



**2007 EURO-MEDITERRANEAN SUMMIT OF
ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCILS AND
SIMILAR INSTITUTIONS**

15 – 16 October 2007

Athens, Greece

The Euro-Med Summit of Economic and Social Councils was held on October 15 – 16, 2007, at Astir Palace Hotel - Athens, Greece.

Participants : Representatives of Economic and Social Councils (ESC) participated at the Euro-Med Summit in addition to Socio-Occupational Organizations in the Euro-Mediterranean Countries which do not have an ESC or similar institutions such as Morocco, Jordan and Egypt.

During the summit, delegations from all ten partner countries, the European Economic and Social Committee, and most EU Member States discussed a number of issues including the participation of civil society in the Euro-Med partnership and the European neighborhood policy, strengthening participatory structures in the partner countries of the South, competitiveness and social cohesion in an integrated Euro-Med area, and follow-up to the Euro-Med ministerial conference on the role of women in society and civil society initiatives for young people. These discussions took place in the presence of the socio-occupational networks and the political authorities of the partnership.

Egyptian Participation :

A distinguished delegation representing Egypt participated in the Summit. The Egyptian delegation which participated at the Summit consisted of the following members :

- **Prof. Abd el Aziz Hegazy**, Head of Network of Civil Society Organizations in Egypt, Member of the Board of Trustees at the Bibliotheca Alexandrina and Former Prime Minister of Egypt.
- **Mr. Adham Nadim**, Executive Director, Industrial Modernization Programme.
- **Mr. Alaa Ezz**, Secretary General, Confederation of EU-Egypt Business Associations CEEBA - Executive President, Federation of Egyptian Chambers of Commerce FEDCOC.
- **Mrs. Aziza Helmy**, Director of Children at Risk Programme - The National Council for Childhood and Motherhood.
- **Mr. Hassan el-Hayawan**, President of the Egyptian European Council.

- **Mr. Loay el-Shawarby**, Vice President of "Nahdet el Mahrousa" {NGO}.
- **Eng. Mai Galal**, Specialist, Dialogue Forum - Bibliotheca Alexandrina
- **Ambassador Moshira Khattab**, Secretary General - The National Council for Childhood and Motherhood
- **Prof. Mostafa el Said**, Chairman of Economic Committee of the People's Assembly.
- **Mr. Mostafa Mungui**, 1st vice President of the Egyptian Trade Union Federation
- **Mr. Mostafa Rostom**, Director of International Relations Department - Egyptian Trade Union Federation.

Mr. Fathi Sorour, President of the Egyptian Parliament and Vice President of the Euro-Med Parliamentary Assembly (EMPA) participated at the Inaugural session.

An Introductory meeting was organized between members of the Egyptian delegation headed by Prof. Hegazy. Followed by another meeting between the Egyptian delegation and Mr. Dimitriadis, President of the Economic and Social Committee, Mr. Confalonieri, President of the Euro-Med Follow up Committee, in addition to Mr. Bence, Head of External Relation Department and Ms. Laila Wold, Secretariat and Organizer of the Summit.

In the second meeting, the European side welcomed the Egyptian delegation and affirmed their happiness for their participation for the first time and their hopes that this participation will be the beginning of further steps toward collaboration and establishment of an Egyptian Economic and Social Committee.

Mr. Dimitriadis declared that the Euro-Med is hoping that Egypt would consider forming an Economic and Social Committee including all Egyptian Civil Society representatives to work with the Euro-Med entities.

During the meeting, the Egyptian delegation raised many questions concerning the regulations and the obligations of the suggested Economic and Social Committee. Prof. Hegazy asked if an ESC should have a specific structure, formula or contribution percentages, taking as an example the ESC of Greece, which is divided to three categories (Employers – Employees – various interests organizations).

Mr. Confalonieri, the President of the Euro-Med Follow up Committee, explained that the formulation of the ESC depends on each country individual situation and usually the Euro-Med does not interfere in such internal matters. The only important condition is that such a committee should reflect the structure of the society through its Economic and Social Actors. In addition, he stressed that such committee members should be independent and cannot be members of any government or political party.

