



Under the Patronage of European Commission and European Council



Paris, 23rd November 2007
General Assembly
Report on Activities, Programs, Finance
Luigi Troiani, Secretary General

Distinguished Delegates, Distinguished Vice Presidents, Dear Chairman, Dear Mr President Simon, Mr. Gilles Mentré, Dear All.

Let me first of all, thank you all and each one for being here today, accepting the invitation of the Vice Presidents to our Statutory Assembly. I am aware that the continuous change of the date of the Assembly has forced you to review your agenda for guaranteeing your presence: the absents at our gathering have not done the same. One reason more for thanking all of you for being here.

Let me then express my gratefulness to Mr. Pierre Simon, President of the Paris Chamber of Commerce and Industry, who is hosting the Assembly, confirming how big it is the involvement of the Chamber in our activities and in the success of the Euro-Mediterranean Trade Distribution and Services Initiative.

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The General Assembly is the key moment for any organization. It is the place where the members decide, approve or disapprove the official documents, discuss and decide upon the budget, elect the Statutory organs.

This is even more true for an organizations as ours, which is composed by so many and distant members, expressing so many and distant entrepreneurial cultures, national backgrounds, ways of being and operating.

The General Assembly is the cauldron where we boil our expectations, criticisms, dreams, projects and programs. The result is the Final Document you will approve tonight, at the end of our working day.

Welcome dear delegates.

Thanks indeed for coming, after a too long period of difficulties and stumbling blocks which our organizations suffered immediately after our Athens Assembly. This is the first of our gathering without Sergio Billé, the first President of Euro-Med Tds, the man to whom, together with the President of the French Traders Jacques Dermagne, we ought a debt of gratitude for creating, and then sustaining for about 10 years, our Association. His sudden and unexpected absence from the Presidency caused a lot of troubles: to be without the Legal representative has forced us to freeze or even stop many projects and activities, and to wait for appropriate conditions for calling a new Assembly which, could guarantee the organisation to set up its projects in "normal" conditions.

I am glad to announce here that we finally settled a new frame of cooperation with the Italian partner, Confcommercio, which is hosting the Secretariat and guaranteeing important part of our budget through services and financial contribution. To keep this cornerstone was indispensable to the association, and we got it! Let me take this opportunity to express my thanks to the president of Confcommercio, Carlo Sangalli, and to his representative in Euro-Med TDS, the Chairman of the Confcommercio International Committee and President of the Chamber of Commerce of Triest, Antonio Paoletti.

The Euro-Mediterranean economic and social environment

Our Assembly comes in a very special moment of economic, social, and political developments in our region.

The Lisbon 9th Euro-Mediterranean Meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs (5-6 November 2007) offered an appropriate opportunity to assess the progress made in implementing the Barcelona process results. Together with positive improvements many challenges are still facing our region such as: structural social and economic backwardness, climate change and shortage of energy, indiscriminate and illegal migration, technological lag, unemployment, social and economic unrest, economic and social security demands. The business community looks in particular at the length which is characterizing the Barcelona process measures improvement, and the slowness which governs the production of rules for fully freeing the entrepreneurial resources in our countries.

President Sarkozy idea of launching the "Mediterranean Union" was probably conceived, taking into considerations the above mentioned and other difficulties in the area. We have been listening with care and attention to your speech, Mr. Gilles Mentré, because it is the first time that from such a high European political Authority comes a look at the Mediterranean region in line the one we raised first, about ten years ago, when our Initiative was created on the basis of what a splendid French Historian, Fernand Braudel, wrote decades before: "It is my firm believe, that all the Mediterranean people share a common destiny".

Looking at the French President initiative, the community of the people bordering our historic sea hope to share in a near future a true and valuable economic and social co-operation which could be the base for the take off towards a more sound and sustainable development. The business community of the Euro-Med TDS Initiative is certainly very attentive at the proposals coming from *Elysée* on the subject.

