



**Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
Ministerial Council
Hamburg 2016**

MC.GAL/4/16
5 December 2016

ENGLISH only

**REPORT BY THE CHAIRPERSON
OF THE**

**CONTACT GROUP WITH THE
MEDITERRANEAN PARTNERS FOR CO-OPERATION**

**TO THE
TWENTY-THIRD MEETING OF THE
MINISTERIAL COUNCIL**

REPORT BY THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE CONTACT GROUP WITH THE OSCE MEDITERRANEAN PARTNERS FOR CO-OPERATION TO THE TWENTY-THIRD MEETING OF THE MINISTERIAL COUNCIL

The major themes of the 2016 Austrian Chairmanship of the Mediterranean Contact Group were dialogue and inclusivity, with the first meeting attended by the Nobel Peace Prize winning Tunisian National Dialogue Quartet. Youth representatives, civil society actors and religious representatives were key participants in meetings and other initiatives throughout the year. The Chairmanship supported several initiatives and practical projects including the first ever Retreat of the Mediterranean Contact Group outside Vienna that was organized together with Spain. The highlight of the Chairmanship, the 2016 OSCE Mediterranean Conference, was focused on the topic of challenges for comprehensive security and youth to the north and south of the Mediterranean. The OSCE's Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation participated actively not only in various OSCE events, but also in numerous projects throughout the year.

Meetings of the OSCE Mediterranean Contact Group

Five Mediterranean Contact Group meetings were held in Vienna in the course of 2016. The Austrian Chair agreed on the meeting topics with the Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation, OSCE participating States and the OSCE Secretariat on a regular and ongoing basis throughout the year. All meetings included active contributions from the Partners for Co-operation. Representatives of the Secretariat regularly updated the Mediterranean Contact Group on activities of special relevance to the Partners. The Austrian Chairmanship also organized several Contact Point meetings and informal meetings to discuss ongoing activities and initiatives.

- The first meeting, held on 29 February, was opened by H.E. Michael Linhart, Austrian Deputy Minister for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs, H.E. Lamberto Zannier, Secretary General of the OSCE and Philip Nobel, Director of the Nobel International Fraternity Academy. Their speeches were followed by a session attended by the Tunisian National Dialogue Quartet, winner of the 2015 Nobel Peace Prize, which serves as a powerful symbol of successful civil society dialogue in difficult conditions. The Quartet members, representing the Tunisian bodies the General Labour Union, the Confederation of Industry, Trade and Handicrafts, the Human Rights League and the Order of Lawyers, focused on the challenges for Tunisia, such as economic development and combating radicalization.
- The second meeting took place on 14 March – as a follow-up to and ten days after the Security Days on migration held in Rome. The meeting was opened by H.E. Lamberto Zannier and H.E. Ambassador Eberhard Pohl, Chairperson of the Permanent Council and Permanent Representative of Germany to the OSCE. Three experts – Lieutenant Colonel Ali Sheyab from Jordan, Frank Remus from the UNHCR and Kilian Kleinschmidt, advisor on migration issues for the Austrian Federal Ministry of the Interior and founder of the Innovation and Planning Agency (IPA), shared their experience in migration management and opinions on the current migration trends. During the subsequent discussion, delegations called for more co-operation and

co-ordination in migration management and the closer involvement of the OSCE in this field.

