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NOTE

from: The Presidency
to: Delegations

Subject: **Second Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on Employment and Labour (Brussels, 21-22 November 2010)**

Delegations will find attached the Chair's conclusions of the Second Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on Employment and Labour held on 21 and 22 November 2010 in Brussels.

**Union for the Mediterranean,
Chairs' conclusions of the Second Euro-Mediterranean
Ministerial Conference on Employment and Labour
Brussels, 21-22 November 2010**

1. The Employment and Labour Ministers of the Euro-Mediterranean partners meet for their **Second Conference under the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) in Brussels on 21 and 22 November 2010**, hosted by Belgium holding the Presidency of the Council of the European Union and under the UfM Co-Presidency of France and Egypt, with the support of the European Commission. The Conference builds on the commitments made at the first Euro-Mediterranean Employment and Labour Ministerial Conference held on 9-10 November 2008 in Marrakesh, and notably the Euro-Mediterranean **Framework for Actions on Employment, Employability and Decent Work** (hereafter 'Framework for Actions'). On this basis, Ministers agree on priorities to **ensure that the economic recovery goes hand in hand with the creation of more decent jobs and with poverty alleviation**, and to **step up the momentum for concrete action at national and regional levels**.
2. The Chairs welcome the progress made in the implementation of the Framework for Actions on Employment, Employability and Decent Work since the 2008 Marrakesh Ministerial Conference.
3. Ministers endorse the preparatory work of the Euro-Mediterranean Employment and Labour Working Group, which at meetings held in November 2009 and October 2010 discussed regional and national trends and policy developments and reviewed progress made under the Framework for Actions, in line with the Marrakesh conclusions. Ministers take note of the synthesis, prepared by the European Commission, of the group's discussion and the reports on national progress, including recovery measures taken by the partners.

4. Ministers welcome the launch of the Euro-Mediterranean Social Dialogue Forum in Barcelona on 11 March 2010, which is set to play a strong role in developing the employment and social dimension of the UfM. The Forum underlined the readiness of employers and trade unions to engage in a process of promoting social dialogue across the Euro-Mediterranean region, which in a first step led to an exchange on matching skills and labour market needs, and it stressed the crucial issue concerning youth integration into the economy and access to employment as part of a multi-dimensional approach. Ministers take note of the synthesis report of the Euro-Mediterranean Social Dialogue Forum.¹
5. Ministers underline the employment and social impact of the global economic crisis, which has been hard felt across the Euro-Mediterranean region, albeit with specific differences. Key challenges which prevailed before the crisis in several partners, such as the insufficient creation of employment, high unemployment, a vast informal sector, and a mismatch between skills and labour market needs, along with a lack of decent work opportunities and social protection, have become still more pressing, requiring a firm policy response and concrete actions.
6. Ministers acknowledge the need to enhance social protection in several partners in response to the global financial crisis, notably for addressing the challenges of alleviation of poverty. They agree that the ILO's Global Jobs Pact and its implementation provide a significant input in the development of the employment and social dimension of the UfM.
7. Ministers underline that extraordinary measures focused on jobs and social protection during the crisis have led to economic as well as social benefits, while acknowledging the objectives of coordinated and differentiated exit strategies to ensure balanced public finances.
8. Ministers underline that employment and social policies have to meet both the short-term challenges of the recovery and the longer-term commitments to structural reform.

¹ <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=88&langId=en&eventsId=298&furtherEvents=yes>

9. Ministers stress that implementing the comprehensive Framework for Actions adopted in Marrakesh has become even more urgent in the face of the job crisis and the push for recovery. Its set of policy objectives on employment and social policies – more jobs; enhancing employability/human capital, gender and creating decent employment opportunities/better jobs – remains fully pertinent. Decent work objectives should not be undermined as result of the crisis. Ministers recall the importance of the Framework for Actions’ integrated approach.

10. The Chairs take note that the question of the protection of the workers’ rights in the Arab Occupied Territories in accordance with the relevant international principles and rules was also raised by some delegations during the meeting.

The chairs take note that the Ministers reached an agreement on the following priorities and proposals concerning the employment issues covering the entire UfM area.

Priorities and proposals concerning the employment issues covering the entire UfM area.

