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**Chairmanship: Serbia****REPORT BY THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE  
CONTACT GROUP WITH THE OSCE MEDITERRANEAN PARTNERS  
FOR CO-OPERATION TO THE TWENTY-SECOND MEETING OF  
THE MINISTERIAL COUNCIL**

The 2015 German Chairmanship of the OSCE Mediterranean Contact Group has worked together closely with the Mediterranean Partners on fostering an intensified dialogue. Moreover, major steps have been taken by the Chair to strengthen and deepen practical co-operation. The liveliness and substance of the Partnership has been underlined by well-attended, timely and extensive discussions during the OSCE Mediterranean Conference in Jordan and at the meetings of the OSCE Mediterranean Contact Group (MCG) in Vienna, and by the active involvement of representatives/experts from Mediterranean Partner countries in various OSCE conferences, seminars and workshops, including their participation in concrete projects throughout 2015.

In its work programme for 2015, which was the fruit of close consultation with Partners and important stakeholders, the German Chairmanship reflected the overarching objective of an “attractive Partnership” for both sides, that is to say, for the Mediterranean Partners and the OSCE participating States alike. Principal topics for the meetings in Vienna and the Mediterranean Conference were identified as follows: terrorism and radicalization, migration (in the light of different cross-dimensional guiding questions), energy, and interfaith/interreligious dialogue.

**The 2015 OSCE Mediterranean Conference**

The highlight of the Partnership, the annual Mediterranean Conference, was held on 20 and 21 October in Jordan under the title “Common Security in the Mediterranean Region – Challenges and Opportunities”. Thanks to Jordan’s generous hospitality, Germany realized its goal of having the Conference held in the southern Mediterranean, six years after the last OSCE Mediterranean Conference to be held in the region.

The Conference focused on important issues such as countering violent extremism and radicalization that lead to terrorism, the role of interfaith and intercultural dialogue, and addressing current challenges related to migration. It brought together around 225 participants from 44 Mediterranean Partner countries and OSCE participating States, including 16 foreign ministers and deputy foreign ministers, a number of important representatives of international organizations such as H.E. António Guterres, UN High Commissioner for Refugees, H.E. William Lacy Swing, Director General of the International Organization for Migration, and

H.E. Fathallah Sijilmassi, Secretary General of the Union for the Mediterranean, and representatives of civil society, academia and the media. At the opening of the Conference, keynote speeches were delivered by H.E. Nasser Judeh, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, H.E. Dr. Frank-Walter Steinmeier, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Germany, and H.E. Ms. Roksanda Ninčić, State Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Serbia (available under <http://www.osce.org/secretariat/194846>, PC.DEL/1391/15, CIO.GAL/163/15). The Conference was covered by 96 representatives from the media, mostly from the region.

For the first time, the Mediterranean Conference served as a platform for high-level political discussions on common security challenges between foreign ministers and high-ranking representatives from capitals, and international organizations. Thereby, the discussion demonstrated that the “inextricable link” of security in Europe and the Mediterranean region is not just an abstract notion; this became a lead-theme throughout the discussions.

The high-level meeting provided both participating States and Mediterranean Partners with the opportunity to jointly reflect on fundamental political questions related to the conditions, structures and tools of co-operative security and confidence-building, and on certain elements of the CSCE and OSCE processes and mechanisms that are of special interest in other regions of the world. Furthermore, the Conference brought forward suggestions and ideas on how to strengthen the OSCE Mediterranean Partnership, not by mere declarations but, rather, through a more structured type of co-operation, and on how to facilitate a more substantive dialogue with the Partners.

The concluding statement by the Chairman of the Contact Group was distributed on 27 October under PC.DEL/1434/15. The consolidated summary was circulated under SEC.GAL/206/15 on 30 November.

## **Meetings of the OSCE Mediterranean Contact Group**

As proposed in the work programme for 2015, six meetings of the MCG were held in Vienna during the course of the year. The topics for the meetings were selected in close co-operation with the Partners and the OSCE Secretariat. The German Chair strongly encouraged and supported contributions from Partner capitals. Experts from the OSCE Secretariat were also present at all the meetings – on the panel or as observers – in order to guarantee a genuine dialogue and to inform the MCG about projects and activities of special relevance to the Mediterranean Partners. The thematic discussions were thus mostly initiated by a speaker representing a general/international point of view, followed by a Partner’s point of view and finally by the OSCE perspective, creating a combination that stimulated lively and often interactive debates.

- The first meeting, held on 27 February 2015, took place in the wake of the 7 January terrorist attack on the offices of “Charlie Hebdo” in Paris and was dedicated to the issues of freedom of the media and countering violent extremism and radicalization. The discussion was initiated through statements by Ms. Dunja Mijatović, OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, Dr. Rubina Möhring, President of the Austria branch of Reporters Without Borders, and Dr. Mansour El-Ganady, founder of Market Insight and Red Cross Culture Exchange Ambassador. Moreover, presentations were delivered by the three Committee Chairs on elements of their 2015 work programmes of special relevance to the Mediterranean Partners.

