

Network of European Local Authorities for Peace in the Middle East

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– Proceedings –

Participants :

- ARTACHO Julian, Project Manager, International Relations, City of Barcelona (Catalonia, Spain)
- BISIAUX Rose-Anne, Project Manager, International Relations, Greater Dunkirk District Council (France)
- BUTZBACH Etienne, Vice Mayor of Belfort / President of the Network for French-Palestinian Decentralised Cooperation (France)
- CERQUA Rosalba, City Councillor, City of Naples (Italy)
- COOREN Bruno, Coordinator, International Relations Division, Greater Dunkirk District Council (France)
- CREVOLA Delphine, Project Manager, United Cities France
- DIEHLMANN Françoise, International Relations, Conseil Général du Val-de-Marne (France)
- FUNARO Antonio, City Councillor, City of Naples (Italy)
- GARRIGUE Régis, Project Manager Palestine/Israel, City of Lille (France)
- LOPEZ MARTIN Miguel Angel, Head of International Cooperation and Development, Deputation of Cordoba (Spain)
- LOTTI Flavio, Director, Italian Co-ordination of Local Authorities for Peace and Human Rights (Italy)
- MORELLO Paolo, FMCU/UTO/Advisor to the Leader of the Province of Turin (Italy)
- NICOLET Claude, Nord Pas-de-Calais Regional Council / Councillor Decentralised Cooperation, Greater Dunkirk District Council (France)
- PORTA Raffaele, Councillor in charge for International Relations, City of Naples (Italy)
- PRIETO Miguel Angel, Catalan Fund for Cooperation and Development (Catalonia, Spain)
- SCELZA Ernesto, Councillor, Peace and International Cooperation, Province of Salerno (Italy)
- TOSCHI Massimo, Adviser to the President, Region Tuscany (Italy)
- VINACCIA Gino, Chairman of the City Council; City of Civitavecchia (Italy)

Official Opening

- Rosa Russo-Iervolino, Mayor of Naples, insists on the active role European cities must play in the peace building process in the Middle East. She underlines the role the city of Naples is willing to play to achieve this goal. Solidarity, justice, peace and dignity are key values for cities—these values must be defended and spread beyond national borders. Local authorities have an asset that states do not possess: their logic is not that of power.

- Raffaele Porta, Councillor in charge for International Relations, City of Naples, underlines that peace can only be reached through building bridges and not walls. We need to build a European Network in order to increase the Local Authorities commitment for peace in Middle East.

The national situations and overview of the Network

France (Etienne Butzbach, Claude Nicolet)

- The Network for French-Palestinian Decentralised Cooperation (Réseau de coopération décentralisée pour la Palestine) supports the Geneva Initiative.
- Project to enlarge the movement of French cities around the issue of peace in the Middle East. A conference will be organized at the French Senate on February 3, 2004 to reach this objective. The goal of the meeting is (a) to make the voice of French local governments heard with regard to the resolution of Israel-Palestine conflict, and (b) to intensify decentralised cooperation programmes between French and Palestinian/Israeli local authorities, following Bertrand Delanoë's (Mayor of Paris) visit to Israel/Palestine.

Spain (Miguel Angel Lopez Martin)

- A meeting will take place in Cordoba on December 11, 2003 aiming at founding the Spanish network of regional funds for cooperation and development. A presentation of the Network of European Local Authorities for Peace in the Middle East will be made (Delphine Crévola).

Italy (Flavio Lotti)

- underlines that peace can only be reached if Palestinians and Israelis enjoy the same rights, the same dignity, and the same security.
- The initiatives carried out by Italian LA can be divided in two types:
 - decentralised cooperation projects
 - solidarity actions.
- There are currently not less than 50 twinning agreements between Italian and Palestinian cities but we estimate that more than 100 LA are engaged in cooperation projects in the area.
- Perugia Conference: initiative taken by the Umbria Region and academics of the University of Perugia, the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, and Palestinian academics. The meeting took place in Perugia the week of October 13, 2003. Representatives of local and national governments, of parliaments, universities and ONGs of the Euro-Mediterranean region were present at the meeting. ULAI and APLA implicitly agreed to work together in the field of *institutional building* of Palestinian local governments—through a cooperation between Israeli, Palestinian and European institutions. Project of training programme for Palestinian civil servants in order to increase capacities of Palestinian local authorities. The Network of European Local Authorities for Peace in the Middle East is asked to support the initiative.

