



ROMANO PRODI, PRESIDENT OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION
'SHARING STABILITY AND PROSPERITY'
SPEECH DELIVERED AT THE TEMPUS MEDA REGIONAL CONFERENCE
BIBLIOTHECA ALEXANDRINA
ALEXANDRIA, 13 OCTOBER 2003

Kind hosts, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Since it was founded, El Iskandariyah -- the world city we know as Alexandria -- has always been a cosmopolitan centre and a meeting point for peoples and cultures.

And after the great library of antiquity was built, it became a shrine of knowledge too.

It gives me immense pleasure to address you in these splendid premises.

The resurrection of the Library of Alexandria is a sign of hope and renewal:

- Of hope in the renewed awareness of Egypt's -- and the Mediterranean's -- cultural and historical heritage. And of the resourcefulness of its people today.
- Of hope in knowledge as the key to greater wellbeing and prosperity.
- And of hope in greater understanding of others as the path to renewing dialogue.

Knowledge, like other cultural and spiritual goods, does not diminish -- but increases -- when it is shared.

And that holds for political stability and economic prosperity too.

Today I want to speak to you about the benefits we in Europe have enjoyed in fifty years of peaceful integration. And how those benefits can be enjoyed by more and more peoples throughout the region.

But in these times of crisis for the region, let me start by saying this.

The peoples of Europe do not believe in any clash of civilisations. European public opinion is united in its rejection of that myth. We Europeans want peace and dialogue.

As your neighbour, Europe can be a bridge between this region and the rest of the world.

Europe's answer is our **Proximity Policy**. To build security with our neighbours -- not by building walls or installing missile shields. But through trade, exchange and dialogue.



And under that Proximity Policy, we want to establish -- more clearly than in the past -- a **Euro-Mediterranean partnership with our neighbours on an equal footing**.

The Proximity Policy is one that prepares the ground for lasting stability and security. That creates the conditions for cooperation and understanding. This is what we call “**soft security**”. But this is not as “defensive” as the term may suggest.

It takes the form of economic and cultural relations, and involves developing civil society and good governance. It seeks to put a human complexion on our relations.

In these dark days of violence and terror, we -- on the Mediterranean’s African, Asian and European shores -- cannot let the extremists get the upper hand. We cannot let the politics of violence set the pace.

We must work together to lay the foundations for peace. This task we can put off no longer.

We cannot draw up a new Road Map every other day. We cannot allow the peace process to be derailed before it even gets going -- for any of a number of reasons:

- because the parties in conflict seek to bypass it,
- because the security focus is too narrow,
- because the parties are tempted to prefer a unilateral to a multilateral approach.

We sincerely appreciate Egypt’s efforts, especially in these difficult times, as part of the international community’s moves to find a way forward. And we in the European Union intend doing our bit.

Part of that effort, ladies and gentlemen, involves the Proximity Policy I mentioned. It is closely linked to our enlargement strategy and flows naturally from it.

As you know, next year the European Union will be expanding to embrace ten new members from eastern and southern Europe.

This enlargement is a great opportunity -- not a threat. An opportunity for countries in Europe as well as for the region around the enlarged Union.

And the Union is also preparing to adopt a constitutional treaty that will enable it to play its role more effectively in the world.

And this will be a good thing for everyone -- for all those who believe in the possibility of a new multilateral form of world governance that is more balanced and more just.

The Union’s eastwards enlargement is an historical obligation. When the Berlin Wall fell, we in Europe decided we did not want to erect new walls.

Because we have learned that **security does not come with higher walls or deadlier weapons**, but with stronger, more stable relations based on peace and prosperity -- the “soft security” I mentioned.

Stronger, peaceful relations and exchanges are the only form of security that is ultimately sustainable.



We in Europe have turned our backs on extremism in politics. Because extremism breeds more extremism and violence brings only more violence.

We have sought to break the cycle of violence, of reprisals and counter-reprisals, because this rarely solves anything in the short term and never definitively.

We have pooled our sovereignty to muster the strength to overcome our past divisions and to increase the influence of those participating in this unique political project.