The aim of any project related to a more intense collaboration among the coastal countries should, of course, be seen as an added value to the progresses of the "Barcelona Process", the fundamental inspiration of our Euro-Mediterranean Initiative. The political cooperation between the European Union and the Mediterranean Countries not belonging to the Eu, is the guarantee which allows the business to grow, in the region, through the spirit of partnership and friendship among the companies. Nor it has to be under evaluated the fact that the objectives of the Barcelona process are supported by a budget of more than € 3.3 billion for 2007-2010. This money is at our disposal if and when we will be able to present appropriate projects and show our capability of cooperation. 3,3 bn euros have been earmarked by the Eu 27 for the Mediterranean regional and bilateral cooperation in the framework of the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument. I have been visiting the European Union Authorities which are responsible for administrating those instrument of cooperation and they are waiting intelligent and useful proposals from us. The success we had in completing the project *euromed-tds.com*, and setting up the platform *emedB2b.biz* is of course a good card we may always play in front of the European Union Institution when asking support and finance.

The main issue we are striving for is, anyway, the completion of the Free trade area, in accordance with the provisions of the Barcelona Declaration and our Association Chart of Messina. The Euro-Mediterranean meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs in Lisbon acknowledged that substantial progress has been achieved to date with the scope of the negotiations now extended to services and right of establishment and agricultural and fisheries products, subjects which are all part of our day by day life and activities. The ministers noted with satisfaction the rising trend of foreign direct investments in the Euro-Mediterranean region and stressed the significant role played by the Facility for Euro-Mediterranean Investment and Partnership (*Femip*). They were also pleased to note that Euro-Mediterranean cooperation in the fields of environment, transport, energy and information society has increased and that common objectives have been defined.

Our Responsibilities

In such a rich environment, full of demands and stimulations, we have not been in conditions to respond with the entire richness of our potentialities.

Beside the personal limitations of the leading group, mine's are for sure too many, objective difficulties froze our propulsive capability, in the period after Athens Assembly.

I said about the absence of the legal representative and the impossibility of calling immediately a new Assembly to re-shape the Executive Board.

I have also to report about the non-attendance at the Executive board meetings of two elected persons, one expressed by the Serbian Chamber of Commerce now Minister of Agriculture of Serbia, the other by the Greek Confederation now President of Eu Social and Economic Committee. The Executive Board has not been in condition to express its leadership appropriately. Let me stress, here, the need that the person who will be elected tonight to seat in the Executive Board shares the sense of responsibility and participate at the Executive Board meetings and be continuously in contact with its regional constituency to be inspired by it in its action and make the local members feel the sense of participation and ownership in relation to Euro-Med TDS.

The Budget constraints are also part of the matter. You approved, distinguished delegates, at the Assembly in Athens, members fees up to more than 142,000 euro. It comes from the closed budget you received by electronic mail weeks ago, that we cashed in 2005 and 2006, less than half of that amount, and we cashed no fee this year, with few exceptions, because we were waiting for the decision of the Assembly. You may easily imagine the consequences on the day by day life of the Association of this unfortunate situation. I proposed to the Executive Board, and the Board accepted, to offer to the Assembly a new Fee system, which at the end will reduce by approximately 1/3 the total contribution of the fees to the budget, but will probably make more realistic the forecast for our activities.

You must be aware of the fact that, because of such a financial constraint, for most of the time, Euro-Med TDS operated with only one permanent assistant to the Executive Board and the Secretary general, plus part time consultants on legal, fiscal, technological matters. We need to improve the quality and quantity of the technical support to our Association: the regular payment of the agreed fees is one of the ways to allow that this is going to happen.

Activities' Record

Executive Board

The Senior Vice President, Mohamed El Masri, reported on the Executive Board activities and decisions.

Let me just mention that two meetings have been held from last Assembly till today, namely on June 7th 2005 and December 11th 2006. The Minutes (synthesis) of the meetings are online in the web site of Euro-Med TDS, www.euromedts.org.

Let me also recall the Assembly that decision has been taken that all the costs related to the participation of the Board members to the Board meetings are covered by the organization of origin, and my appeal to the Assembly is to confirm that decision, at least for the time being.

