



**SECOND EURO-MEDITERRANEAN MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE
ON THE INFORMATION SOCIETY**
“Building an Enabling Environment for the EUROMED Information Society”

Cairo 27 February 2008

DECLARATION

1. The Ministers thanked the Egyptian Government for hosting the Second Euro-Mediterranean (EUROMED) Ministerial Conference on the Information Society in cooperation with the Slovenian Presidency of the EU and with the European Commission as well as the successful organisation of the Cairo ICT Exhibition.
2. The Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (Barcelona Process), which constitutes a unique framework for dialogue and cooperation between the two shores of the Mediterranean, based on the Association Agreements and recalled the importance of the European Neighbourhood Policy and the Action Plans agreed with most of the Mediterranean partners as important tools to reinforce and complement the Partnership. Association Agreements and Action Plans emphasize the importance of the Information Society. They emphasised the importance of co-ownership for the Barcelona Process in order to establish a common area of peace and stability, build a zone of shared prosperity and promote mutual understanding between people across the Mediterranean; they reaffirmed their commitment to implementing the relevant objectives of the Five-Year Work Programme agreed by the partners at the 10th Anniversary EUROMED Summit in 2005; they noted that the Euro-Mediterranean meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs in November 2007 welcomed high-level cooperation in the field of the Information Society.
3. The Ministers acknowledged the adoption of the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI 2007-2013), which includes funds for the Mediterranean Partners.



4. The Ministers recalled the outcomes of the First EUROMED Ministerial Conference on the Information Society (Dundalk, 10-11 April 2005), which laid the foundations of a new regional dimension of the Information Society, and of the First Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on Higher Education and Research (Cairo, 18 June 2007), which agreed on future steps for increasing cooperation in the field of education, research and innovation.
5. The Ministers recognised that cooperation in the field of the Information Society and in the field of Higher Education, Research and Innovation go hand in hand and constitute mutually reinforcing elements towards the achievement of the Barcelona Process goals; in this respect, the implementation of concrete measures such as participation in programmes (Tempus, Erasmus Mundus, 7th Framework Programme of Research and Development, Competitiveness and Innovation Programme), the networking of institutions (EUROMED Distance University, EUROMED University Forum, Euro-Mediterranean University) and the improvement of mobility including Mobility Centres and Portals and their follow-up will be very important.
6. The Ministers acknowledged the vital contribution of the Information Society, Research and Innovation to competitiveness, job creation, and meeting the challenges of globalisation; they encouraged the active participation and involvement of all stakeholders, such as Governments, civil society, private business and international organisations and recognised the role of public/private partnerships in the development of the information and communications technologies (ICTs) sector.
7. The Ministers recalled the results of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) held in Geneva from 10 to 12 December 2003 and Tunis from 16 to 18 November 2005, and the consensus reached on its outcome documents. The Ministers advocated that policies related to the Information Society should take into account the recommendations made by the Summit and recalled the close relation between the Information Society, socio-economic development, transfer of technology, as well as human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the right to development with special attention to the use of ICTs for development.



8. The Ministers recalled that a consensus emerged at the WSIS for an international approach to the Information Society that is common to all UN Member States and based on its outcome documents (the "Geneva Declaration of Principles", the "Geneva Plan of Action", the “Tunis Commitment” and the “Tunis Agenda for the Information Society”) which include recommendations for bridging the digital divide, and they welcomed the follow-up processes for Internet Governance which includes:
- enhanced cooperation in the future, to enable governments, on an equal footing, to carry out their roles and responsibilities regarding international public policy issues pertaining to the Internet;
 - the new forum for multi-stakeholder policy dialogue - the Internet Governance Forum which held its first meeting in Athens from 30 October to 2 November 2006 and its second meeting in November 2007 in Rio de Janeiro on 12 to 15 November 2007 is planning its third meeting in India in 2008 and its fourth meeting in Egypt in 2009.
9. The Ministers welcomed the results of the Second Euro-Mediterranean Meeting between the European Regulators Group and the Mediterranean regulators in Rome (5 December 2007) and emphasised the need for further liberalisation of the electronic communications markets taking into account differences in national situations, in order to stimulate a favourable environment for the widespread use of ICT, thus encouraging foreign and domestic investments.
10. The Ministers considered that regulatory reform should be actively pursued by the Mediterranean Partners through a process of harmonisation at regional level and of approximation of regulatory frameworks. They recalled that the Ministries and regulatory authorities responsible for the sector in the Mediterranean countries had met in February 2007 in Jordan to launch the second work plan of the EU-funded regional project “New Approaches to Telecommunications policies” (NATP-II).



11. The Ministers took note of the document entitled “*Investing in Our Future*” as a contribution of the Arab Mediterranean Partners to the work of the Information Society in the Euro-Mediterranean context.

12. The Ministers highlighted the accomplishments of bilateral and regional projects aiming at regulatory reform of the electronic communications sector and at improved networking between the information technology and research communities. However, Ministers stressed that forthcoming regional projects should aim at improving mutually beneficial ICT partnerships between Europe and the Mediterranean Partner countries, building on the achievements of EUMEDIS and other regional initiatives and on the issues discussed at the 2nd Ministerial conference.

13. The Ministers recalled the availability of instruments to implement regional and bilateral assistance for the development of the Information Society, such as the Facility for Euro-Mediterranean Investment and Partnership (FEMIP) and other lending mechanisms provided by the EIB, workshops, seminars and twinning projects funded by the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI); they invited the Mediterranean Partners to benefit from these instruments. In addition, Ministers welcomed specially designed regional programs that explore the special nature of the sector and its potential.