We have broken down the frontiers within the Union by creating a Single Market and allowing goods, capital, services and people to circulate freely.

We have created a new political, economic and human area. Now we are determined to share the benefits of this area through a **new approach** to international relations, a new philosophy of cooperation and partnership.

This means establishing ever closer and stronger relations with all our neighbours, creating a “**ring of friends**” with whom we **can share all the benefits of membership, barring the Union’s institutions.**

There are two objectives:

- Together with our partners, we want to develop **an area of prosperity and stability** based on shared values and the principle of economic integration.
- And we want to **strengthen our political and human bonds and cooperation** in a broad range of fields.

We believe that our Proximity Policy for the Wider Europe is the right way forward. I shared my views on this concept with Prime Minister Ebeid a year ago.

These are the reasons why I believe that:

- The Proximity Policy will offer greater opportunities -- in terms of markets, growth and trade.
- It will progressively extend the area of the four freedoms -- free circulation of goods, capital, services and people.
- It will enhance cooperation in the fight against common threats.
- It will strengthen good governance, respect for human rights and individual freedoms, the rule of law and participatory institutions.

Ladies and gentlemen,

This is the substance of our political offer.

We are willing to help. I firmly believe that the European Union should stand ready to assist those countries willing to take up the challenge. Not only financially, but also with our full political backing and support for reform.



But the pace of reform and change is a choice the individual partner countries must make.

Whatever choices individual countries do make, the range of closer economic relations we are offering in exchange for better political and economic governance is clearly in their interest.

We hope therefore that the ratification of the **Association Agreement** between the European Union and Egypt will soon be completed. And next year we look forward to its coming into force.

It will establish a free-trade area progressively. Egypt's products will become more competitive -- not only on European markets but also worldwide. And it will strengthen and deepen our relationship in various fields.

Ladies and gentlemen,

There are, of course, other facets to our cooperation too.

I cannot overstate the importance of **dialogue and the human dimension** of our relations with our Mediterranean partners.

It would be a grave mistake to neglect the Mediterranean, the cradle of European civilisation, as we build the new Europe.

This means **establishing a strong Euro-Mediterranean partnership on an equal footing** -- in trade, in investment, in educational exchanges, in cultural and political dialogue.

We have chosen to put the emphasis on cooperation, not just on security. That rules out any one-sided, Eurocentric approach and it calls for multilateralism and persuasion, not coercion or unilateralism.

The need for cultural dialogue does not only concern the countries on the northern and southern shores of the Mediterranean. It also calls for **dialogue within our societies in Europe**, where large numbers of people originate in this region.

This also implies the **universal recognition of values and principles on which European integration in particular has been based** -- starting with human rights, the role of women in society, the media and civil society -- **throughout the Mediterranean.**

My concern to tackle this issue led me to set up the **High-Level Advisory Group on Dialogue between Peoples and Cultures.**

Because I felt we needed to foster such a dialogue, based on **respect for the other, equality, freedom of conscience, solidarity and knowledge.**

Those five principles have been taken by the Group and turned into five **principles for action.** Because it is time to turn words into action.

Today's Tempus MEDA Conference is one practical step towards establishing an active, operational dialogue.



I look forward to hearing the presentation of the Group's draft report shortly and I am keen to hear the discussion too. Your views are important because the Group will set about finalising their conclusions in the light of what is said.

Some things are already quite clear.

- Such as learning about others so we can respect their diversity.
- Such as the importance of mobility and turning skills to account.
- Such as using the media as a tool for fostering equality and mutual knowledge.

The future Euro-Mediterranean Foundation for intercultural dialogue will be one crucial instrument for an active, operational dialogue. It will provide the first practical illustration of our equal partnership and a place where we can work together, plan and carry out common projects.

As the Union's first joint structure with its partners, the Foundation will fulfil the desire to give concrete form to the principle of co-ownership, of the feeling of belonging.

The Foundation must be independent and non-governmental in nature. It must have a flexible, light structure that allows it to act as a catalyst, turning to account existing facilities and programmes and reinvigorating existing networks.

The High-Level Advisory Group's report will contribute considerably to identifying the objectives and activities of the Foundation.

