDSTAT II Programme, which will run until the end of 2008, emphasised the need to explore other available mechanisms to allow continued support beyond that date.

22. Stressed the importance of the cooperation among the Administrations of Tourism or Tourist Boards of the EuroMed partners in exchanging information, statistics and best practices in the field of sustainable tourism.

23. Stressed the need to reinforce cooperation in the field of tourism between the European Union and the Mediterranean partner countries and agreed to take steps to prepare and implement cooperation actions, particularly in the areas of education, training, cultural heritage, institutional capacitation, investment promotion and statistics, drawing on existing programmes.

24. Invited FEMIP to mobilise its whole range of financial instruments in order to foster the development of tourism and its links with the Mediterranean partner countries.

25. Invited the senior officials on tourism to meet in order to prepare a Working Programme to be submitted to the next EuroMed Ministerial Conference on Tourism.

26. Agreed that the EuroMed Ministerial Conference on Tourism be held biennially.