“Economic recovery together with more decent jobs and poverty alleviation: nine policy priorities

11. Within the Framework for Actions, Ministers, while acknowledging national differences, highlight the following nine **priority challenges for employment and social policies in the UfM:**

i. **Boosting employment creation to avoid a jobless recovery**

Even before the crisis, the expansion of employment opportunities lagged behind economic growth in many partners. The need for a huge number of jobs to reduce unemployment and under-employment has become even more salient in the face of the crisis, while the challenge of fast-growing working-age populations in the Mediterranean partners becomes ever more pressing. There is an urgent need to step up economic and employment policies geared towards job creation at all levels in particular through support of micro, small and medium sized enterprises and the provision of micro-credit facilities

ii. **Enhancing decent work opportunities**

The vast informal economy in some partners and the spread of precarious jobs represent a concern as well as a barrier to development and labour rights both in the short and medium term. In many cases it deprives workers of labour rights and social protection. This challenge needs to be addressed through an integrated approach based on economic, fiscal and social policies. Efforts to enhance decent work opportunities and the creation of more and better quality jobs, the upgrading of health and safety at work and the respect and the implementation of the fundamental rights at work need to be stepped up.

iii. **Tackling high youth unemployment and under-employment**

Youth unemployment is a key challenge, both in countries with an ageing population (mainly the EU Member States) and in countries with a fast-growing working-age population (in most other UfM partners). Youth unemployment may reduce opportunities over the life-course, and lead to the loss of valuable resources both for the economy and society. Efforts need to be geared at providing job opportunities for young people, enhancing education systems, reducing the school drop-out rate, facilitating transitions from school to work, encouraging entrepreneurship and self-employment and offering better opportunities, vocational guidance and assistance to bring the young unemployed and young graduates into employment. In this area special attention should be paid to the development and modernisation of apprenticeship opportunities, a stronger role for companies in training and integrated learning processes in firms.

iv. **Enhancing women's participation in economic and social life**

More emphasis should be put on women's economic and social empowerment and employability for the benefit of society as a whole and in order to tackle poverty and social exclusion. Moreover, positive action and dissemination of good practices in favour of women as well as reconciliation of family, private and working life for women and men should be social policy priorities. Ministers reaffirm the conclusions of the Second Ministerial Conference on 'Strengthening the role of women in society' held in Marrakesh in November 2009.

v. **Skills development matching the changing needs of labour markets**

Developing the right skills enhances access to the labour market and to more and better quality jobs. But the mismatch between existing qualifications and labour market needs is a widespread concern. Unequal access to education, between rich and poor, rural and urban areas, also remains a problem. It is therefore a key challenge to enhance the quality of education geared at labour market needs, to develop attractive vocational training and to complement it with effective incentives for life-long learning, also allowing for a new role for companies and a new vision for vocational policy and training methods, including their governance. Ministers take note of the outcomes of the Symposium on the Governance in the field of Vocational training and technical education organised in Paris on the 28th and 29th of October 2010.

vi. **Enhancing the capacity of public employment services**

Within the framework of active labour market policies and in times of increased unemployment, public employment services have proved their value more than ever. But their capacity and efficiency is still underdeveloped in several partners, which calls for investments in this area, where exchange of best practice is vital.

vii. **Prioritizing poverty alleviation**

Vulnerable groups have been most affected by the crisis, including the young unemployed, women, working poor and poor households which are widespread in many partners. Tackling poverty needs to be based on an integrated approach and efforts should particularly aim at promoting full participation in society and the economy and at extending employment opportunities, while ensuring equal opportunities in the access to affordable public and private quality services. The role of NGOs should be strengthened in this context.

viii. **Modernising social protection and developing a social protection floor**

Existing social protection systems need to be modernised, ensure adequate income support and access to healthcare and made sustainable. At the same time, in many partners the promotion of a social protection floor for all, in line with the approaches advocated by the agencies of the UN, notably the ILO, and supported by the World Bank and the IMF, will need to be given priority.

ix. **Promoting effective social dialogue**

Social dialogue can effectively contribute to ensuring that economic and social change embraces sustainable social development. However, the dialogue between employers and trade unions is still weak in several partners. Social dialogue needs to be firmly anchored at the core of the employment and social dimension of the UfM, while promoting tripartite structures as well as autonomous bipartite dialogues between employers and trade unions, and investing in the capacity of social partners.

In addition to social dialogue, Ministers welcome a wider dialogue with civil society and other relevant stakeholders.

In this context Ministers also underline that legal migration constitutes a factor that contributes to economic and social development, recalling the conclusions of the first Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Meeting on Migration, which took place in November 2007 in Algarve, Portugal.

Enhancing policy dialogue at regional level

12. With the policy framework of the employment and social dimension of the Union for the Mediterranean in place, Ministers call for **moving decisively towards concrete action and a stronger focus on regional policy dialogue**. In a first step, particular emphasis will be put on issues related to matching skills development and labour market needs in the UfM, through employment policy, vocational training policy, and working conditions, as set out in paragraph 11 and in the proposals in the ANNEX.