Secretary General and Secretariat

The Secretariat of Euro-Med TDS takes care of all the regular activities of the Association, such as: relations with the distinguished members, organisation of statutory meetings, lobbying and communication with authorities, communication with stakeholders, search for tenders and grants, search for partners, conception and preparation of studies and projects, editing of the monthly bulletin, update of the website, participation to conferences and other occasion of representation.

The Activities of the Secretary general and of the Secretariat, including the structure and the names of the persons working at the Secretariat, are published in the web site of Euro-Med TDS, www.euromedts.org.

We have always insisted that it could be appropriate that the contact person in the member organizations, who deals with Euro-Med TDS, spend some period working at the Secretariat. This would make smoother and easier our communication and give a reciprocal sense of personal commitment to the common job. Don't underestimate this opportunity.

Let me now go to enlist the principal activities and products realized by Euro-Med TDS from the Athens General Assembly.

Euro-Med TDS News

The newsletter, which is published monthly on the Euro-Med TDS website, reports the latest news and events related to Trade and Services issues in the Euro-Mediterranean region, and in single member countries.

It also conveys information about the activity of the EU in the Mediterranean area, and other projects aiming at strengthening transnational commercial co-operation.

Some editions of the newsletter may be focussed on specific issues (i.e. Women Entrepreneurship in the Mediterranean region, Fishery, etc.).

In the recent period, the bulletin suffered lack of funds, and lack of information from the members. Let me request you, distinguished delegates, to instruct your communication officer to provide the Secretariat with update information on your organisation, especially as far as the international activities, change of leaders, strategic decisions, etc. are concerned. The result will allow all of us to know about the others, with an important advantage in terms of having at our disposal knowledge for future actions.

EmedB2b.biz Platform

The emed platform infrastructure has been designed with particular care towards the needs of small and medium enterprises, in order to facilitate their access to international markets.

Emed-b2b.biz is the software of applications for B2B Demand and Offer on line, it is the most advanced platform as for technological content and partnership. The platform works through two interdependent applications:

- 15 L.A.P. (Local Access Point) and 1 I.A.P. (International Access Point)
- 1 N.O.F. (Network Operating Facility)

You will find further details in the enclosure n. 1.

In December 2005 emed-tds.com consortium's legal representative Conference, opted for setting up "an ad hoc company having the sole social scope of running the emed-b2b.biz, having Euro-med TDS the only founder of the commercial company". The meeting expressed its agreement with the Statute of the future company, and with the contract designed for the relations between the new commercial entity and single LAPs.

The Executive Board in December 2006, endorsed the position expressed by the Consortium, asking the Secretary general to proceed. Immediately after his election, the new Legal Representative will open "Eumed Tradenet S.r.l.". Therefore the experimental one year phase will finally start.

Euro-Mediterranean Fisheries Initiative - EFI

Conditions existed to continue EFI, the specific initiative in the fishery and aquaculture industries, carried out in collaboration with institutional and entrepreneurial bodies involved in marketing, processing, conserving and distributing the sea and aquaculture products.

EFI takes particular interest in spreading better practices in the field of import/export procedures and quality control: certification, labelling and traceability. EFI is involved in problematic issues related to the protection of fishery resources, to safety at sea, to health and hygiene aspects of processing, conservation and distribution of the catch.

EFI takes advantage from the trilateral co-operation between governmental institutions, the European Union and entrepreneurs.

In the above mentioned framework, Seville Conference, on 10-11th May 2007, has been organized, in cooperation with Andalusia Junta and the Ministries of Agriculture of Italy and Spain. Qualified representatives of the fishery sector coming from the northern and southern shores of the Mediterranean Sea gave different opinions and insights in reference to distribution and sale of fishery products. In the enclosure n. 2, you find the programme of the Conference and the cover of the Introductory Report. The full text will be on line by next week and send by mail to your addresses.

