

MED NGO Statement
as read at the
3rd Conference of EuroMed Ministers for the Environment
(Cairo, 20 November 2006)

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me¹ start by thanking the European Commission and the Finnish Presidency for the invitation, as well as the Government of Egypt for the hospitality.

It is my pleasure to be speaking on behalf of the NGO Steering Committee also known as the *CdS* (Comité de Suivi) with its members from EEB, ENDA Maghreb, FoE Mednet, MIO-ECSDE, RAED and WWF MedPO. My further pleasure is to be speaking also on behalf of the *Mediterranean Environmental NGO Meeting* that was held yesterday in the premises of the League of Arab States, attended by around 100 representatives of NGOs from almost all the Mediterranean countries.

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

We once again emphasize the need for a holistic approach towards Sustainable Development in the Mediterranean that should be at the heart of the Euro Mediterranean Partnership, addressing the inequalities of the North and the South, particularly in relation to poverty issues.

This holistic approach refers to the needed attention to all aspects of environment in order to obtain sustainability, including: the marine environment, where apart from dealing with marine pollution, marine biodiversity should also be addressed - including the establishment of marine reserves; the terrestrial environment, where land degradation, soil erosion and desertification should be urgently addressed, and the atmospheric environment, where air pollution and its impacts at local and global levels have to be greatly reduced.

We, the NGOs, support the Declaration of the *Marrakech EuroMed Civil Forum* and reiterate that all systematic destruction of natural resources caused by conflict, aggression and occupation should be condemned. We believe that liberty, peace, solidarity, stability and good governance are prerequisites for the achievement of sustainable development.

As a result of the *CdS* consultations and yesterday's joint meetings of NGOs and Parliamentarians on improving the environmental cooperation in the Mediterranean after Barcelona +10, we would like to state the following:

On the ENP and ENPI:

- A sufficient level of funding within the ENPI should be earmarked for environmental activities both at the regional level of implementation (Regional Strategy for the Mediterranean) as well as at the national level (National Action Plans). Allocation of funds to NGOs should also be facilitated and specified.
- The governance process currently used for the ENP does not provide appropriate levels of transparency and participation. Its governance structure and mechanism must therefore be strengthened so as to ensure transparency, environmental integration and civil society participation. We ask the Ministers today to ensure the participation of

¹ (the statement was read by the coordinator of the NGO Steering Committee (*CdS*), Dr. Emad Adly, General Coordinator of RAED)

representatives of civil society in the preparation and review of the National Action Plans.

- In developing and applying the ENP we should make the best of what has already been achieved by other existing regional bodies, such as the UNEP/MAP, being the Secretariat of the Barcelona Convention, its Protocols and the Mediterranean Commission for Sustainable Development (MCSD). Good work has been done by MAP over the last 30 years and we stress its importance as a mechanism to address the objectives of the EC Environment Strategy for the Mediterranean and Horizon 2020.
- Education for Sustainable Development should be promoted as a tool for setting solid foundations for peace, dialogue, cooperation, better understanding of cultural diversity and environmental protection.
- In the area of EuroMed trade, Mediterranean Partner Countries have the right to protect their food security and sustainable development needs. The EuroMediterranean Partnership, ENP and ENPI must be fully supportive of the relevant recommendations of Sustainability Impact Assessment reports. The European Commission should provide an action plan on mainstreaming these recommendations into its trade agenda. An on-going mechanism for the monitoring of the implementation of the recommendations of the Sustainability Impact Assessment of the Euro-Mediterranean Free Trade Area should be set up with the participation of civil society.
- We call on Ministers to commit themselves to regional cooperation on climate change.
- We are seriously concerned about new plans to build nuclear power plants in the region.

On the Horizon 2020:

- We welcome the Horizon 2020 however it only addresses part of the larger sustainable development challenge that must be dealt with by the EMP.
- The necessary political and financial support for the full implementation of the Horizon 2020 initiative to de-pollute the Mediterranean must be secured.
- The steering committee of the Horizon 2020 must effectively function as a forum of Mediterranean stakeholders catalysing environmental integration in all other components of the EMP and ENP. NGOs should participate on an equal footing as proposed by the SMAP Working Group.
- We NGOs accept the invitation presented to us in yesterday's Med NGO meeting, on behalf of the European Commission to identify the capacity building needs of the Mediterranean NGOs.
- We NGOs are committed and will continue working at the regional level, and we will mobilise national and local NGO participation in the implementation of Horizon 2020, particularly local communities affected by the negative impact of pollution hot spots, to ensure that their concerns and needs are taken into account in the preparation of relevant 2020 projects.

Finally, I would like to thank all those who supported our meeting of yesterday, the EC, the Finnish presidency, UNEP/MAP, the GWP-Med, the League of Arab States and the Ministry of Environment in Egypt and specifically H.E. Eng. Maged George for his cooperation and the support he has given to our activities in Egypt and for the kind invitations and hospitality that the NGOs and the Parliamentarians have received during their stay in Egypt.