

Speaking Points

EIB FEMIP Conference Luxembourg, 26th of October 2015

Dear President, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honor for me, as Minister of Foreign and European Affairs, to present some closing remarks at this annual FEMIP Conference, which has actually been taking place for the first time here at the EIB in Luxembourg. The subject of the conference was innovation, entrepreneurship and jobs. These are issues which are of crucial importance to both shores of the Mediterranean, and I believe many lessons and best practices have been shared today.

Since its creation in 2002, FEMIP, the Mediterranean arm of the EIB, has become the instrument of reference of the economic and financial Euro-Mediterranean partnership.

Tangible public and private projects are financed in various areas: energy, transport and telecoms, environment; human and social capital.

These activities contribute to growth and generate employment opportunities, and help to create an enabling environment for the private sector to flourish.

FEMIP is an expression of the EU's **long-term cooperation policy** with the Mediterranean countries based on economic integration and political association. FEMIP has become a key player in the cooperation between the EU and the Mediterranean partner countries. It also actively supports the goals of the Union for the Mediterranean whose Senior Officials meeting is going to take place in Luxembourg tomorrow. Luxembourg's support to the FEMIP is also expressed by Luxembourg's regular national contribution to the FEMIP Donors Trust Fund.

The partnership between the EU and countries in the South of the Mediterranean has to be reinforced in the future so that our mutual interests can be successfully addressed.

We have to acknowledge that the EU must **be able to react more efficiently to the increasingly divergent aspirations** of our partners and more rapidly **to the quick evolutions** of our neighborhood. The currently ongoing revision of the European Neighborhood Policy aims to do just that.

Similarly, the EU needs to recognize that our partner countries are also responsible for their relations with the EU. The engagement in the areas of the rule of law, democracy and good governance (including the fight against corruption) is a fundamental requirement.

One of the most pressing issues to be addressed in the framework of the cooperation between the EU and its southern neighbors is unemployment, and especially youth unemployment. This issue remains a major challenge in the region. Therefore, today's conference was of particular importance. Under the leadership of our Minister of Labor, the Luxembourg Presidency has launched an initiative for youth employment through vocational training in the Maghreb countries. The initiative seeks to bring together public institutions in the three countries with private sector developers to provide capacity building that, in turn, will trigger entrepreneurship in the three North African countries. This initiative shall be a pilot to be replicated at a later stage in the Mashreq countries.

I think that there are numerous areas in which we share common interests and objectives:

- Firstly, stability. The EU and its Member States have to make all efforts, alongside their partners, in order to fight threats to the **security** resulting from conflict, organized crime and terrorism, and to develop their abilities to co-manage crises and disasters;
- The improvement of public governance is also crucial as well. The rule of law, human rights and democracy are of the highest importance to the EU and its Member States.
- Finally, migration and mobility constitute essential areas of cooperation for us. The improvement of mobility, especially for educational, scientific, cultural, training and professional purposes, has not only positive effects on the economy but also on society as a whole.

I've just mentioned migration issues as an area in which a strengthening of the cooperation between the EU and the Southern countries of the Mediterranean is needed. As you know, the current migration crisis is obviously a priority for the Luxembourg Presidency.

The flow of migrants, which we have witnessed over the past months, obliges us to face our responsibilities as political leaders, as members of the international community, and as human beings.

In times of crisis, unfortunately, unilateral tendencies, nationalist or populist reflexes tend to reappear.

However, turning inward is certainly not a viable solution.

Only by acting together, the countries of origin, of transit and of destination of the migrants, will we be able to provide a response to the challenge posed by migratory movements in the Mediterranean. Only by firmly anchoring our work within the framework of our international obligations will we be able to find a solution respectful of our common values and principles.

Under the Presidency of Luxembourg, the Council of the EU has been able to agree to a substantial increase in the EU's financial and technical assistance to Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey to enable these countries to better deal with the Syrian refugee crisis.

However, at the same time, and even if those decisions are already an important step towards alleviating the burden of Syria's neighboring countries, we cannot sit back and limit ourselves to treating its symptoms; we will also have to tackle the root causes of migration and refugee flows: development inequalities, conflicts and violence, absence of the rule of law, persecution and violations of human rights.

Indeed, considering the increasing challenges they are facing, there is clearly a need to address the political context in which FEMIP is working.

Let's be clear, the Southern neighborhood is undermined by armed conflicts and some countries are at war.

Ladies and gentlemen,

However, there are examples of positive political change. For instance, the Nobel Peace Prize awarded to the Tunisian National Dialogue Quartet rewards the architects of a unique transition in which civil society played a decisive role in preserving national unity and creating democracy.

This serves as a model for crisis resolution in the region. Only national unity and the promotion of democracy can pave the way towards peace and stability. Luxembourg contributes to Tunisia's democratic transition, notably in supporting a microfinance program, which is funded through the FEMIP Donors Trust Fund.

To conclude, I would once again like to stress that by relying on the EIB's long-standing technical and banking expertise, FEMIP can not only continue to be the financing facility of reference for the Mediterranean region, but is also contributing to the economic development and political progress in the Mediterranean region, by improving people's lives.