Paolo Morello (UTO-FMCU/Province of Turin)

- Explains the 2002 FMCU/UTO-IULA initiative to reconstruct Palestinian cities through a ULAI - APLA cooperative programme. This initiative has been suspended.
- Need to involve in the network all European cities that support peace process in the Middle East.
- Need to work hand in hand with NGOs.

Massimo Toschi, Region Tuscany

- The European network should in no case appear as the supporter of one particular camp. It must first and above all present itself as supporter of peace.
- Need to support the Geneva Initiative.
- Need to condemn all forms of violence and terrorism.

Etienne Butzbach

- With regard to the concept of balance between Palestinians and Israelis: we need to take the responsibility for our imbalanced position in favour Palestinians; as defenders of peace, we eventually support the cause of Israel.
- With regard to the accusations of anti-Semitism: need to firmly and systematically condemn all forms of anti-Semitism.
- With regard to the criticism of European decentralised cooperation programmes with Palestinian local authorities, the latter lacking legitimacy:
 - o Palestinians did not have the chance to organise a democratic process
 - o We need to create the conditions for this democratic process to take place.

Claude Nicolet

- Need to present the European Network to national institutions (National Assemblies, State ministries, etc.).

General Objectives of the European Network

In Europe

- Increase the number of Local Authorities and Countries taking part in the European network.
- Create a database containing all decentralised cooperation programmes between European Local Authorities and Palestine.
- Promote the exchange of experiences between ELA engaged in the ME.
- Press on the European Union so that it can act concretely in taking the necessary measures for promoting a just and sustainable peace in the Middle East.
- Press on the National States, European Union and the United Nations to recognise the role of European Local Authorities in promoting peace and cooperation in the Middle East.
- Work on creating a European public opinion in favour of a just and sustainable peace in the Middle East.
- Pressure States, European Union and the United Nations in order to obtain their support for aid development programmes for Palestine.

In the Middle East

- Develop decentralised cooperation programmes in Israel and Palestine.
- Contribute to enhance the dialogue between Palestinian and Israeli Local Authorities through APLA and ULAI.
- Promote and support all peace initiatives between Palestinians and Israelis
- Co-ordinate more efficiently cooperation programmes (e.g. on a territorial basis – e.g. Eurogaza – or thematically – e.g. medical cooperation : Lille initiative.)

Name

Participants suggest to call the network: "Network of European Local Authorities for Peace in the Middle East" (abbreviations : ELPME in English, COEPPO in French; ELEPMO in Italian, etc.).

It is necessary to attract as many European local authorities as possible, including those which would be reluctant to appear as too pro-Palestinians.

Françoise Diehlmann (Val-de-Marne), representing Marcel Trigon's point of view (Councillor for International Relations and Decentralised Cooperation) argues that the EuroPalestine original denomination should be kept. She mentions that the Belgian network could be irritated by the new name. Bruno Cooren will contact the Belgian partners to find out.

The question of the name remains open.

Operational Objectives

1. Communication

- Creation of an internet site for the network. The proposal of Dunkirk to host the site is accepted.
- Enti locali per la pace will create a logo for the network and forward it to Dunkirk.
- Database containing all decentralised cooperation programmes between Europe and the Middle East will be established. A form will be sent to all national/regional by Cités Unies France (Delphine Crévola). National/regional databases will then be forwarded to Dunkirk to be put on line.
- Information mailing list will be elaborated.
- Need to have a brochure, a report of activities country by country, as well as a programme of activities.

