XIII HIGH-LEVEL MEETING
ADDRESSING THE HUMANITARIAN CHALLENGES FOR A EURO-MEDITERRANEAN PARTNERSHIP
December 2017

MARIANNA V. VARDINOYANNIS FOUNDATION
The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership must target peace and stability for the people in the Mediterranean. Our region has been the birthplace of many civilisations, but also suffers great challenges such as conflict, migration, and climate change.”

Marianna V. Vardinoyannis
BACKGROUND

A REGION BUILT ON RESILIENCE

The Mediterranean region encapsulates the challenges and the urgency of today’s world. North of the Mediterranean Sea, the consequences of the economic crisis are still felt in society and have weakened economic and social cohesion. South of the sea, the promises of the Arab Spring have faded and been replaced by conflict and instability. Turkey, Lebanon or Jordan continue suffering the highest impact from increased migration flows, while the migration crisis in Europe has fed populist and separatist sentiment within the European Union. The stability of this region, full of History and heritage, goes by strengthening partnerships and promoting intercultural exchange, so agree participants in the XIII High-Level Meeting of the Nizami Ganjavi International Center (NGIC).

On 22-23 November 2017, the XIII High-Level Meeting of the Nizami Ganjavi International Center (NGIC) brought together 30 former Presidents, Prime Ministers, and Ministers in a discussion around the humanitarian challenges faced by the Euro-Mediterranean region. Organised in Athens in partnership with the Marianna V. Vardinoyannis Foundation and hosted by Mrs. Vardinoyannis, the meeting sought to draw options for a region that is not a stranger to instability – and resilience. Day 1 of the conference was hosted at the Acropolis Museum of Athens, a fitting reminder of the heritage and richness of the lands along the Mediterranean Sea.

The NGIC, committed to the promotion of dialogue beyond borders with the aim to promote peace, brought together eminent leaders to discuss difficult questions and review the options for a revitalised Euro-Mediterranean Partnership. From the humanitarian challenge of migration to the threat of separatism, participants put forward recommendations and proposals to strengthen a pivotal partnership that cannot be side-lined.
The most important crisis we have in Europe is one that threatens our values and solidarity. Uncertainty and the unknown have turned us inwards, built walls, and sent us back to nationalist discourses. But instability knows no borders.”

Yannis Moralis

MIGRATION

THE NUMBER ONE CHALLENGE

The world is seeing today the highest flow of migrants since the Second World War. In the Euro-Mediterranean region, forced migration is a key humanitarian challenge. Between January 2014 and November 2017, over 1,750,000 people crossed the Sea to the coasts of Italy, Greece, and Spain in search of better opportunities or fleeing conflict. More than 15,000 people lost their lives in the attempt. In Turkey, Lebanon or Jordan, Syrian refugees registered with the UNHCR alone account for 4%, 16% and 6% of the countries’ total populations.
Migration is the number one challenge for the Euro-Mediterranean. In the European Union, division among the Member States is clear: while countries along the Mediterranean bear a heavy humanitarian burden, others set up walls at their borders or vote to leave the Union, creating political tensions between them. The unequal response to the migratory crisis highlights the difficulty to achieve a common vision, and the division within the European Union, let alone between the EU and its neighbours.

At their core, forced migration and displacement are the consequences of conflict and inequality. As such, they must be addressed at two levels: the humanitarian level, protecting the lives of those leaving their home countries, and supporting host communities; and at a deeper level, with development approaches that root out the social, political, and economic causes of forced migration.

**Proposals from the Athens Meeting**

- **Prioritise humanitarian support** to save lives and support accommodation, integration, and equal opportunities for migrants.
- **Fight and eradicate trafficking and smuggling of persons**, opening channels for legal migration through international agreements and cooperation.
- **Support host countries**, putting special attention in supporting host communities and citizens.
- ** Guarantee secure return** for migrants, and support their home countries in accommodating them back into their territory.
- **Address integration at the citizen level**, working with host communities to foster dialogue and counter negative stereotypes against migrants.
- **Enable more effective channels of communication** between citizens and high-level politicians to address the challenge of migration.
Migration is not a humanitarian crisis in itself. The number one challenge of our time is, in fact, to end the conflicts that are creating forced migration and displacement.”

