

THE DOCUMENT

Appeal for the Greater Mediterranean

On the occasion of the 21st International Inter-religious Meeting for Peace, starting tomorrow in Naples in the presence of H.H. Benedict XVI, of President of the Italian Republic Giorgio Napolitano, and with the participation of representatives of all religions, Heads of Governments and representatives of international institutions, the Fondazione Mediterraneo proposes again the Appeal for the Greater Mediterranean as a matter for reflection for the participants in view of true dialogue between cultures, religions and laity and as foundation for peace and shared progress within the region. Overcoming any previous proposals we need to have a vision not taking into account the international interests of great Powers, but rather the real interests of an area where took its origin the western culture both material (Neolithic), intellectual (Hellenism) and religious (Hebraism, Christianity, Islam). This area has always been inseparable from Middle East and its unity is to be reconsidered beyond the economic and strategic interests of the great Powers

1. The Fondazione Mediterraneo has as its main objective the institution of a Coalition of Shared Values and Interests among the countries which, through the centuries, have acted around the Mediterranean – such as the Hellenic, Roman, Byzantine, and Islamic civilisations – and which today, due to geographical contiguity, to their social and cultural reciprocal influences and to numerous human exchanges, represents the solidarity area of the “Greater Mediterranean”: a tradition of synergies, sometimes even tumultuous and troubled, but from which an indissoluble interdependence arose, stronger than all contrasts, hostilities, and wars.
2. The Fondazione Mediterraneo, which during the last fourteen years has made these synergies valuable, giving them importance, wishes now to go on in the name of peace and cooperation among the populations and in respect of the fundamental rights set forth in the UN charter. It is for this reason that it proposes again the “Appeal for the Greater Mediterranean” on the occasion of the 21st International Inter-religious Meeting for Peace, in order to set common targets and effective means to build up a “Dialogue among Societies and Cultures” based on harmony and cooperation between religions and laity.
3. In order to realize a real dialogue between men and women of the different cultures of the Greater Mediterranean – a strategic and historical subject which works in cooperation with the countries of the Middle East, the Gulf and the Black Sea – it is necessary promote international understanding through the promotion of awareness of the identity, social and cultural reality of the Greater Mediterranean. It is also necessary to encourage a closer interaction among these realities in order to strengthen shared values and interests, respecting the fundamental human rights and to develop human resources and intellectual cooperation and human resources in multidisciplinary fields.
4. The Mediterranean has long been fraught with tensions, crises and conflicts that have torn the fabric of a peaceful and prosperous cohabitation. Fresh outbreaks of terrorism and the risk of a division between those who believe in dialogue and those who favour a ‘clash of civilisations’ make it necessary an increased engagement by governments and Civil Society in order to promote a Coalition of shared Values and interests.
5. The Coalition should act in a concrete way by developing models and programmes for cultural and material growth within the region, based on the concepts of equal dignity and mutual respect among different cultural identities – having their own principles and values, but at the same time being open to exchange and discussion. Specificity, traditions and at the same time shared interests and actions: the watershed between the specificity and shared values will find its reason in the respect of the fundamental human rights and will be the engagement to meet the new common challenges, such as the right to equality of men and women. All this work is based on the principles of equality, sovereignty, and dignity of peoples, as well as on the respect of pluralism, of cultural diversity, of the person’s fundamental rights and of democracy.
6. The reconciliation in the Greater Mediterranean needs a search for Solidarity and Development. Young people must receive education and professional training in order to reduce obstacles to their personal development. A great effort is necessary to permit the equal inclusion of young graduates into the working force: to this end it is necessary to start a specific action aiming at identifying individual formative needs in relation to new opportunities in the labour market of the Greater Mediterranean.
7. Openness to global knowledge should not damage local cultures and instead will merge tradition, modernity, and innovation. The engagement to create “Alliances among Civilizations” requires new policies where mutual cultural respect supports the defence of individual human rights. This is, in fact, the new frontier of social experimentation, wherever intensive migratory processes have brought about a co-habitation of different religious and cultural groups.