13. **At regional level**, Ministers call for enhanced policy dialogue along the following five axes:
 - i. **promote networking between experts on employment issues** throughout the region; in this regard, taking into account the possibilities for projects identified by the UfM Secretariat under indent (iv), the Euro-Mediterranean Employment and Labour Working Group should identify appropriate ways of putting in place:
 - a) networking in the area of qualification and skills, with a view to anticipating the needs of the labour market and to making employers and workers aware of them;
 - b) exchanges of expertise among public employment services, institutions of vocational training and of social protection, and other relevant stakeholders on selected practical issues in the area of capacity building, including in the field of labour migration;
 - c) exchanges of expertise related to the objective of improving the delivery and management of reliable data and statistics on labour markets;
 - d) exchanges of expertise in the area of health and safety at work including with a view to identifying the feasibility of creating a Euro-Mediterranean Observatory for Health and Safety at Work (see ANNEX).

- ii. encourage partners to take **leadership for thematic initiatives**, with one or two partners inviting others to cooperate on specific issues, including by extending already existing bilateral cooperation activities, so as to create thematic clusters of partners cooperating on specific topics. In this respect, Ministers welcome the initiative of:
 - a) Morocco and France in the field of vocational training management by organising in 2011 in Morocco, the second Symposium on Governance in this area, and by participating to several related projects (see annex II)
 - b) Italy, together with other interested countries, in the field of vocational training, by sharing its already active project on a Euro-Mediterranean Cooperation Centre;
- iii. **promote social dialogue** at the regional level within the framework of the Union for the Mediterranean, notably through the annual **Euro-Mediterranean Social Dialogue Forum** (hereafter the ‘Forum’), composed of employers and trade union representatives selected on the basis of autonomous nominations by regional social partner mechanisms in line with the practice followed at the first Forum in March 2010. The Forum should continue to contribute to the implementation of the Framework for Actions and promote social dialogue in the Euro-Mediterranean partners and develop exchanges between the social partners across the region. Ministers invite the social partners to define, within this Forum, specific areas where their dialogue across the Euro-Mediterranean region could provide added value to addressing the objectives of the Framework for Actions, and to work towards concrete outcomes, following the example of the UfM social partners’ expert group on matching skills development with labour market needs. The Forum could also look into ways of advancing capacity building among social partners.

- iv. **encourage the Union for the Mediterranean Secretariat** to improve coordination among donors, including donors from the private sector, with a view to **promoting projects** on the employment and social dimension in the priority areas set out above, while recalling the principle that funding from the European Union will be limited to existing resources within the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI) and other relevant instruments, within the Multiannual Financial Framework ceilings. The Ministers welcome the important financial support provided by the European Union in social policy sectors such as education, vocational training, employment services and social protection through past and ongoing bilateral and regional financial cooperation.
- v. **make use of available expertise** from the European Training Foundation as well as from the bilateral, regional or multilateral institutions and **highlight the importance of continued cooperation** with international organisations notably the International Labour Office and international financial institutions, in addressing employment and social challenges in the Euro-Mediterranean region.
12. Meanwhile, the Framework for Actions needs to be thoroughly implemented within the **individual partners**. This should also take into account the employment and social policy objectives defined, respectively, within the action plans under the European Neighbourhood Policy and, for the candidate and potential candidate countries, within the accession process. For the EU Member States this implementation takes place within the context of the Europe 2020 Strategy and in line with the new European employment guidelines.
13. Ministers call on the **Euro-Mediterranean Employment and Labour Working Group**, chaired by the UfM Co-Presidency, with the support of the European Commission, and composed of high-level representatives of all the partners, to continue at its annual meetings the exchange of best practices and the coordination of the regional policy dialogue under the Framework for Actions. It should particularly report to the next Ministerial Conference on the progress in:

- a) implementing the Framework for Actions by the partners, including an inventory of best practices;
- b) developing the regional activities referred to under paragraph 11.

14. The Third Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on Employment and Labour under the Union for the Mediterranean will be convened in 2012.”

Proposed actions and projects which will be submitted to the UfM Secretariat for consideration of funding (non limited list):

I – The Euro-Mediterranean Observatory for Health and Safety at Work

Main objectives:

The Observatory is above all a **network of experts** designed to act and provide information and training in the field health and safety at work.

In line with the conclusions of the first ministerial conference of Marrakech (9-10 November 2008) the regional Observatory on Health and Safety at Work aims at identifying and pooling skills and knowledge of the Mediterranean partners in order to:

- Make national authorities, social partners and all other stakeholders of the business world more aware of the issue of health and safety at work.
- Promote the establishment of legislative and statutory instruments to improve working conditions.
- Support the implementation of measures that improve working conditions.

