



PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY OF THE MEDITERRANEAN
ASSEMBLEE PARLEMENTAIRE DE LA MEDITERRANEE

الجمعية البرلمانية للبحر الأبيض المتوسط

CHARTER OF THE MEDITERRANEAN

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“The Mediterranean is becoming a nuptial bed for West and East”.

Michel Chevalier (1806-1879)

Foreword

At the dawning of the third millennium, the Mediterranean still gives us good reason to prosper and hope, and it calls on us to partake in the art of living. As citizens and parliamentarians of all Mediterranean countries, it is our intention to unequivocally stake our claim to our heritage and our say in the future, which is why we want to lay down a declaration of our beliefs and ideals.

The Mediterranean is an Inner Sea bathing the shores of three continents. As such, it is part of the very matrix of Europe, the Maghreb and Mashrek, leaving a legacy of stable core values. This legacy has produced in us a never-ending curiosity for self-betterment and knowledge. The complex traditions that have long thrived on both sides of the Sea have taught us never to denigrate the greatness of mankind. They tell us about ourselves, who we are, and enrich our surroundings. They have given us an identity, and the freedoms we are proud of, and moreover, they allow us trust our neighbours.

The Mediterranean has taught us to give and receive, to strive for achievement and question ourselves with singularity of purpose, as well as evolve in distinct mental environments within an intricate world, since the times of Homer and Virgil. Its knowledge, laws, beliefs, three monotheistic religions, the respect for nature and beauty, the sacred and reason, have always shone out far from its shores contributing to the whole experience of mankind. This is why we, both as citizens and parliamentarians, wish to show we are worthy of our heritage. Our aim is not to make one civilisation great to the detriment of another, nor to scorn persons or property, but simply to state, as we look towards our future, that wisdom, freedom and a common idea exist, which we feel are imperative for the future of the world.

A Common Heritage

On a world scale, the Mediterranean is quite a small land-locked sea. However, this Sea has undoubtedly played a unique role in the history of mankind and his freedom. As the “Mother of Civilisation”, the Mediterranean has witnessed the rise and fall of peoples who have left a profound imprint on the culture of humanity: from the Assyrians, Egyptians, Minoans, Hebrews, Hittites, Phoenicians, Greeks, Etruscans, Romans, to the Gallic and Iberian peoples, the Berbers, Arabs, Ottomans, to name but a few.

It is equally remarkable that the three monotheistic religions of the world grew up in the Mediterranean, or close to it, and this is where they have found their maximum expression. Whilst relations between these monotheistic religions may have often been conflictual, their three Revelations have nonetheless been the vehicle for the expression of countless shared values that have contributed to shaping the Mediterranean *psyche*. By giving an intrinsic value to Man, the three religions have offered dignity to humankind, implying greater respect for his physical and moral integrity. This legacy binds us: it is why inter-religious dialogue takes on a particular relevance and therefore has to be strengthened.

The history of the Mediterranean, including all its turmoil, helps us to understand the place of mankind and the people throughout the course of time.

Periods of relative stability, when a given people or power dominated the Mediterranean or had a more or less predominant role there, alternated with other periods of antagonism between rival forces. Greece composed of its cities at the time of Pericles, the Hellenic Empire of Alexandria, the (High) Roman Empire, the Byzantine Empire and Justinian’s Reconquest, the zenith of the Abbasid Caliphate, the Ottoman Empire from the time of the conquest of Constantinople to Lepant, and even England, a non-Mediterranean power at the end of the 18th and beginning of the 19th century: here we see periods of peace and stability.

During the building phases of these empires, or on the contrary, during their decline, all of them being to differing degrees multi-ethnic and multi-confessional, the Mediterranean was fiercely contended: Greece against Persia, Rome against Carthage, Byzantium, and later, Spain against the Ottoman Empire, France against England, etc.

History often likes to destroy what it has built. Empires collapse, crowns fall, kingdoms are dismembered. After unity, diversity and multipolarity follow. In 395, the division of the Roman Empire between the Emperor Theodosius’ two sons, one of whom received the West, and the other, the East, led to a dividing line between East and West. At the same time, the Arab-Muslim conquest during the 7th century separated the Northern and Southern shores of our internal sea.

The succession of civilisations in the Mediterranean seems to have led to the genesis of two great civilisations: Arab-Muslim on the one hand, and Greco-Roman-Judao-Christian, on the other. This distinction may appear to be somewhat simplistic, and it would seem rather unscrupulous to bring the whole heritage of the Greek culture to bear on only one side of this distinction. The great philosophers and scientists of Arab Andalusia origin, such as Ibn Sîna

(Avicenna) or Ibn Ruchd (Averroès), as is widely known, preserved and transmitted the intellectual heritage of the Ancient Greeks.

Nonetheless, this twofold portrayal has the merit of clearly identifying a genuine divide that exists today, one that is always in the minds of the Mediterranean people. However, this “mental boundary” has never been insurmountable and its importance should not be overestimated.