- The meeting on 19 April included a panel discussion on interreligious dialogue; the panellists were Kamal Boraiqa Abdelsalam Hassan from Al Azhar University in Cairo, Mohanad Ouadir Mechnan from Algeria’s Ministry for Religious Affairs, and Elif Medeni, representative of the Islamic Religious Authority of Austria. During the subsequent discussion, all delegations stressed the significance of interreligious dialogue. Austria presented a draft decision of the Permanent Council on the place and date of the 2016 Mediterranean Conference, which was approved. The Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights reported on its work on freedom of religion or belief. The Transnational Threats Department updated the participants on relevant upcoming events.
- The main topic of the fourth meeting on 14 June was the radicalization of youth and its prevention. First, two speakers from France – film-maker Fabienne Servan Schreiber and Valérie de Boisrolin, President of *Syrie Prévention Familles* – shared their experience in combating the radicalization of youth in France. Second, youth representatives Fadwa Al Ahmadi from Tunisia and Aissam Benaissa from Algeria reported together with Moussa Al Hassan Diaw, an Austrian advisor to the Federal Ministry of Justice on de-radicalization issues, on a workshop on the prevention of radicalization of youth in North Africa organized by Austria on 3 May in Tunis. Both sessions were followed by lively discussions. Thirdly, the German OSCE Chairmanship reported on the OSCE Counter-Terrorism Conference held in May in Berlin. The Mediterranean Contact Group meeting concluded with an update by the Chair on the preparations for the annual Mediterranean Conference.
- The Austrian Chairmanship of the Mediterranean Contact Group ended on a positive note on 18 November with a meeting on the topic of job creation and business opportunities for youth around the Mediterranean. Firstly, the Chairperson, H.E. Ambassador Christian Strohal, reflected briefly on the Chairmanship of the Mediterranean Contact Group. Secondly, Mr. Martin Gleitsmann from the Federal Austrian Economic Chamber presented two innovative projects on youth employment co-ordinated by the Economic Chamber in Austria. Mr. Adnan El Ghali from Ibn Khaldoun University focused on the challenges for youth employment in Tunisia. Thirdly, representatives of the OSCE Secretariat reported on a workshop on border security and management in Malta as well as a workshop on the OSCE Code of Conduct in Jordan. Lastly, the German Chairperson-in-Office updated meeting participants on preparations for the Ministerial Council meeting in Hamburg.

2016 OSCE Mediterranean Conference

On 5 and 6 October the highlight of Austria’s Chairmanship, the 2016 OSCE Mediterranean Conference entitled “Youth north and south of the Mediterranean: facing security challenges and enhancing opportunities” was held at the Hofburg in Vienna. The Conference was attended by more than ten ministers and deputy ministers including the Libyan Foreign Minister H.E. Mohammed Taher Siala who reaffirmed Libya’s interest in becoming an OSCE Partner for Co-operation. All sides considered that the active participation of youth representatives in all sessions of the Conference had ensured that their voices were included in discussions.

Prominence was also given to Libya on the agenda due to the participation of Martin Kobler, the UN Secretary-General's Special Representative and Head of the UN Support Mission in Libya, who delivered opening remarks during the high-level segment of the Conference. Keynote speeches were also introduced by H.E. Sebastian Kurz, Austrian Federal Minister for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs and H.E. Vincenzo Amendola, Italian Undersecretary of State for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation.

OSCE Secretary General Lamberto Zannier closed the Conference together with Minister Kurz. The consolidated summary of the Conference was circulated under SEC.GAL/171/16 on 15 November.

Co-operation beyond political dialogue: projects

As in previous years, the political dialogue between participating States and the Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation was complemented and reinforced by a growing variety of practical co-operation projects. The projects covered all the OSCE dimensions and key areas of the current OSCE and Mediterranean agendas. They were funded through extrabudgetary contributions generously provided by a number of participating States, confirming the usefulness of the OSCE Partnership Fund established almost ten years ago in 2007.

As the Chair of the Mediterranean Contact Group, Austria supported a number of initiatives and projects that saw proactive engagement by the Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation. Most notably, in collaboration with Spain, Austria promoted the organization of the first ever Retreat of the Mediterranean Contact Group outside Vienna, which was held in Madrid on 23 and 24 May. Retreat participants discussed in an informal setting the future of the OSCE Mediterranean Partnership, including possible innovations in the Partnership's format and modalities. The event was attended by a large number of participating States and Mediterranean Partners, together with representatives from Libya and civil society. Martin Kobler, the UN Secretary-General's Special Representative in Libya, and other experts provided relevant input. The Retreat was preceded by an expert workshop organized by the Conflict Prevention Centre (CPC) on the topic of civil society dialogue for social cohesion. The workshop allowed for an exchange between mediation experts and practitioners from Mediterranean Partner countries and Mediterranean participating States. The findings of the workshop were distilled into recommendations which were shared with all delegations.