It will propose two types of activities to its members:

- **developing resources to train national stakeholders** through the exchange of experiences and research/action in the field of occupational risks. The principle objective is to develop pilot actions with companies on a voluntary basis (i.e. according to their commitments to the CSR).
- **providing information** so as to promote risk management and prevention regarding occupational safety and health.

Its institutional partners:

It should seek partnership with the relevant bodies: the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA/BILBAO²) and its European Risk Observatory; the Senior Labour Inspectors Committee (SLIC); National Institute of Research and Security (INRS/ Nancy); International Network of Training Institutes for Labour Relations (RiiFT), as well as ILO and its International Training Centre in Turin etc.

The Observatory can lean on the bilateral exchanges already existing between several partners, in particular Spain, Morocco and France and can be extended to the all the UfM partners showing interest in the field.

Its activities:

- Identifying practices and projects in the network member partners which could be used as transferable experiences.
- Strategic watch on "best practices" regarding methods and techniques as well as social practices, in non-Mediterranean partners as well as in several specialized institutions.
- Spreading and organizing exchanges on these practices within the UfM partners.
- Carrying out projects on demand (research, investigation, conferences, implementation of experimental actions, publication of guides, etc.) within partners and for actions carried out in partnership either between partners or with businesses or networks of businesses.

² According to the Director of the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA) "Spending on workplace health and safety should be seen as an investment and not a cost" (annual report, 2009).

Its resources:

The network is a "soft" organization based on teleconferences and a limited number of meetings designed to foster knowledge transfer and mutual learning. Pending the results of the first projects, a secretary and a website should be sufficient to ensure the smooth functioning of the network.

Expected results

Public and private bodies throughout the region (i.e. UfM partners) may:

- share their experiences in the field of health and safety at work;
- reinforce their expert capacities;
- launch experimental actions;
- develop legal instrument which strengthen health and safety at work;
- apply for tenders regarding projects carried out in this field by States, by the European Union or by funding organisations.

II - Proposed actions for matching skills development with labour market needs in the Union for the Mediterranean

- I. Ministers welcome the social partners' involvement in the Union for the Mediterranean Process. They take note of the summary of Euro-Mediterranean social partners' expert meeting on matching skills development with labour market needs in the Union for the Mediterranean, which took place on 26 May 2010³;
- II. In this context, Ministers also take note of the following proposals for concrete action in this area made by the UfM-Co-Presidency and/or other partners, which will be examined by the Euro-Mediterranean Employment and Labour Working Group, and where appropriate submitted to the UfM Secretariat for consideration of funding:

³ <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=88&langId=en&eventsId=298&furtherEvents=yes>

- launching assessment of labour markets needs, with a view to highlighting shortages of skilled and semi skilled workers and identifying new jobs and qualifications that will require new programmes and new methods for training and re-training, in line with lifelong learning policies;
- inviting the appropriate structures put in place by UfM Education and Employment/Labour Ministers, to describe and compare levels of certification in education and training at the national, international or sectoral level; aiming at a 'Euro-Mediterranean certifications framework' as appropriate, cutting across the different professional sectors and which would be developed on a voluntary basis bringing together European and Mediterranean partners, ensuring that this complements and does not duplicate the EQF and ECVET developments;
- improving national vocational education and training systems, including their governance through the implementation of institutional mechanisms that involve the social partners in the management of training systems (i.e. the National Commissions for Qualification, National fund for training);
- examining the possibility of identifying a limited number of VET centres of excellence across the Mediterranean which could be developed into centres of a regional scope, subject to appropriate funding, proven added value and taking into account a well-balanced distribution;
- notwithstanding relevant competences for migration issues and in line with the EU's Global Approach in this area, considering how a programme of circular migration could include elements of VET and Higher education to improve the human capital of migrants.
- encouraging the exchange of information on skills needs and employment opportunities on a voluntary basis, without prejudice to the access to the labour market, taking into account existing bilateral projects.

- fostering governance in the field of Vocational training and technical education on the basis of proposed actions presented in the declaration of Paris concerning Governance (28-29 October 2010) and existing bilateral projects on:
 - the involvement of social partners through capacity building, by assessing training systems, exchange of experience and training sessions;
 - the assessment of skills needed in different sectors of activities, by implementing sectorial observatories and by recognising competences and qualifications by social partner organisations;
 - apprenticeships and training in close cooperation with companies in order to promote access to qualified jobs for young people, to upgrade the skills of manpower, to foster mobility, and to facilitate the transition of poor qualified workers.
-