The Euro-Mediterranean School of Services Economics (Eumesse)

We are aware of the importance of training our current and future businessmen and leaders, to increase and optimise the economic resources and opportunities that can be encountered in our region. This is why Euro-Med TDS is active on the training field, with an ambitious objective: the creation of the Euro-Mediterranean School of Services Economics (Eumesse).

Training, increasing the capacities of young professionals, is one of the main instruments to allow the convergence between the two shores of the Mediterranean. This is still more true in services sector, where success relies to a great extent on the skills and intuitions of managers and entrepreneurs.

Eumesse wishes to be, a higher education initiative, providing entrepreneurs and would-be entrepreneurs of the tertiary sector of Euro-Mediterranean countries with an innovative training opportunity, still missing in the Euro-Mediterranean academic environment. More specifically, Eumesse would provide in-depth education on the issues that characterise the services sector and its internationalisation, within a Euro-Mediterranean cultural frame.

The Pre-Feasibility study of Eumesse says that Eumesse may have many assets, that will distinguish it from traditional higher education institutes:

- the international dimension will contribute to the cultural growth of the students
- students will have the chance to know people from other countries with the same interests and objectives as their: this will allow the creation of relational networks, which could be the starting point for future international activities
- the Euro-Mediterranean dimension will give the students a cultural approach coherent with their operative environment, which is not the case with French or Anglo-Saxon institutes.

The Pre-Feasibility study draws also the conditions for setting up the activity.

I am glad to announce that a joint initiative of the vice President Paoletti with the Chambre de Commerce de Paris, powerful entity in training and teaching activities, could probably tailor a sound proposal for solving the lasting issue. Proposals are also welcome from Egypt and other southern Countries.

In the meanwhile, we did not stop our training activities. Following previous training courses mostly realized in Europe, it has been provided in Cairo, during the year 2005, a course on "*Start-up for Services Company*". The course was realised in partnership with Performa, the Italian Institute of Foreign Trade, the Federation of Egyptian Chambers of Commerce and the Cairo Chamber of Commerce. It trained young entrepreneurs or will-be entrepreneurs to the creation of new companies, and to the correct management of the complex starting phase in tertiary activity.

TuttoFood

Euro-Med TDS signed an agreement with ANIBO (National Association of Italian Buying Offices), which was mandated by Fiera Milano to promote the exhibition TuttoFood to strategic foreign buyers.

TuttoFood took place in Milan from 5th to 8th May 2007. It was a comprehensive showcase of the Italian produce for the worldwide food and beverage market. Buyers and trading companies from all over the world met in order to offer an updated outlook on food trends. About 3.500 exhibitors and 2.500 buyers attended the Fair.

Euro-Med TDS entered into an agreement with the organizers in order to guarantee the covering of expenses incurred by the buyers who, through Euro-Med TDS, would have been introduced to TuttoFood.

Many members took this opportunity and sent affiliates to the Fair, using the services of Euro-Med TDS and having all the related costs paid by the organizers.

Economic Observatory

The project aims at creating the "Euro-Mediterranean Economic Observatory".

The Observatory could be promoted by Euro-Med TDS, in collaboration with Istituto Piepoli aiming at producing update information and forecasts through polls, interviews and questionnaires. The result would be a complete and updated picture of major local economic trends and of objective and subjective variables influencing the economic demands orientations.

The Observatory would investigate trends related to domestic economy, corporate and household spending and/or investing trends, level of confidence in future, forecasts, etc.

The result would be a useful tool for the action of Governments, companies and firms, European Union, scholars and analysts, etc.

The Project of the Observatory is at your disposal on request.

Excerpt from Financial issues

The realisation of the above mentioned projects and programs and other actions, requested financial resources, and implied keeping the accounts of the Association.

You received, distinguished delegates, well in advance of the General Assembly, the closed budgets for 2005 and 2006, together with the audits. Copies are at your disposal in case of need (annex 3-4-5-6). The floor is yours as for observations, questions, remarks. It has been my duty to prepare the closed budgets and making them audited. It is your duty to approve, emend or refuse them.

[...]