8. The diffusion of prosperity requires the promotion a new labour division and the development of comparative productivity. This is the climate to support the investments. The protection of people’s rights, of the weaker social classes, and of less-favoured areas, must be undertaken in consideration of market rules, combining efficiency and solidarity.
9. The construction of a Mediterranean society, solid in shared principles and values, is incompatible with the so-called “clash of civilizations”, the use of force, and the violent subversion of international political and social order. Those who proclaim evil ideology, those who instigate division, those who incite to overpowering must be morally isolated, especially if we are to eliminate future conflict.
10. In some parts of the Muslim world and in the Middle East, globalization generates hostility, and in some cases violence. In this way, all the negative stereotypes of Islam that have been accumulated in the Western imagination throughout the centuries are reinforced, creating a generalized vision of Islam. We underscore the sterility of this vision of the world, of this over-simplified vision of an Islam antithetical to modernity and a Europe that symbolizes a completed modernity. We insist on the necessity to overcome this dangerous vision and to do everything to create a vision of modernity shared both by Islam and by the West. The result today is the development of a contraposition between, on the one hand, the idea of a Muslim society structurally attached to the rules of an Islam unable to adapt itself to the changing world, and, on the other, the idea that modernity is a privilege only of the West.
11. Islam and modernity must not be considered to be two antagonistic ideas and Islamic and Western world must not be considered a priori as opposed. This requires a policy of solidarity to move together in parallel evolution and in accordance toward the same end: a necessary collaboration is not only in the interest of Islam but also in that of the West.
12. This collaboration is the founding element to construct the dialogue between men and women of the different cultures of the Greater Mediterranean. Further, it recognises that civil society – including local communities, universities, entrepreneurial organizations, professional orders, unions, NGOs, network associations, the media, etc. – is the key factor to progress regarding human rights, political security, culture, economy, science, sustainable development, communication and information.
13. The Greater Mediterranean is an ancient geographic and political space, within which are found the needs for inter-cultural dialogue, peace, integration between innovation and tradition, and individual rights and social solidarity. Until now, numerous initiatives undertaken for the pacification and development of the area have produced only partial progress. The feeling of hope that the region experienced with the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (activated by the European Union in 1995 as part of the Barcelona Process) and with other initiatives today are in a stalemate. The Greater Mediterranean must cease to be the object of political programs designed elsewhere and instead formulate its own strategies as direct expressions of the needs of its peoples: therefore, it is necessary to remain aware of the risks of altering structure and of marginalising the Euro-Mediterranean region, and to undertake the creation of a dialogue between men and women of the different cultures of the Greater Mediterranean, even to remove artificial barriers in the Arab world, separating the Mediterranean countries from those of the Gulf.
14. The Greater Mediterranean does not mean to extend the myth of “Mediterraneanness” to a larger area, but it is the contestation of the rhetoric of a mental space in which the differences and common visions become annulled by a superficial and artificial representation. Our Greater Mediterranean is made up of different women and men who may even be in conflict but who nonetheless want social justice and democracy. This is what the Greater Mediterranean is about; it is not about an abstract entity stuck in antiquity, but about women and men of the 21st Century who want to govern global processes in order not to be overwhelmed and subordinated.
15. Recognizing that the West and Islam are born from the same cradle is not an act of mutual subordination but the recognition of the truth as a base for a sincere dialogue, where the Mediterranean, Europe, and the

Islamic World constitute fundamental pillars on which they may construct their future, only if they can transform the “Identity of Being” into an “Identity of Doing”, and only if, all together, we are in the position to transform “Love of Power” – an omnipresent idea – into “Power of Love”: an indispensable element to secure shared development and peace not only in the Greater Mediterranean but on a global scale.

Naples, 21st October 2007

First Signatories:

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(and 58.760 more signatures until 20.10.2007)