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Peace, Stability and Prosperity
Israel’s Perspective on the Barcelona Process

Silvan Shalom
Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs

A decade ago, the Barcelona Declaration stated that members of the process are “convinced that the general objective of turning the Mediterranean basin into an area of dialogue, exchange and cooperation guaranteeing peace, stability and prosperity requires a strengthening of democracy and respect for human rights, sustainable and balanced economic and social development, measures to combat poverty and promotion of greater understanding between cultures, which are all essential aspects of partnership.”

Peace, stability and prosperity for the Mediterranean basin are the declaration’s main goals. Israel, in the spirit of the Barcelona Declaration, saw the Barcelona process then as it does today, as an important and a correct means to fulfilling Israel’s long-standing dream. Our dream is to live in peace, understanding, tolerance and cooperation with all our neighbors. The road towards this goal is stated in the same declaration: dialogue, exchange and cooperation.

Israel shares the new ideas and initiatives put forth and accepted unanimously at the Luxemburg Euro-Med Conference in May 2005, promoting political and economic reform, human rights and education, through concrete and measurable actions. Nevertheless, we feel it is necessary to return to the essential ideas that are the driving force and the raison d’être of the Barcelona process.

In our view, the Barcelona process framework is the ideal framework for breaking old stereotypes, misguided myths and erroneous beliefs between nations. In other words, it can serve to prepare the ground and the hearts for peace and cooperation.

Israel has recently completed its disengagement from the Gaza region as well as from four villages in northern Samaria. Disengagement was meant to be the turning point necessary to create a change in the stalled political process between Israel and the Palestinians. The momentum created by this move should be used in order to create a constituency for peace in our region. It should serve to empower the moderate forces and further isolate the extremists bent on continuing the cycle of violence.
The Barcelona process can and should serve as the catalyst for as many projects as possible in those areas in which we can identify interests common to us all. Beyond the clear and immediate benefits of such projects, they can also serve as excellent confidence-building measures (CBM’s). History has shown us more than once the ability of CBM’s in promoting mutual understanding, tolerance and collaboration.

Furthermore, the benefits of these projects are supposed to serve as tangible proof of the “fruits of peace” and to increase public interest in reaching the goals set forth by the Barcelona Declaration.

In the last decade, Israel has tried, through its governmental and non-governmental representatives, to show the highest level of involvement in any possible cooperation. We are not starting from zero – Israel’s participation in regional projects dates back to the first days of the Barcelona process:

Within the political-security basket, Israel is involved very actively in the Development of a Euro-Mediterranean System of Mitigation, Prevention and Management of Natural and Man-made Disasters project, which recently went into the implementation phase.

Within the regional economic cooperation basket, in the framework of strengthening commercial relations with Jordan and the EU, we signed a Pan-European Accumulation agreement.

Israel, the Palestinian Authority and the EU signed an agreement to open a Joint Energy Office and a Joint Transportation Office in order to establish common projects with EU backing.

Israel’s Minister of Communications participated in the first Euro-Med conference of Communications Ministers.

Within the social-cultural basket, projects included: the Euro-Med Youth Exchange Program, the Medea program, eight projects in the framework of the Euro-Med Heritage programs. Israelis were also involved in education and training programs as well as in the EUMedis program involving information society.

The highlight of this basket, in our view, was the establishment of the “Anna Lind Foundation” for inter-cultural dialogue. Israel was among the first supporters of this project and among the first to pledge financial backing for the foundation.

Now we must look to the future.

Those who claim that the main obstacle before advancing in the Barcelona process is the stalemate in the Middle East peace process, represent an attitude that prevents the parties to the Barcelona process from fulfilling its full potential. The Euromesco report of February 2005 states the following:
“...political dialogue and CBM’s are designed to facilitate efforts at conflict resolution. If CBM’s are held hostage to conflict resolution, the logic of the measures goes to waste. Thus, the conditionality that has been accepted in the EMP is the EXACT OPPOSITE of what these measures are designed to achieve.”

It matters not what the main objectives of the members of the Barcelona process are: peace and prosperity, democratization, economic reforms, human rights, empowerment of civil society or other goals. In any case, we must focus on maximizing the potential inherent in the Barcelona process in order to support the advancement of the peace process. The way to achieve this goal is through as many CBM’s as possible, as long as they are varied and available to all.

In recent months, we can again feel the winds of cautious optimism blowing throughout our region. We are hopeful that maybe this time all sides will join us and show a real will to reach the peace, stability and prosperity that have eluded us for too long, that are still close and yet out of reach.

We hereby call on all the members of the Barcelona process: For peace, let us work together in order to create a social, cultural and economic infrastructure for the immediate welfare and long-term fulfillment of the vision of the Barcelona Declaration.