Noeleen Heyzer

Migrants come directly to a school, to a classroom. Simple citizens are their first point of contact, and the first to tackle the impact of migration. Cities must not be left alone in this effort; they must get a voice at the high-level discussions.”

Benedetto Zacchiroli

The European Union must move into action, and liquidate the causes of mass migration. This includes promoting agreement on a common view on migration, creating a joint military force, joint intelligence services, fortifying borders, and facilitating repatriation.”

Peter Medgyessy

We must give priority to saving lives. Traffickers and smugglers will use every opportunity they have to take advantage of migrants.”

Hikmet Cetin
The Mediterranean coast has been the birthplace of countless cultures and civilisations. Turkey, Greece, Italy, Egypt, Spain; each country at the shores of the Mediterranean holds a rich culture that has advanced History with knowledge. But this multicultural history has also given way to conflicts and wars.

If international institutions are not up to the challenge of maintaining international law, those of us who believe in a just world must continue working and say ‘not at my doorstep’ to injustice.”

— Vaira Vike-Freiberga

**SEPARATISM & MULTICULTURALISM**

**PROTECTING IDENTITY AND THE RULE OF LAW**

The Mediterranean coast has been the birthplace of countless cultures and civilisations. Turkey, Greece, Italy, Egypt, Spain; each country at the shores of the Mediterranean holds a rich culture that has advanced History with knowledge. But this multicultural history has also given way to conflicts and wars.
In the last decade, separatism and nationalist rhetoric have gained support North, East and South of the Mediterranean. In many cases, these are built around exclusive proclaimed cultural identities, with politicians using the mechanisms of democracy to turn citizens against each other. In Ukraine, separatist groups, with foreign support, marked the beginning of Europe’s most recent armed conflict, on its course now to a fourth year of fighting with renewed violence. The Muslim world has been shaken by terror and war based on cultural and religious differences, which have spilled over to the rest of the World in the form of Islamist terrorism. In Spain, political conflict has translated into social division with the process for the independence of Catalonia, while the UK and the EU only recently agreed on the terms for Brexit. Meanwhile, the European Union, conceived as a multicultural, multi-identity Union, struggles today to keep unity, while international powers watch (and often interfere) as separatism cracks its foundations.

“Whichever crisis, they all start because someone violated the rule of law.”
Rosen Plevneliev

Proposals from the Athens Meeting

**Protect individual cultures while promoting a good understanding of peaceful coexistence.**

**Reinforce regional connections by supporting “soft” interconnectivity through cultural exchange, to promote dialogue and understanding between social groups.**

For the EU, focus on building a common European identity based on solidarity and the richness of its multicultural History.

Maintain the rule of law to guarantee the rights of all social groups, seeking to understand the uniqueness of each context.
“Dialogue between people and cultures must be the key priority for global powers, and it must be the vehicle for a new Europe.”

Petar Stoyanov

“Let us not blame identities for our problems. Without an identity, we are like people without a shadow—we would not exist. There would be a vacuum inside us. And when people are empty inside, they become prey to extremism and false promises to fill that empty feeling.”

Vaira Vike-Freiberga

“What we see today in many countries are cultural wars. We no longer see the traditional alignment, left or right around economic principles, but around cultural ideas.”

Ismail Serageldin
“We live at a crossroads between East and West. The challenges of our region are not just our region’s, not even Europe’s, but a threat to democratic values and development worldwide.”

Bujar Nishani

“We must translate the Barcelona process into the XXI Century – but it cannot be led by the European Union. Whatever partnership, it should be based on what we in the Mediterranean agree upon.”