A Shared Space

We have known since the burning of Troy, and since the time of Homer, that history is always tragic. However, in the Mediterranean, war, as well as peace, have always created secret links between its shores. Regardless of borders and beliefs, men have never ceased to move from one country to another. As a consequence, hatred arising from ignorance lost ground. By way of trade or poetry, and by way of navigation, the Mediterranean civilisations, hostiles or neighbours, never ceased to fraternise.

At the time of this period of apparently widespread political cohesion in the Mediterranean following the Greek expansion and the Roman conquest, this manifest unity was characterised by the adoption of a common language. The drawing up of common city plans or the proliferation of temples with similar-styled colonnades and pediments dedicated to the same divinities, concealed inveterate differences within its territories. The conquerors and the conquered mixed with one another and influenced each other, giving rise to local and heterogeneous groupings.

On the contrary, it led to an unprecedented vitality of inter-Mediterranean exchange between men, ideas, lifestyles that contributed to creating, if not a civilisation, at any rate a common culture, spirit and values throughout the Mediterranean.

As seafarers sailed across the “Sea between the lands”, they brought with them their different influences and customs, transforming the Mediterranean into a melting pot where traditions and cultures became intertwined.

This cross-fertilisation brought about the privileged crossing places that have acted as catalysts throughout Mediterranean history, such as *Al-Andalous*, Venice, Byzantium-Constantinople-Istanbul, Alexandria, Carthage, Thessalonica and Marseilles.

Amongst the Mediterranean values forged by history, it is important to note, in random order, the tradition of hospitality, a sense of family, appetite for debate, a love for beauty, a taste for the pleasures of life and nature, as well as openness to neighbours, a sense of tragedy...

No given value can be considered as being the exclusive prerogative of any given region; rather, their combination forms a common heritage of unprecedented proportions. Hence, Mediterranean artists and writers have contributed to the emergence of a “mental picture of the Mediterranean” that is both real and imaginary, the shores of which are illuminated by the same lights, and bathed by the same crystalline blue water, that are home

to the same endemic plant varieties – olives, vines and figs – as well as oriental species that today have come to symbolise the Mediterranean landscape, such as orange, almond and apricot trees.

So, this metaphoric “melting pot” is not devoid of meaning and it can be authoritatively relied upon when evoking our common heritage. Accordingly, “*the alphabet was Phoenician, notions were Greek, the law was Roman, monotheism Semitic, ingenuity Punic, science Arabic, power Ottoman, co-existence Andalusian, sensitivity Italian, adventure Catalan, liberty French and eternity Egyptian*”.¹

It is possible to read the history of the Mediterranean as a rich and complex road, spanning from the diverse unity of ancient times to the united diversity of modern times. Of course, there is no reason to be charmed by an idyllic vision. Rather, we can say that the uncertainty and threats of yesterday once again tell us that it is urgent to take action, and that it is reasonable to hope. The time has come to come to terms with what it means “to be Mediterranean”, and to map out the boundaries of our common heritage. The future is always written in the handprint of the past.

A Collective Challenge

In truth, the Mediterranean has not always lived up to its expectations. It is up to us to face, together, a reality which is complex and sometimes dangerous from a political, economic, and cultural perspective:

- from a political perspective: there are numerous sources of tension in the Mediterranean, the most important being the Middle East, the negative ramifications of which extend far beyond the region itself; moreover, several riparian States have been or are still targeted by terrorist attacks;
- from an economic perspective: the gap between the northern and southern shores is considerable and the trend is for it to continue to grow; such disparity between the standards of living therefore lead to significant migratory pressures; as transit countries, the South Mediterranean states are now faced with the problem of large numbers of illegal immigrants, as has been the case with the north of the Mediterranean for a long time; attempts to cross the Mediterranean on makeshift boats have cost innumerable human lives; the Mediterranean economy is far from complying with the precepts of sustainable development, and environmental risks associated with human activity are therefore multiplying;
- from a cultural perspective: the lack of awareness of the diversity of cultures and religions is growing dangerously, leading to surge of intolerance.

¹ Joseph Maïla, *Etudes*, February 1997

This acknowledgement is sufficient to allow us to measure the extent of the challenge that lies ahead if we are going to transform the Mediterranean into an area of peace, mutually beneficial exchanges, and shared prosperity.

This is precisely why the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean (PAM) has been established.

In fact, the Parliaments of the riparian States wanted to establish their own parliamentary forum to enable them to share their experiences, compare their ideas and joint together to look for common answers to the most poignant problems facing the region.

By doing so, they sought to inject new dynamism into their common Mediterranean heritage, desirous of demonstrating its modernity and contributing to furthering the values that guide and answer the legitimate aspirations of the Mediterranean peoples they represent.

The values uniting Mediterranean people are not merely limited to the spheres of culture and the art of living, in fact, far from it. Such values are equally present in politics, considered in a broad sense.

They represent the very values that lay down the foundation stones for the actions of PAM, which is why it is imperative to restate them.