In light of a priority established for its 2017 OSCE Chairmanship, as Chair of the Mediterranean Contact Group, Austria also supported and promoted a series of events and activities focused on preventing and countering violent extremism and radicalization that lead to terrorism (VERLT). Notably, a Regional Roundtable for North African Youth on Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism was organized in Tunis on 3 May. The event provided an informal platform for youth from North Africa to discuss among themselves and with selected experts their perceptions of the drivers of VERLT, including those underlying the recruitment of foreign terrorist fighters. The outcome of the roundtable discussion was presented to participating States and the Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation at the June meeting of the Mediterranean Contact Group in Vienna, as well as during a side event at the 2016 OSCE-wide Counter-Terrorism Conference. Youth representatives from this workshop were subsequently invited to follow-up events, including the OSCE-Mediterranean Conference in Vienna on 5 and 6 October. Austria continued this initiative by organizing a

workshop in Vienna on 4 October for Western Europe. In 2017, Austria plans to hold three more such workshops – in the Black Sea region, Western Balkans and Central Asia.

Representatives and experts of the Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation were involved in a range of projects designed by the OSCE Secretariat in close consultation with the Mediterranean Partner delegations in Vienna. For example, a Field Study on Sustainable Energy for Partners was organized from 11 to 15 July by the Office of the Co-ordinator of Economic and Environmental Activities/Energy Security. The field study saw the participation of several energy experts from Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation and participating States, including from the private sector. It facilitated an exchange of perspectives and knowledge regarding renewable energy and energy efficiency. Representatives of energy institutions from each of the Partners were able to engage in an exchange with Austrian and German energy stakeholders. A special focus was put on state-of-the-art technologies, business partnerships, financing and strengthening capacity to implement sustainable energy policies and solutions in the six Mediterranean Partner countries.

In late 2016, a Workshop on the Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security was organized in Amman at the invitation of the Jordanian authorities by the CPC (FSC) from 17 to 20 October. In line with FSC.DEC/1/08, this workshop raised awareness and facilitated a discussion on the OSCE Code of Conduct amongst OSCE participating States and Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation. Participants contributed national perspectives and discussed relevant provisions of the OSCE Code of Conduct. Some participants expressed their desire to continue the exchange of perspectives and information, including on the issue of women serving in the armed forces.

In the context of the project run by the Office of the Special Representative on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings on combating human trafficking along migration routes, Mediterranean Partner representatives from law enforcement, the judiciary, labour inspectorates, public social services and civil society were invited to participate in the first of three simulation-based learning exercises at the Center of Excellence for Stability Police Units (COESPU) in Vicenza, Italy from 14 to 18 November. The exercises consisted of realistic simulations of criminal cases of labour and sexual exploitation among migrants, including child victims.

With the support of the OSCE Chairmanship-in-Office, and in close co-operation with the Government of Malta, the Transnational Threats Department (Border Security and Management Unit/Action against Terrorism Unit) organized a workshop on strengthening co-operation between the OSCE Partners for Co-operation and participating States in the area of border security and management in Valletta from 15 to 17 November. The event was attended by some 80 national and international experts from the OSCE participating States, the OSCE Partners for Co-operation, the OSCE Border Management Staff College, as well as Frontex, Europol, INTERPOL, the International Organization for Migration, Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces/Police Co-operation Convention for South East Europe, EUNAVFOR MED/Operation SOPHIA, EUBAM Libya, the International Institute of Justice and the UNHCR. The three day interactive discussions demonstrated the interest among the participating States and the Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation in exchanging information and best practices, in strengthening cross-border bonds, and in exploring additional forms of international assistance, including in the area of risk analysis and management. As a follow-up, the Transnational Threats Department Border Security Management Unit is exploring ways to involve “points of contact” from the Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation in the border security and management focal point network of the

OSCE. A series of capacity-building trainings in the area of risk analysis and management tailored to the needs of the Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation is envisaged for 2017.

Acknowledgement

The 2016 Austrian Chairmanship of the Mediterranean Contact Group would like to express its sincere gratitude to the German OSCE Chairmanship, the OSCE Secretariat, the OSCE participating States and the Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation for their engagement, commitment, support and intensive co-operation within the Mediterranean Partnership 2016.