Ambassador Moshira Khattab, stressed during the meeting on the Egyptian side willingness for such collaboration with the Euro-Med and that the Egyptian delegation is looking forward for future cooperation. She added that it was important to know about other countries experiences in order to look for the positive steps and avoid any possible mistakes. The function of such Egyptian committee should be provided with all the required resources to ensure the implementation of this entity and at the same time secure its independency.

Mr. Dimitriadis finalized the meeting confirming the Euro-Med's great delight for the Egyptian contribution for the first time. He stressed that Egypt was always considered the culture leader in the region and its participation is considered a great added value to the summit.

The Summit official Sessions:-

The Inaugural Session started with a welcome speech by Mr. Polyzogopoulos, President of the Economic and Social Council of Greece, followed by several interventions by Mr. Dimitriadis, President of the European Economic and Social Committee, Prof. Abd el Aziz Hegazy, Mr. Bruto Da Costa, President of the ESC of Portugal, representing the EU Portuguese Presidency, Ms. Sophia Kalantzakos, Deputy Minister of Employment and Social Protection.

Afterward, an address was given by H.E. the President of the Hellenic Republic Mr. Karolos Papoulias followed by a speech by Dr. Sorour, and an intervention by Mr. Wissels, Director of the European Commission.

The President of the Hellenic Republic welcomed all participants including the Egyptian delegation and was very pleased that Egypt participated in the Euro-Med Summit for the first time.

In his Speech his Excellency Dr. Fathi Sorror stressed on the importance of the Summit, Since It gathers high officials of Civil Society Organizations in each of the participating countries. As a result, they will be more responsive and aware of their peoples' needs and problems.

He added that in the beginning we have to admit that the Euro-Mediterranean cooperation is not yet up to the set objectives and wishes needed for the general interests of our people in the North and South.

His Excellency stated that the cooperation between the Civil Society Organizations and the Socio-Economic councils in the Euro-Mediterranean frame is a necessity for the coming future done by the geography, drafted by history and confirmed by the unity of fate. However, all these organizations and councils should consider that the two factors: political and cultural on the two levels: regional and international, are vital and should be put into great consideration in order to accelerate the achievement of total development and social coherence.

Dr. Sorour invited all concerned organizations at the edges of the Mediterranean to activate the initiatives, which relate to a cultural exchange and particularly with regard to the introduction of the European side to the culture of the Southern side: its standards, values and holiness, either connected to the religion, the habits or the traditions.

His Excellency finalized his speech by affirming that the weakness of political determination in the North countries in the settlement of their political conflicts and its synchronization with the work deficiencies of the South countries in the domains of economic and social development has multiplied their risks together.

H.E. Prof. Hegazy made an intervention starting by affirming that the employers, employees and civil society organizations of Egypt, participated in this summit with

full willingness and enthusiasm to strengthen their cooperation and ties with the European Union through the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC).

Prof. Hegazy explained that this willingness and enthusiasm are reflected in the composition of our largest ever Egyptian delegation to the summit and that we are here to continue and follow up on the dialogue that was initiated during the visit to Egypt last September by a delegation headed by Professor Confalonieri.

Professor resumed by saying that this dialogue has set the stage for Egypt's keen interest to establish a national civil society structure encompassing major active economic and social players for its national and regional objectives. There are three parameters for this structure, namely: willingness; vision; and instruments.

H.E explained that the willingness is demonstrated by the presence of this high level broad-based; multidisciplinary delegation encompassing the key employers, employees and NGOs of the Egypt of today. The vision is steadily emerging through a participatory process, involving all stakeholders. And The instruments will evolve guided by this vision.

Finally, his H.E affirmed that the Egyptian delegation is looking at an entity that is independent; capable, fully empowered; highly participatory; and adequately resourced mandated. An entity able to build consensus among all civil society actors, with a view to impacting decision making, at all levels, in a manner conducive to serving the people of Egypt with their different interest groups. (Full Text- See Annex I)

A Press conference took place at the end of the Inagural session.

The Summit in the two following working sessions discussed two important topics related to the following subjects:

First working session discussed the Civil society participation in implementing the European Neighbourhood Policy Action Plans. It was co-chaired by Ms. Daibes Murad, Head of the Palestinian delegation and Ms. Lanara, Executive Committee of the Greek ESC.