The first such value is that of democracy. It owes its origin to Greek civilisation and was present in some of the so-called City-States of the Mediterranean, before returning with a vengeance in a radically new form after the French revolution.

Whilst it is important not to reduce democracy to a single or standardised model, given that countries that represent widely varied national contexts; it would be equally mistaken, however, to simply apply the precepts of absolute relativism, whereby all democratic governments, or those presented as such, are automatically considered as valid. Undoubtedly, in the Mediterranean, the degree of flourishing of parliamentary democracy is not the same throughout and that considerable advancement can still be made in certain areas.

From this perspective, PAM's action has to be undertaken in a constructive spirit. It is not about handing down lessons, meting out credits or deducting penalty points, rather its aim is to promote the evolution required by setting up the necessary conditions for positive emulation. In this respect, widespread inter-parliamentary action relating to the activities of PAM will allow it to play a pioneering role in exchanging information about good parliamentary practices serving the purpose of comparing and strengthening democracy.

Basically, PAM subscribes to the "Universal Declaration on Democracy", adopted by the IPU at the 98th Inter-Parliamentary Conference held in Cairo in September 1997, which conferred the following tasks on Governments:

- To fully respect human rights as defined by relevant international conventions;
- To ensure that Parliament represents all components of society;
- To give Parliament the powers and means by which to express the will of the people by legislating and overseeing government action;
- To hold free and fair elections at regular intervals enabling the people's will to be expressed on the basis of universal, equal and secret suffrage;

- To ensure respect for civil and political rights, such as the rights to vote and to be elected, the rights to freedom of expression and assembly, access to information and the right to organise political parties and carry out political activities;
- Party organisation, activities, financing, funding and ethics must be properly regulated in an impartial manner;
- Individual participation in democratic processes and public life at all levels must be regulated fairly and impartially in order to avoid any discrimination, as well as the risk of intimidation by State and non-State actors;
- To ensure everybody is granted access to administrative and judicial remedies on the basis of equality as well as respect for administrative and judicial decisions;
- To be committed to satisfying the economic and social needs of the most disadvantaged, thus ensuring the full integration in the democratic process;
- To accommodate the participation of all people in order to safeguard diversity, pluralism and the right to be different in a climate of tolerance;
- To foster decentralised localised and regional government and administration;
- To guarantee a genuine partnership between men and women in the conduct of the affairs of society.

PAM also pledges its support for the “criteria for free and fair elections” as stated in the Declaration adopted by the IPU at its 154th Inter-Parliamentary Council held in Paris in March 1994.

By deepening its undertaking in support of democracy, PAM also promotes the principles of the rule of law, including among others, judicial independence, respect for the hierarchy of norms, equality before the law and other legal principles, as well as the right for everyone affected by the decision of a State organ or other public body to have an effective remedy before an impartial and independent judicial organ.

In the field of international relations, PAM is committed to the Charter of the United Nations and respects and promotes the following principles:

- Pacific settlement of disputes and conflicts;
- Respect for State sovereignty and the adoption of the “responsibility to protect and support” defined by Resolution 1674 of the United Nations Security Council;
- Support disarmament and non-proliferation treaties in the region, such as the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT);
- Universal condemnation of all forms of terrorism ;
- Condemnation of all forms of occupation;
- Support for the peace process implemented in the region, in particular in the Near East, where the objective is to achieve, on the basis of the principal resolutions of the Security Council, a fair and durable settlement to the conflict, through the establishment of two States, Israel and Palestine, living side-by-side with certain and mutually recognised boundaries;
- Adhesion to the principles of the Carthage Charter of Tolerance in the Mediterranean, and support for initiatives such as the Alliance of Civilizations aiming to further mutual understanding and promote peaceful and constructive dialogue among cultures and religions

An Engagement for the Future

Finally, it is the duty of each generation to write the page which will shape the future of our respective people. We, parliamentarians and citizens of the countries of the Mediterranean, gathered together in Monaco in this year, 2008, wish to show to ourselves that we possess the dignity to have learned from the lessons of the histories of our two shores. The history of the Mediterranean Sea has taught us that the happiness of the people must be worked towards. Nothing is given, nothing is promised. The worst is never far away if we do not take caution. But everything is possible for those who accept to dare and to act.

History accelerates, and the world recedes. It is becoming more and more difficult to find an answer to the old question which philosophers used to ask: Where can I feel myself to be at home? It seems that the time has come for us to assume together our responsibilities. We shall neither escape nor avoid them. We believe in mankind and in its freedom, and we have the privilege to be aware of who we are and where we live. We believe that every citizen from the shores of the Mediterranean has the right to live in peace, away from suffering and hunger. We want for our people and our countries to have the right of complete access to their heritage, and that they are able to see it bear its fruit. This heritage is not without substance; it tells us about knowledge, beauty, and mystery. It is our duty, we, the parliamentarians and citizens of the Mediterranean countries, strengthened by this common past, to work towards the future with confidence, and to recreate the lost unity of our two shores. We hope that this unity can bring peace, prosperity, and power to our people, which are all essential elements in the support of life.