"It is about bringing peoples together through regional cooperation, partnership and dialogue” (Euromesco report).

Let us move from a “lose-lose” situation to one of “win-win” from which we can all benefit.

The present document showcases Israel’s vision for the future of the Barcelona process. It is a concrete vision that can be implemented immediately. It is a vision that can be translated into concrete action whose results are measurable within a few years or less as long as we maintain a number of conditions:

- A focus on regional activities, open to all and in a constructive atmosphere, in order to build CBM’s that will address the common needs of all those involved;
- A repeated pledge by all participants to uphold the guiding principles of the Barcelona Declaration – dialogue, exchange and cooperation;
- A joint (north-south) management of the process.

In the next pages we will present a number of ideas and initiatives that are true to the spirit described above. These are ideas which Israel would like to continue and develop together with other countries who will find them interesting, with a view to the future of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership.
The economic crises down the years have seriously affected governments’ ability to assist the vulnerable sectors in grassroots communities (children, youth, elderly, handicapped and especially women).

The aim of the proposed project is to contribute to poverty reduction through socio-economic development programs, by empowering women and promoting gender equality through an inclusive approach.

The idea is to implement, within five years, a comprehensive human resources development program with emphasis on gender in selected countries in the Mediterranean basin and Middle East. Professionals, who have trained in Israel and in their own settings in such regions, will have acquired the necessary skills and capacity to manage “community driven” development programs and thereby enhance the material resources and human capital of their target population.

With regard to our long experience in this field, we propose:

- To institute gender mainstreaming through ‘tailor-made’ training programs – workshops and seminars on topics such as: women’s leadership, participation of women in the labor market, creation of businesses by women, and support systems for women entrepreneurs.

- Empowerment through networking.

By building working links with the Women’s Mediterranean Forum, MCTC/MASHAV has been able to develop networks and programs for the empowerment of women in the Mediterranean basin. It is suggested that the next congress of that Forum be held in Israel (2007), within the framework of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership.
A disaster is defined as “a catastrophic event which, relative to the manpower and resources available, overwhelms a healthcare facility and usually occurs in a short period of time.” Year after year thousands of people around the world die from natural disasters, and millions more are injured. Apart from the human suffering, the financial damages incurred by natural catastrophes are estimated at billions of dollars annually. Governments and relevant organizations need to learn to operate and respond quickly and efficiently to these disasters. Over the years, Israel has had to learn to deal with disasters and has built up a professional response to urgent medical demands. Therefore, Israel proposes programs and workshops dealing specifically in emergency medicine and trauma.

- Developing and Organizing a Trauma System

The program of studies will include: comprehending the continuity of treatment of trauma patients in a trauma system, studying the structures involved in the various phases of treatment, and developing a specific model of a trauma system suitable to the participants’ countries of origin.

- International Training Course for Nurses in Emergency Room Nursing and Trauma Care

This course offers nurses continuing education in emergency room nursing and multi-trauma injuries. The course will include, among other topics: exposure to new methods and approaches, medical and nursing techniques in the treatment of patients, triage principles, nursing intervention and treatment, and principles of initial first aid in emergency situations and in life-saving skills.
The goal of the CTRC will be to address the importance of counter-terrorism and to offer an opportunity for better understanding the terrorism phenomena by encouraging joint research projects on this crucial issue.

The CTRC will initiate seminars, workshops and conferences, and help to bring together national research centers, scholars and students from the region, while contributing to their interaction and enabling them to share experiences and knowledge.

The first stage for creating the CTRC will be to set up a Counter-Terrorism Research Fund (CTRF) that will dedicate itself to the establishing of the center and will offer scholarships for researchers to advance joint projects on the topic of counter-terrorism.
What is a Technological Incubator?

A technological incubator is an organization established to provide a supportive and protective environment for individual inventors and entrepreneurs, so that technological innovations can be developed into business ventures.

It provides a framework and support for nascent companies to develop their innovative technological ideas and form new business ventures that can attract private investors.

The program is opened to private investors so that they can become owners of the incubators and invest in the nascent companies at an earlier stage, thus enabling a greater return on their investment.

The main objective of the government in supporting such a program is to help entrepreneurs during the seed stage of a project by assuming the role of a private investor in this very risky stage of business development.

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An enhanced cooperation program is proposed in the field of technological innovation, a field of great importance for the prosperity of all the countries in the Mediterranean region.

In this regard, based on Israel’s extensive experience in the development of "technological incubators", the suggestion is to have an exchange program aimed at assisting the setting up of similar incubators in other countries of the partnership. This can be achieved through meetings of policymakers, seminars and educational and vocational activities.

In these activities, special emphasis should be given to the younger generation.
In the western world the last ten years have been characterized by a clear tendency of using an economic approach in the process of decision-making in the public health system.

