

Final Declaration of 5+5 Dialogue FMs' 8th meeting.

GAMMARTH, April 17, 2010 (TAP) - The 8th meeting of the 5+5 Dialogue Western Mediterranean Foreign Ministers, held on April 15-16 in Tunis under the co-chairmanship of Foreign Minister Kamel Morjane and Spanish Foreign Affairs and Co-operation Minister Miguel Angel Moratinos, "voiced deep satisfaction at the 64/134 resolution, dated December 18, 2009, by virtue of which the United Nations Organisation General Assembly had adopted President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali's initiative proclaiming 2010 "International Youth Year: Dialogue and Mutual Understanding" and calling for the organisation of a world youth conference, under the UN's auspices.

The ministers also decided to support action to be organised within this framework.

According to the conclusions made public at the end of the works, this meeting allowed participants to reassert that the 5+5 Dialogue constitutes the hard core of the Euro-Mediterranean co-operation and a model of North-South partnership likely to reinforce complementarity and solidarity between the two western Mediterranean shores.

They commended progresses achieved by the Dialogue, including notably the summit of heads of State and Government, held in 2003 in Tunis.

The ministers renewed attachment to the values of democracy, solidarity and co-operation by starting a debate on issues of regional and international interest and prospecting ways likely to further reinforce the 5+5 Dialogue by improving working methods and inter-action with the other co-operation fora in the region.

As regards the situation in the Middle East, they reiterated the emergency of implementing the two-State solution, calling for an effective and credible revitalisation of the peace talks between Palestinians and Israelis and expressing firm conviction that the settlements policy in the occupied lands, in addition to its being illegal, constitutes an obstacle to the prospects of peace in the Middle East.

They insistently call on the Israeli government to put an immediate end to all settlement activities in eastern El Qods and the rest of the West Bank, including the so-called natural extension of colonies.

The 5+5 Dialogue Foreign Ministers expressed deep concern over the Israeli authorities' recent decisions to alter the rules regarding residence of Palestinians in the West Bank, notably in case that these decisions could lead to expulsions, warning against the dangerous effects of such a situation on peace efforts in the region.

They also expressed deep concern over the situation in Gaza, reiterating conviction that a lasting peace could only be achieved if an overall settlement is reached for the Syrian-Israeli and Lebanese-Israeli conflicts.

Besides, they asserted total support to Palestinian authorities' action to set up the institutions of the future Palestinian State, notably the August 2009 Palestinian Authority's plan, expressing wish that the forthcoming events including among others the Union For the Mediterranean Summit in Barcelona could be an occasion to assess these efforts and establish the prospects to materialise, as soon as possible, the two-State solution.

They reckoned that an international conference could, when time comes, be held to achieve this objective.

The ministers also backed up the call launched by the UN Secretary-General for a complete and vigorous reform of the international financial sector, hailing the decision to introduce more flexibility to the tools of prevention and resolution of the International Monetary Fund's crises, while expressing satisfaction at the G20's commitment to re-establish access to credit and confidence in the financial system's stability.

As regards climate, the ministers suggested to create, on Tunisia's proposal, a Euro-Mediterranean agency for the eco-system and coastline protection, which is mainly tasked with ensuring co-ordination between related projects and initiatives.

As to food security, the ministers expressed satisfaction at the interest taken in this subject by the international community in the meetings of the G8 in Aquila and of FAO in Rome in 2009, calling for a better technologies transfer between the North and the South in matters of production, plantation management, processing and development of farming produce.

The ministers called the western Mediterranean countries to support all efforts aimed to materialise projects to be achieved as part of the Mediterranean Solar Plan.

Regarding migration, the ministers highlighted the role played by the 5+5 Dialogue since the October 2002 Tunis Conference.

They called to implement the conclusions of the Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Meetings on Migration held in Albufera and Evora, in 2007 and 2008, respectively, inviting the Libyan presidency to organise the next ministerial conference on migration according to what had been agreed on in Evora.

Addressing the Union For the Mediterranean (UFM), ministers praised the adoption of the statutes of the UFM Secretariat-General and the nomination of its secretary-general and its six deputy secretaries-general, calling for the effective start of this secretariat so that it begin in the nearest future the achievement of goals and priorities set for it by the heads of state and government at the Paris Summit of July 13, 2008.

They discussed the creation of a Euro-Mediterranean development bank and the creation of an agency to support small-and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

The ministers also reasserted their commitment to carry on efforts of the European Union for southern Mediterranean countries, emphasising the importance of the Maghreb in UFM construction and building a sphere of peace, solidarity and prosperity in the Euro-Mediterranean region.

The ministers decided to establish a regular follow-up committee headed by the rotating co-presidency. It will be tasked, in particular, with preparing for the annual meetings of foreign ministers and following up their recommendations.

The ministers reiterated the importance of the 5+5 Dialogue to discuss common stakes and challenges and boost co-operation initiatives in western Mediterranean and within other regional co-operation authorities.

Noting the outcome of the recent sector-based ministerial meetings, the ministers welcomed Tunisia's proposal to host a business forum in the current year to further boost investment and partnership between partners of the Dialogue.

Addressing the importance of decentralised co-operation, the ministers commended the initiative of the 5+5 interior ministers to include in the agenda of their meetings, on a regular basis, an item related to co-operation between local communities of partner countries and praised the set of recommendations made in this area.

The ministers also stressed the strategic role of the tourism sector in economies of the western Mediterranean basin, noting that this sector was strongly hit by the global economic crisis.

They called for devising a common approach to further stimulate co-operation in matters of tourism strategy and examine the possibility to reactivate ministerial meetings as part of 5+5, reasserting that tourism is a factor of rapprochement and sustainable development in the western Mediterranean region.

The ministers also advocated a structured regional co-operation in the areas of higher education and scientific research to create a really integrated space of research and innovation based on a technological bridge between the two Mediterranean shores.

They emphasised the determining role of culture in bringing Mediterranean peoples closer and strengthening regional stability, given the fact that cultural co-operation is a key vector to prompt mutual enrichment and promote values of tolerance, solidarity and peace.

The ministers also commended efforts exerted by the Arab Maghreb Union in matters of sub-regional integration, lauding AMU foreign ministers' decision to set in service the Maghreb Bank for Investment and External Trade and stressing the key role which this financial institution will be called to play in matters of inter-Maghreb economic integration.

The ministers also hailed the holding in Tunis, in May 2010, of the second meeting of the Maghreb businessmen council.

They reiterated the importance of dialogue between the Arab Maghreb Union and the European Union, pointing to the interest of deepening relations between both sides and pleading for regularity of AMU-EU meetings which had started at the AMU foreign ministers council on January 22, 2008 in Rabat.