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MEDPRO: Prospective analysis for the Mediterranean region

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Your Excellency, dear professors, dear colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure to conclude this rich day.

I would like to start by citing Paul Valery who used to say that "I am interested in the future because I have to spend the rest of my life there".

Doing Foresight is always complex. It is not only a purely theoretical exercise but has also a practical scope. It involves experts, stakeholders and potential users, be they policy makers, civil society,

companies or researchers. You had a very difficult task with MEDPRO, "Prospective analysis for the Mediterranean area". You started your project in March 2010, just in the Arab Spring! To speak about the future in such turbulent times was a very challenging, next to impossible mission.

But you succeeded in making sense of the new information. You have developed strategic intelligence to support decision-making. You have provided both a qualitative narrative for the future of the Mediterranean and quantitative data which provide robust evidence.

Developing strategic intelligence should be seen as a longer term project for anticipating the future grand societal challenges. I always say that this should be an integral part of the work of all European Commission policy making, including in DG Research and Innovation. The difficulty now lies in moving from diagnosis to prescription, from theory to concrete actions.

Ladies and gentlemen, the Mediterranean is one of the world regions most likely to suffer from water stress and desertification. It is very prone to suffer from climate change impacts. It is among the most sensitive areas in terms of population migrations; it is also a territory where the world's three monotheist religions meet and to which the origins of our civilisation can be traced. It is a very diverse, and thus "fertile" area, with a lot of untapped potential.

We have seen today the divergences but also the convergences, interactions and common interests that will form the basis of an ever closer Euro-Mediterranean cooperation by 2030.

Both the EU member States and the Southern Mediterranean countries should be outward-looking and forward-looking. We should not be inward-looking and backward-looking. 2030 is almost tomorrow. We have to face many common challenges together, urgently starting with economic growth and job creation. It goes without saying that these require a strong impetus from education, research and innovation.

Following the European Council decision on 9 February, the Multi-Annual Financial Framework 2014-2020 is now on track. This is good news for Europe but also for our Mediterranean partners and for our researchers on all sides of the Mediterranean Sea.

Let me say a few words about research and innovation in this final session of your conference.

In the current European 7th framework programme there are 400 participants from the Southern Mediterranean and many more if we include Israeli and Turkish teams that are associated to our FP7. This EU-Med collaboration is very strong in fields like water, food, environment, energy, transport and health.

In addition to scientific advancement, through our projects and initiatives, we build strong and long-lasting networks of people in the Mediterranean regions. This allows fostering common understanding, prosperity and well-being. We promote innovation in all sectors. But we also need to make efforts on capacity building, infrastructures and institution building. This was particularly highlighted in the Mediterranean Research and Innovation Action called MIRA.

I am convinced that also the successor of MIRA, the new Mediterranean Science, Policy, Research and Innovation Gateway project, MED-SPRING will promote a constructive dialogue on research and innovation.

In a time of uncertainty and conflict – and this is unfortunately not a rare thing in the Mediterranean region – we should give a prominent role to education and science. Investing in human capital is probably the first pre-condition to progress and sustainable development. This cannot be emphasized too much.

Mobility of students and researchers, the circulation of knowledge, should be seen as a real opportunity. Research and Innovation must remain at the top of the Euro-Med partnerships. You can count on our DG. Our principles are co-ownership, mutual interest and shared benefits.

Four years ago, an Expert Group called Euro-Med 2030 was calling for a genuine "Euro-Med Community" sharing the same vision around the Mediterranean. The idea was to build on the *acquis* of the Barcelona process launched already in 1995. The three pillars of that time still remain valid – more than ever: to establish a common area of peace and stability; to create an area of shared prosperity; and to develop human resources including the mutual understanding of cultures and the exchange between civil societies.

Now, in its strategic communication: “A New Response to a Changing Neighbourhood”, the EU set itself the goal to work together with its neighbours towards the creation of a Common Knowledge and Innovation Space. This policy framework provided the impetus for new initiatives to engage with the political, social and economic transformations in the South Mediterranean Neighbourhood. In the high-level Euro-Mediterranean conference on research and innovation held in Barcelona in April 2012 a renewed partnership based on more strategic ‘region to region’ cooperation was launched. Several EU Member States and Southern Mediterranean partners have already taken the initiative to pursue this objective towards a Euro-Mediterranean bi-regional programme in research and innovation.

Your Excellency, dear colleagues, we are currently discussing our next research funding programme, Horizon 2020. You can be sure that

in the future we will not have a "scientific European fortress". We will tackle common issues together. We will find jointly the answers that we need.

Finally, I would like to thank you for your participation to this conference and your personal commitment to promote the development of the Mediterranean region.