Amre Moussa
EURO-MEDITERRANEAN PARTNERSHIP

TOWARDS THE FUTURE

In closing, participants agreed that a revitalisation of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership would help tackle the challenges faced by the region. Building on the model drawn by the Barcelona Process started in 1995, a regional partnership should be based on multi-cultural relations, and seek to offer humanitarian and development support to all countries in the area. It should, however, not be lead by the European Union, but by all countries in the Euro-Mediterranean region.

Proposals from the Athens Meeting

Addressing the challenge of separatism, and exploring options to countering extreme nationalism through counter-propaganda mechanisms and the establishment of an anti-separatism initiative.

Promoting cooperation in the region for the creation of employment opportunities and a job radar to advance education.

Continuing the work of the Nizami Ganjavi International Center, spreading ideas of intercultural dialogue.

Developing joint operations between Euro-Mediterranean countries for anti-terrorism and against trafficking and smuggling, similar to the “NATO + Friends” format.
Debating issues is no longer enough. We must come up with recommendations, solutions, and carry them to where they can make a difference, both to global powers and to civil society.”

Amre Moussa
The outcomes of this XIII High-Level meeting inform the future dialogues by the Nizami Ganjavi International Center. New options to revitalise the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership will be explored in the region, continuing a vibrant dialogue on its humanitarian and cooperation challenges. In the Spring of 2018, the Sixth Baku Forum will gather over fifty current and former world leaders to draw options for global cooperation.

NEXT STEPS
LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Vaira Vike-Freiberga  
President of Latvia 1999-2007, Co-Chair NGIC

Ismail Serageldin  
Former Vice President of the World Bank, Co-Chair NGIC

Marianna V. Vardinoyannis  
Goodwill Ambassador of UNESCO, President of the "Marianna V. Vardinoyannis Foundation"

Mladen Ivanic  
President of Bosnia and Herzegovina

Sissy Pavlopoulou  
First Lady of the Hellenic Republic

Andri Anastasiadis  
First Lady of the Republic of Cyprus

Bujar Nishani  
President of Albania 2012-2017

Rosen Plevneliev  
President of Bulgaria 2012-2017

Boris Tadic  
President of Serbia 2004-2012

Emil Constantinescu  
President of Romania 1996-2000

Petar Stoyanov  
President of Bulgaria 1997-2002

Ivo Josipovic  
President of Croatia 2010-2015

Rexhep Meidani  
President of Albania 1997-2002

Viktor Yushchenko  
President of Ukraine 2005-2010

Zlatko Lagumdzija  
Prime Minister of Bosnia & Herzegovina 2001-2002

Oscar Ribas  
Prime Minister of Andorra 1982-84, 1990-94

Iveta Radicova  
Prime Minister of Slovakia 2010-2012

Peter Medgyessy  
Prime Minister of Hungary 2002-2004

Amre Moussa  
Secretary General of the Arab League 2001-2011

Ali Hasanov  
Head of the Public and Political Department of the President’s Administration, Republic of Azerbaijan

Nazim Ibrahimov  
Minister of State Committee on Work with Diaspora, Republic of Azerbaijan

Hikmet Cetin  
Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkey 1991-1994

Noeleen Heyzer  
Under-Secretary General of UN 2007-2015

Katherina Yushchenko  
First Lady of Ukraine 2005-2010

George Katrougalos  
Alternate Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Hellenic Republic

Dimitris Pantermalis  
President, Acropolis Museum

Rodi Kratsas  
Former Vice President of the European Parliament, Member of the Board of Directors of the “Marianna V. Vardinoyannis Foundation”

Yannis Moralis  
Mayor of Piraeus, Greece

Benedetto Zacchiroli  
President of the European Coalition of Cities against Racism, Advisor of the Prime Minister of Italy

Dora Bakoyannis  
Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Hellenic Republic 2006-2009