In Israel, since the implementation in 1995 of the Public Health Law, much experience and knowledge has been accumulated in the field of health systems management, in the domain of credible available data as well as parameters of efficiency and management of complex health systems.

The proposal is to develop cooperation in the field of health systems management, a domain of great importance for the welfare of the population in all the countries of the Mediterranean region.

The idea is to share the Israeli experience in confronting the issue of how to use the limited resources which exist for financing health expenses versus the needs that are ever increasing due to different factors that include, among many, the aging of the population, the decrease in infant mortality, expensive technological developments, and preventive medicine.

Practically, the proposal is to organize a seminar which will deal with such issues as: establishment of unified and comparable data systems for all the public hospitals, efficient use of the public health system, multi-year planning of the national health system, etc.

This proposal was presented for the first time at the Euro-Med Forum on Health, held in Barcelona on November 14-15.
In order to stop the damage caused to the soil as well as rehabilitate the fertility of dryland regions in the Middle East, it is recommended to establish mechanisms of regional cooperation in technology, research and training in the fields of grazing, afforestation, use of marginal waters, and preservation of propagating material.

Israel can provide the researchers and the research infrastructures, assist in training, cooperate in sustainable development projects of dryland regions, and transfer knowledge via MASHAV.

It is also suggested that a research fund be established for applicable research in “sustainable development of dryland regions in the Middle East” where experts from countries in the region can compete.
Mediterranean Musical Dialogue - Musical Project

The Mediterranean is not only a geographical and historical area, but also an imaginary cultural space comprising a diversity of identities and cultures. The dialogue between these different cultures has created a unique texture that may be called the Mediterranean Culture.

Because of its abstract nature, music serves as an ideal tool for such dialogue.

Each musical tradition around the Mediterranean has its own unique identity. Yet they share many common elements.

The proposal is to organize in Israel or in another neighboring country a four-day dialogue with the participation of musicians (instrumentalists, vocalists and composers) from all Mediterranean countries. The dialogue, conducted as a series of interrelated workshops, would aim to create an exchange of ideas among musicians who create in a “Mediterranean” spirit, i.e. by combining elements from their different musical cultures while at the same time learning the principles of their venerable traditions.
Further discussions may deal with the role of the writer in the respective countries.

The proposed encounter will further include readings of poetry and prose by leading authors who will make use of translations, which are either already published or are done in the workshops.

It is proposed that the event be repeated on an annual basis, each time in a different participating country, in order to create an ongoing literary platform for discussing Mediterranean literatures.
not born in the country in which they live and create. The workshop will look into the human and social experience of immigration, cultural identity, and other themes.

Each participating country will produce its own films and will receive films made by the other participants all of which will be broadcasted on national television networks.

A Mediterranean Kids Film Festival
A festival aimed at encouraging the dialogue between the younger generations in the Mediterranean through filmmaking.

Children from the participating countries will be invited to tell their own story using the cinema as their storyboard. The young filmmakers will be invited to present their films and to meet fellow directors.

Between the years 2001-2003, 13 Israeli projects (8 documentaries and 5 fictional films) received full support from MEDEA, amounting to a total of 294,000 EUR, thus providing an excellent and rare opportunity to establish relations with fellow filmmakers from Europe and the Mediterranean.

Israel would like to continue co-operation with European and Mediterranean partners and thus proposes the following projects:

Immigrants Around the Sea
A workshop targeted for documentary filmmakers who are working on their first films, and who were
Human history is rife with examples of man’s inhumanity to man. The attempt to learn from the past is no guarantee that similar atrocities will not be committed in the future. We must engage in a daily battle to eradicate racism, discrimination and incitement.

Every state is obligated to teach its citizens, especially the children, tolerance and respect for others. The main way to accomplish this is through the school system. In today’s world, the media plays an increasingly central role in shaping society, for good and for bad. We must confront the possibilities as well as the threats that our many-faceted, “online” world presents.

The seminar that is proposed will take place at an institution that deals with these issues every day of the year – Yad Vashem, The Holocaust Martyrs’ and Heroes’ Remembrance Authority. Alternatively, the seminar could be held in another location, aided by or under the professional guidance of Yad Vashem.

The seminar is intended for senior educators and journalists from Europe and the Mediterranean. The two or three-day seminar will consist of three sessions:

- Education for tolerance in the school system (this could focus on a particular geographic area – Europe, for instance – or a particular group, such as high school students).
- Incitement in the media, with an emphasis on satellite broadcasting and the Internet.
- Case studies – teaching the Holocaust at Yad Vashem.

It would be possible to incorporate – at this seminar or future ones – a workshop/brainstorming session that will produce curricula or practical recommendations to be passed on to the relevant bodies in each country for implementation.