2. Events/Actions

a. IULA-FMCU/UTO Unification Congress, Paris, May 2-5 2004

On this occasion, a meeting of the Network will be organized on May 3rd, that is, right before the plenary session on "Cooperation and diplomacy: a challenge for cities and communities" (May 4). CUF takes the responsibility of the logistics of the event.

b. Medical Conference for Peace in Lille

Organised in Lille on June 21-23 2004. Israeli, Palestinian and European local authorities are invited to participate in the event.

c. European mayors delegation in Palestine and Israel

Date still to be decided.

d. Conference of the "Network of European Local Authorities for Peace in the Middle East" ("Dunkirk II")

This meeting might be held in Cordoba (Spain), Fall 2004.

e. European Local Authorities Resolution for Peace in Middle East and Campaign against the wall

Flavio Lotti is responsible for writing a resolution draft that could be officially adopted by city councils. This document will be discussed and amended via email.

Adoption of the Network's founding principles (draft)

The following text combines Flavio Lotti's and Etienne Butzbach's contributions.

Preamble

- Considering the Israeli-Palestinian conflict ,
- Considering that the colonization policy performed by the Israeli Government in the Palestinian Territories nourishes the cycle of violence,
- Considering that terrorism – be it state terrorism or individual terrorism – is unacceptable, is to be condemned, and nourishes the current conflict,
- Convinced that, without a strong commitment by the international community, a just and sustainable peace will not be achieved in the Middle East,
- Convinced that peace will only be achieved through the recognition of the two peoples' right to the same dignity, the same rights, and the same security,
- Aware of the major role that Europe needs to play to reach these objectives, given its historical responsibility in the situation of the region,
- Preoccupied by Europe's silence and insufficient activity in the Middle East,
- Convinced that Europe will need to employ all its energy to achieve peace in the Middle East,
- Repeating its attachment to democracy and its condemnation of and struggle against all forms of anti-Semitism and racism,
- Convinced of the role local authorities, as first level of democratic life, closest to the citizens, must play in the achievement of peace—through dialogue, solidarity, and decentralised cooperation programmes,

Article 1: The Network will support, following the Dunkirk (December 2002) et Brussels Declarations (September 2003),

- all initiatives improving the dialogue between Israelis and Palestinians.
- all forces in favour of peace present in Israel and Palestine.
- all initiatives of decentralised cooperation between Palestinian, Israeli and European local authorities.

Article 2: The Network will pressure the European Union and the member states in order to achieve a just and sustainable peace. It is committed to shape/sensitise European public opinion on this question.

Article 3: The Network

- is composed of national and regional networks as well as any European local government committed to peace and decentralised cooperation in the Middle East.
- will work hand in hand with APLA and ULAI.
- wishes to link its activities to those of United Cities and Local Governments.

Agenda 2004

February 3	Conference at the French Senate, Paris, to mobilize French local authorities around the issue of peace in the Middle East. → Cancelled. Could possibly take place during the Unification Congress in Paris.
21 February	Preparation meeting for the mobilization seminar which will take place during the FMCU-UTO/IULA unification congress in Paris. This meeting will take place during the next FMCU-IULA meeting, that is February 20-21. Paolo Morello will find out.
April	Could the Network approach the cities of Lyon and Geneva as well as WHO? The Network could in fact manage to participate in a meeting organized by the former organizations. It will take place in April and 7 Palestinian cities as well as 7 Israeli cities will be present. Ghassan Shakaa (Naplouse, APLA) and Meir Nitzan (Rishon Le Zion, ULAI) will participate.
May 2-4	Unification Congress in Paris, from May 2-5: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - participation in the roundtable on peace on May 4 - side event : Seminar of the Network of European Local Authorities for Peace in the Middle East possibly on May 4.
June 21-23	Palestinian-Israeli-European Medical Conference for Peace in Lille (France)
Fall 2004	2 nd Conference of European Local Authorities and NGOS for Peace in the Middle East, Cordoba? (Spain)
2004	European Mayors delegation in Palestine/Israel
2004	Launching of the campaign against the wall