During this session, Mr. Iuliano, from the European Economic and Social Committee made a presentation about the information report on "Civil society involvement at local level in the context of the implementation of action plans for the ENP and balanced and sustainable development" (See Annex II)

This presentation was followed by a comment on the report by Mr. Wissels, Director, ENP coordination at the European Commission and a Presentation by Mr. Boufous, Member of the Employment Commission of the Confederation of Moroccan Enterprises (CGEM), of an example of civil society involvement in implementing the EU-Morocco ENP action plan.

Those presentations were followed by opened discussions stressing on two main topics which were Economic Integration and Freedom of Mobility and Travel.

The Second working session discussed "The Competitiveness and Social Cohesion as factors in building an integrated Euro-Mediterranean area" (See Annex III). It was co-chaired by Mr. Chaabane, President of the ESC of Tunisia and Mr. Dulevski, President of the ESC of Bulgaria.

During the session, a presentation of the report was given by Mr. Blanco Muñoz, Member of the Economic and Social Council of Spain followed by an Intervention of the report of the European Parliament, on the construction of a free trade area in the Euro-Med region. by Mr. Arif, Member of the European Parliament and Rapporteur

The discussion of the report raised debates around The Neighborhood Policy, Illegal Immigration and the Dialogue between the European and Arab countries.

The First session on the second day of the summit discussed the State of play concerning the establishment of permanent structures of dialogue/National ESCs in three southern partner countries such as Jordan represented by Mr. Al Maaytah, President of the General Federation of Jordanian Trade Unions as well as Morocco, represented by Mr. Zegloul Essaydi, President of the Union of Moroccan agricultural cooperatives (UNCAM) and Egypt represented by Prof. Abd el Aziz Hegazy. It was

co-chaired by Mr. Coquillion, Vice-President of the ESC of France and Mr. Ariza, Vice-President of the ESC of Spain.

The Fourth working session discussed the Follow-up of the Euro-Med Ministerial Conference on the Role of Women in Society (Istanbul 14-15 November 2006). It was co-chaired by Mr. Bruto da Costa, President of the ESC of Portugal and Mrs. Benabbas, Member of the Bureau of the ESC of Algeria.

During this Session a number of presentations were given by Ms. Attard, member of the European Economic and Social Committee and Rapporteur, about the own initiative opinion of the EESC on Women and Entrepreneurship in the Euro-Med region (See Annex IV) and Ms. Santoro, President of the Commission for international and EU-policies of the National Council for Economics and labour (CNEL), about the interim report on "Factors facilitating access by women to economic and social life and higher qualifications" (See Annex V)

In addition an Intervention by Ms. Sayin, from Women Employment Platform of Turkey and a Presentation by Ms. Kärkkäinen, Coordinator of the Gender thematic group of the European Training Foundation (EFT), of the report on "Gender mainstreaming in education and employment: overall perspectives and case studies"

The Fifth working session discussed the Euro-Mediterranean networks of economic and social partners and civil society organisations co-chaired by Mr. Portelli, President of the ESC of Malta and Mr. Nasnas, President of the ESC of Lebanon.

During the sessions, there were interventions by Mr. Sarraf, President of the Union of Mediterranean Confederations of Enterprises (UMCE), Mr. Tlili, Euro-Med Trade Union Forum, Mr. Gouet, Project Manager, International Federation of Agricultural Producers (IFAP) and Mr. Lozano, Coordinator of the Euro-Mediterranean Network for Social Economy.

The Sixth working session discussed Civil Society Initiatives for Youth. It was co-chaired by Mr. Tamir, President of the ESC of Israel and Mr. Liolios, Vice-President of the ESC of Greece.

A Number of delegates gave presentations concerning the Civil Society Initiates for Youth such as Ambassador Moshira Khattab as well as Ms. Attard, Project Officer of the Euro-Med Youth Platform and Mr. Olivé-Serret, Director of the Executive Secretariat of the Euro-Med Permanent University Forum.

Ambassador Moshira Khattab stated that the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood (NCCM); the highest national body in charge of child development and protection; was honoured to receive a delegation from the EESC last month. This delegation was chaired by the president of its Euro-Med follow-up Committee, which was visiting Egypt to discuss opportunities and avenues of mutual interest and to explore options that could further enhance dialogue, broaden the spheres of consensus and hence have an effective impact on decision making at both bilateral and regional fronts.