14. The Ministers stressed the fundamental need to ensure interconnection of research networks to support, inter alia, the creation of grid-enabled scientific e-Infrastructures able to make ICT Research and Development cooperation between Europe and the Mediterranean countries more efficient; they recognised the fundamental role that EUMEDCONNECT played in interconnecting the National Research and Education Networks (NRENs) in the region and with Europe, enabling collaboration in multiple domains with high scientific and societal impact, and considered it essential to guarantee the sustainability and promotion of the initiative.



15. The Ministers stressed the necessity for greater participation of researchers and experts of the Mediterranean Partners in EU programmes in the fields of Research and Development as well as in Innovation, and deemed it necessary to offer new ways and facilities for exchanges and collaboration to the ICT research community of the Mediterranean area. Specific actions targeting this collaboration should be included in the relevant schemes of the ICT part of the 7th Framework Programme of Research and Development.
16. The Ministers underlined that the conjunction of multilingualism and the internationalisation of search engines, indexation tools and domain names (IDN) provides new opportunities in the Mediterranean area for cultural, educational and social exchange among the different languages in the EUROMED region as well as for electronic commerce and tourism.
17. The Ministers acknowledged that in order to encourage exploitation of the opportunities and to take advantage of the benefits offered by the Internet and new online technologies, measures are needed to promote their security and safer use, in particular for children and minors.
18. The Ministers declared that policies aimed at bridging the digital divide and at facilitating e-inclusion should be based on the principle of solidarity between all stakeholders, such as governments, civil society, private business and international organizations and recognized the role of Public Private Partnerships in the development of the ICT sector.
19. The Ministers invited the Euro-Mediterranean Partners to improve access to, and facilitate the efficient use of information, technology transfer and networks, and offered assistance to promote mechanisms for strengthening Euro-Mediterranean cooperation with view to achieving the goals of the Barcelona Process.
20. The Ministers therefore agreed to undertake the appropriate measures to realize the following actions:



- intensify cooperation in the EUROMED region in regulatory issues, connectivity, research and ICT for development, multilingual e-content, e-learning, e-science, e-health, e-inclusion and e-government, helping to bridge the digital divide;

- reinforce the work of the EUROMED Forum on the Information Society as a crucial tool to enhance and strengthen cooperation between the EUROMED Partners and to convene such a Forum at least once a year in order to improve synergies, assess the impact of common efforts in the field of the Information Society and recommend future actions; in particular, the EUROMED Forum on the Information Society will:
 - use ICT to enhance communication among countries in the EUROMED region by considering to create an electronic forum, a secure website that will help share information, post meetings agendas, documents, minutes of meetings and outcomes;

 - prepare a Work Programme with specific initiatives and projects to be executed within an appropriate time frame. This Work Programme should match all the decisions taken within this meeting;

 - carry out a mapping exercise to match the existing programmes on one side and identified priorities for the Euro-Mediterranean region on the other. In this regard, the suggested cooperation was based on a peer to peer level of partnership and the principle of cost sharing;

 - consider the appropriate mechanism to carry out the functions necessary to prepare for, and to regularly report to, the Ministerial conference in a comprehensive and timely manner.



- undertake a broad programme of actions to support the process of regulatory reforms for the sector of electronic communications in order to build an institutional environment which will promote effective competition and to encourage investment in the sector;
- encourage the process of approximation of the regulatory frameworks of the Mediterranean Partners and the European Union, and the establishment of close cooperation between their regulators on a regional basis by providing advice and support for the regulatory activities of the future "EUROMED Network of Regulators" and, bilaterally, through twinning projects, workshops on important regulatory issues, and the continuation of the "New Approaches to Telecommunications Policy (NATP-II) " project;
- take the appropriate measures for the continuation of the EUMEDCONNECT initiative as well as adequate financial support also by Mediterranean Partners and other sources of funding;
- promote more active participation in the 7th Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development, an essential instrument for research activities in the ICT field; and support the effectiveness of ICT National Contact Points of FP7 through capacity building and knowledge sharing;
- enhance cooperation in the field of innovation by promoting the participation of Mediterranean Partners in activities related to innovation including the EU CIP, building upon the successful implementation of the declaration of the "6th EuroMediterranean Conference on Industry" held in Rhodes on 21st September, 2006;
- work towards improving the safety and security of ICT, especially in regard to cyber crime, consumer protection, child protection, spam and other privacy-related issues;
- support the extension of cooperation in areas of mutual interest, such as:



- consultation and monitoring of the internationalisation and standardisation of digital networks and platforms, in particular for the implementation of widely used scripts and languages;
- facilitating internationalisation of digital networks and platforms by encouraging the development and dissemination of appropriate tools and techniques such as multilingual word processing, e-mail clients, web browsers, search engines, keyboard drivers etc.

Implementation and Follow Up:

- Ministers agreed to maintain at least once a year meetings of the EUROMED Forum on Information Society with a view to implementing the above mentioned objectives and actions as well as reviewing achieved progress and report to the EUROMED Committee.
- Ministers agreed to hold a EUROMED Ministerial meeting biennially to assess the state of play of the implementation as well as to promote further cooperation.

The Ministers agreed that by implementing this Declaration a new impulse will be given to the EUROMED Dialogue on the Information Society.