In relation to the four financial years under your considerations, let me underline an obvious consideration: any delay, or lack of payment of the due fee undermines the ability to act of the Association, creating a quasi-total dependence of its existence on the projects it may succeed to obtain or, even worse, on the begging with third parties of the Secretary general.

It is necessary that Euro-Med TDS may make its budget normal and workable. This can happen only if the fees system works regularly. This is the only way to pursue our activity with continuity, in accordance with the ambitious objectives fixed by the members and the Statutes.

The Euro-Mediterranean partnership is becoming a more and more important argument as we approach the Euro-Mediterranean free-trade Area (2010), and financial constraints should not be an obstacle to Euro-Med TDS playing a primary position in the Euro-Mediterranean environment.

Having in mind the criticism exercised by most of the members in relation to the fee system approved by the Athens General Assembly, the Board has accepted a new scheme of fees proposed by the Secretary general in accordance with most part of the members. While the outstanding debts will be dealt one by one by the Executive Board together with the Secretary general, here follows what the Executive Board proposes to the General Assembly with regards to the annual fee system, valid until next General Assembly, starting with 2007 financial year:

- € 10,000.00 for the members coming from: Italy, France (CCIP), Spain, Greece;
- € 5,000.00 for the members coming from: France (CGI), Monaco, Slovenia, Turkey;
- € 2,500.00 for the members coming from: Algeria, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Cyprus, Israel, Jordan, Libya, Malta, Portugal, San Marino, Tunisia;
- € 1,500.00 for the members coming from: Albania, Egypt, Lebanon, Montenegro, Morocco, Palestinian Authority, Serbia, Syria.

The above Fee scheme has to be approved or emended by the General Assembly.

Please acknowledge that the provisional budgets for 2007 and 2008 have been prepared in accordance with the above mentioned figures.

Looking at the future

I think we should consider the present General Assembly the appropriate place to relaunch our activities.

The goal of Euro-Med TDS, as written in By-Laws, is "to provide support to the member organisations in order to strengthen their role as agents of social and economic growth in the Euro-Mediterranean region and to enhance the contribution to the development of a sound service economy in the region".

We are requested by the soul of our times, by the needs of the region where we live, to act to reinforce the Initiative. Taking into account that private services economy means between 55 and 60% of Gnp in all our nations, trade, distribution and services are requested to play a major role. In order to make this possible we have to engage ourselves with inspiration and belief in our mission.

In this frame, it is important the fact that new organizations continue to come at our door and ask to become members. It is now the turn of the Union of Traders of the Republic of San Marino, which presented at the Executive Board its application months ago. You will vote on that application. The Republic of San Marino is the oldest democracy in the world and an economy where trade and distribution show lasting traditions and splendid results. Let me here greet the President of the Union, Mr. Marco Arzilli, whom I hope will promptly seat as one of the delegates at this Assembly.

With this in mind, dear delegates, You will be called this afternoon to approve the Program of Activities and the Final Document which will resume your proposals and deliberations expressed during the Assembly.

Let me only remark the importance of one of the proposals you receive from the Executive Board and the Secretary general. We share the idea of calling an important Euro-Mediterranean Conference, to be realized under the auspices and with the attendance of higher representatives of the European Union and our governments, together with outstanding leaders of trade distribution and services. In doing so, we will celebrate the Ten Years from our Messina Conference Manifesto and deal with matters such as the Free Euro-Mediterranean Area, President Sarkozy Mediterranean Union project, and else (see annex n.9).

Later during the day you will also elect the new Statutory Organs. The regional meetings early in the morning produced indications to the Assembly, which will be presented to you later.

As far as the Secretary General is concerned, I thank you for electing me at last Assembly. I hope the job done at the Secretariat, with the unavoidable limitations which are properly submitted to your judgment and criticism, may receive your approval, together with the approval of my Report and the financial documents. In case you still trust the person you elected, I consider my duty to remain firmly at your disposal in order to revive, together with the new Executive board, Euro-Med TDS in the important years we are approaching.

Thanks for your attention.