The personalities of regional civil society to act as advisers to the Foundation will provide fresh, dynamic input for its activities, and will offer real added value to what is already being done in the cultural field.

The Foundation will promote exchanges between cultural and intellectual players. It will involve opinion formers in both northern and southern countries who are already engaged in the dialogue. And in particular it will seek to take the dialogue further and open it up to the wider public.

This means the Foundation will need to set in motion an ongoing cultural debate, in particular using multi-media techniques. Special attention needs to be paid to focus groups, such as journalists and young people.

We are willing to provide a start-up grant of five million euro on the understanding that the other Euro-Mediterranean partners make an initial voluntary contribution -- financially or otherwise -- amounting in total to at least the Commission's grant.

I earnestly hope a final decision will be taken to establish the Foundation at Naples on 2 December.

And I hope it will be fully operational and functioning by autumn 2004 -- because the Foundation's establishment is a token of our credibility and the seriousness of our approach.

At that meeting in Naples, our Euro-Mediterranean partners will need to conclude on the **other two issues** that will further enhance and strengthen our cooperation.



In the political field, a **new Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly** with a consultative capacity should be set up to deepen our political dialogue and foster our cooperation in security.

In the economic field, we need a **new instrument to stimulate private-sector development and investment** and to help eliminate the major obstacles to growth and job creation.

For financial as well as political and symbolic reasons, **my preference is for a new Euro-Mediterranean bank as a subsidiary of the European Investment Bank. But we are currently assessing the various options** for setting up such an instrument, in the light of the possibilities and obstacles.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Another practical example of what we mean by *opening up our policies* and *sharing everything but our institutions* is the extension of the **Tempus** programme to the Mediterranean in 2002.

Tempus works through networks involving higher-education institutions from the European Union and our partner countries, to ensure a lasting impact on education systems.

On top of the academic benefits it brings, cooperation in higher education naturally helps to strengthen dialogue between cultures.

And exchanges at individual, scientific and technological level are vital to bring peoples closer, promote understanding and improve their perception of each other.

Of course, culture and intercultural dialogue are neither a cure-all nor a substitute for taking cooperation further in other fields. But by setting the human dimension at the centre -- as the cement of the bonds between us -- they will ensure that such cooperation will be conducted for the sake of all.

In particular, this will ensure that **the time of misunderstandings and negative stereotypes can ultimately cease between all Mediterraneans of goodwill.**

But we must keep up our search to see what else can be done to bring the peoples of the Euro-Mediterranean region closer. And this conference in **Alexandria is an opportunity to look to the future.**

Ladies and gentlemen,

In the realm of culture and civilisation, there can be no conflict.

In the realm of faith, there should be none either.

Egypt's role in world civilisation and its immense cultural prestige need no stressing.

Egypt's role in the Middle East is crucial today too.

It is crucial for peace in the region. The European Union is grateful to Egypt for its efforts to help find a peaceful solution to the region's conflicts, particularly in these dark days of violence and terror.

It is crucial for dialogue within the region and with the West.



EUROMED REPORT

Issue No 66

14 October 2003

Ladies and gentlemen,

Today the international community and the peoples of the region have a road map.

Perhaps it is not ideal. Perhaps it lacks clarity and detail. But it is all we have to **break the infernal cycle of violence and despair.**

Let us follow it and see where it takes us.

We must not allow the extremists on any side to derail that process. We must not allow the logic of war, of reprisal and retaliation, to wreck the only hope there is.

There is no lasting military solution to conflicts between peoples.

Everything I have said today is an appeal to dialogue and a rejection of the call to violence. And the presence of us all here today bears witness to this shared desire for dialogue.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The Romans called the Mediterranean "*Mare Nostrum*". It washes many shores -- Africa's, Asia's, Europe's -- and has many faces and moods -- at times stormy and agitated, at others calm and tranquil.

This sea of ours must belong to all the peoples who live around its shores.

We need to make it a **crossroads for exchange and dialogue**. A haven of peace and security, of shared prosperity and knowledge, where human values and progress take pride of place over conflict and strife.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The Great Library of Alexandria is reborn. And now the Mediterranean must regain its unity.

Thank you.