- At the second meeting, on 27 March, the MCG discussed the topic of counter-terrorism and the issue of addressing the conditions conducive to radicalization as well as its impact on our societies. Dr. Gudrun Harrer, Chief Editor of the newspaper *Der Standard*, and Mr. Moussa Al-Hassan Diaw, co-founder of the “Netzwerk sozialer Zusammenhalt”, contributed their own perspectives, the one being more academic and the other more practical in nature.
- The meeting on 8 May focused on “International migration, human trafficking and refugee protection in the Mediterranean”, with remarks by Ms. Diane Goodman, Deputy Director of the Regional Bureau for Europe of the UNHCR, Ambassador Madina Jarbussynova, OSCE Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, and Mr. Marcin Pruss of the European Commission Directorate for General Migration and Home Affairs.
- The fourth meeting, on 19 June, was dedicated to the implementation of the counter-terrorism declarations on kidnapping for ransom (MC.DOC/6/14) and foreign terrorist fighters (MC.DOC/5/14) adopted at the 2014 OSCE Ministerial Council meeting in Basel. Introductory remarks were delivered by Ms. Dana Benvenisti-Gabay, Director of the Regional Security and Counter Terrorism Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Israel, and Mr. Alexey Lyzhenkov, OSCE Co-ordinator of Activities to Address Transnational Threats. The preparations for the 2015 OSCE Mediterranean Conference constituted another important item on the agenda.
- “Sustainable energy: Advancing stability and security in the OSCE Mediterranean region” was the title of the fifth meeting, held on 18 September, which featured presentations by Ms. Teresa Ribeiro, Deputy Secretary General of the Union for the Mediterranean in charge of Energy, Mr. Abdellaziz Hajjani, Head of the Department of Energy at the Ministry of Energy, Mines, Water and Environment, Morocco, and Mr. Yurdakul Yigitgüden, Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities.
- The sixth and final meeting took place on 20 November with a focus on the positive potential of migration for economy and stability in the Mediterranean region. Introductory remarks were made by Ms. Christiane Kuptsch, Senior Specialist in Migration Policy, Labour Migration Branch, International Labour Organization (ILO), Professor Ghazi Gherairi, Secretary General of the International Academy of Constitutional Law, Tunisia, and Ms. Teresa Albano, Economic Affairs Officer, OCEEA. Furthermore, the meeting considered the outcome of the 2015 OSCE Mediterranean Conference and the way ahead, with a presentation by the incoming Chair of the Mediterranean Contact Group, Ambassador Christian Strohal, Austria.

Apart from the meetings at ambassadorial level, the German Chairmanship organized several contact points meetings and a number of informal meetings to consult with the Partners prior to important decision-making or major events, such as the Mediterranean Conference. In addition to the direct exchange of views on current issues of common interest, the German Chairmanship kept Partners extensively informed on a regular basis.

## **Co-operation beyond meetings: Projects**

Besides meetings, practical co-operation took place in the context of a number of fruitful projects and various workshops with the Partners in all three dimensions, the latter being partly financed by the Chairperson of the Contact Group and including the workshops on “Gender-sensitive Labour Migration Policies: Awareness Raising in the Mediterranean Region and Eastern Europe”, Malta, from 7 to 9 October, and on “Border Security and Counter Cross Border Criminal Activity in the Mediterranean Region”, Avila, Spain, from 20 to 22 October. In addition work was carried out on substantial studies such as the field study on sustainable energy for the OSCE Mediterranean Partners, which is intended for completion in spring 2016.

Contributions to the Partnership Fund facilitated, among other things, support for the participation of representatives/experts from the Mediterranean Partners in numerous OSCE conferences, seminars and workshops in 2015, notably the Security Days on Building Bridges, Vienna, 21 and 22 May; the Conference on Tackling Emerging Transnational Threats in the Mediterranean Region, Monaco, 1 and 2 June; the Annual Security Review Conference, Vienna, 23 to 25 June; the 15th Conference of the Alliance against Trafficking in Persons, Vienna, 6 and 7 July; and the meetings of the OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum in Vienna on 26 and 27 January, and in Belgrade from 11 to 13 May.

Germany also promoted and contributed financially to the forward-looking project “Placement of young diplomats from the Mediterranean Partners in the OSCE Secretariat” (Project no. 1101636), facilitating placements for a period of four months during the timeframe 2015–2016. The first placement period (September to December 2015) has seen one Moroccan young diplomat and two Tunisians being placed in the OSCE Secretariat, where training and assessments have given them familiarity with the OSCE’s commitments, values, standards and practical work.

As an important outreach activity, Monaco, Belgium and Germany funded the translation into Arabic and French of the booklet “The OSCE Mediterranean Partnership for Co-operation – A Compilation of Relevant Documents and Information”, the original English version of which had been launched in December 2014 on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the Mediterranean Contact Group. Both translated versions were officially presented at the last MCG meeting on 20 November 2015.

In conclusion, the 2015 German Chairmanship of the Mediterranean Contact Group wishes to express its sincere gratitude to the Serbian OSCE Chairmanship, the OSCE Secretariat, the OSCE participating States and the Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation for their commitment, support and co-operation in the framework of the Mediterranean Partnership 2015.