It is in this context, specifically at the regional front, that her Excellency did propose the creation of a Euro-Med network for children, a suggestion that was well received in principle by the delegation, as it aims to invest in the future of our region, rather than pay the higher cost of solving problems in the future.

Ambassador Moshira Khattab added that the phenomenon of globalization has captured world's attention in various ways. From the information superhighway to the illegal trafficking in drugs, arms and even humans, to the phenomenal impact of the global media.

She affirmed that today, people all over the globe are being touched or affected in some way by globalization. Perhaps the most visible and talked about dimensions of globalization is the boom in information and communications technology, and economic integration, both of which have resulted in a quantum leap for the development of the world, as we know it today.

H.E also explained that building societies that equip people to prosper in today's and tomorrow's world will be one of the most important measures of effective and legitimate government in this century.

Therefore, the Euro-Med structure for children will be an important mechanism for instilling the culture of respect for Human Rights; peace education, tolerance and acceptance of others. And its purpose is proposed: To cooperate with the governments of the member states and relevant civil society members in promoting the development of technical activities and instruments that contribute to the integral protection of children and to the improvement of their families' quality of life.

The Ambassador added that leading economists have proven beyond doubt that investing in children has the highest economic return; 1 to 7. If we can provide our children the opportunity to grow up in an atmosphere of love, peace and security; we will definitely save many generations the scourges of wars

The Ambassador summarized her call for a Euro-Med structure for children by saying that the question is not WHETHER such structure is required, but rather HOW we can make it most effective as fast as possible. (Full Text- See Annex VI)

The Seventh working session discussed the activity report of the Euro-Med Follow-up Committee by Mr. Confalonieri. The session was chaired by Mr. Hencks, Vice-President of the ESC of Luxembourg and Mr. Stefanou, Vice-President of the ESC of Greece.

At this final Session, Mr. Confalonieri made a presentation of the activity report of the Euro-Med Follow-up Committee.

The Closing session was chaired by Mr. Polyzogopoulos, President of the Economic and Social Council of Greece followed by a presentation and adoption of the final declaration (See Annex VII). Participants commented on several points of the declaration and were promised to be taken in consideration while issuing the final version. At the end of the Summit, Ms. Dora Bakoyannis, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Greece made the closing speech and thanked all the participants for their efficient participation.

Conclusion:

The outcome of all summit sessions and meetings concerning Egypt could be briefly concluded at the following points:

- The Egyptian delegation upon return to Egypt is supposed to take all necessary steps and contact all concerned Authorities toward the establishment of an Egyptian Economic and Social Committee.

- Several countries (France, Algeria, Tunisia and Spain) which already have economic and social committees invited the Egyptian delegation to visit their countries and offered their experience for the Egyptians to establish a new committee.

- The Euro-Med proposed organizing a workshop in Brussels for the Egyptian delegation, for more discussions concerning the establishment of the Economic and Social committee. They also offered to send an expert to Egypt whenever it is required. The date and time of such workshop is not decided yet.

- Ambassador Moshira Khattab stressed on the importance of the establishment of a Euro-Med Network for Children and her initiative was very welcomed and appreciated by all delegations particularly the French delegation. Consequently, the establishment of a Euro-Med Network for Children was stated and recommended at the Summit Final Declaration (See Annex VI).

List of Annexes:

ANNEX I	Speech by Prof. Hegazy, Head of the Egyptian Delegation
ANNEX II	Information report of the Section for External Relations on Civil society involvement at local level in the context of the implementation of action plans for the European Neighborhood Policy and balanced and sustainable development
ANNEX III	Joint report on "the factors of competitiveness and social cohesion for the construction of an integrated euro-Mediterranean area"
ANNEX IV	Opinion on Promotion of Women's Entrepreneurship in the EURO-MED Region
ANNEX V	Factors facilitating access by women to economic and social life and higher qualifications
ANNEX VI	Presentation by Ambassador Moshira Khattab, Secretary General of the Council of Motherhood and Childhood in Egypt
ANNEX VII	Final Declaration