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NATO'S MEDITERRANEAN DIALOGUE

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INTRODUCTION

The Mediterranean Dialogue (MD) is not only a vital component of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) cooperative approach to security, but is also a strategic track that stemmed from an in-depth knowledge of the interlinked security as well as stability environments in Europe and the Mediterranean. This Mediterranean dimension is now an integral element in Europe's security structures.

Since its launch in 1994, the Dialogue matured into a comprehensive instrument marked by joint ownership and stronger practical cooperation. Developing defense reform and contributing to the fight against terrorism have become distinguishing factors for this Dialogue, especially after the Istanbul Summit of 2004.

The said summit instated a new phase for NATO and its Mediterranean partners for which reaching out to the broader region of the Middle East became evident. This entailed the promotion of practical bilateral cooperation with interested countries in the region, which in turn brought NATO and its Mediterranean partners closer. This enabled to better tackle common challenges, most important of which are terrorism and its manifestations. More on these challenges is to come.

JORDAN AND NATO

My country has been a target of terrorism due to its principled positions and relentless efforts in rejecting and combating all forms of this sinister phenomenon. Terrorism is a global trend that is caused and motivated by religiously and culturally neutral factors. It has no nationality. Jordan is committed to fighting terrorism and cooperating with NATO and other partners to thwart the spill over effect of extremism in all its forms. I will be coming back to this theme in the course of my intervention.

Furthermore, Jordan has always been committed to developing its cooperation with NATO on political and practical levels, and has been an

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active participant in all aspects of the Mediterranean Dialogue since joining it thirteen years ago. The Kingdom sought to establish a long term partnership that branches from mutual interests, and the need to promote peace, security, stability, and prosperity in the Middle East and the Mediterranean region.

Jordan's approach herein balances political dialogue and practical cooperation, which is an extension of Jordan's dynamic participation in relevant NATO political meetings and diplomatic activities. The Jordan NATO annual cooperation programs have seen the implementation of many joint ventures, mostly in military related issues and training.

Jordan's commitment to developing and elevating the level of its relations with NATO resulted in an augmented, all inclusive individual cooperation political-military program that heralded a new phase of cooperation. This Individual Cooperation Program (ICP), which is currently being discussed between the Allies and Jordan, pays tribute to the Kingdom's key regional role, a pillar for stability and security in the Middle East.

SECURITY DIMENSION UNDER THE MEDITERRANEAN DIALOGUE AND THE PALESTINIAN ISRAELI CONFLICT

Global security today is threatened by grave challenges and hazards, be it the aforementioned terrorism, regional conflicts, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, failed states, or organized crime in addition to the difficulty of securing sustainable development and economic growth. I will also mention many other relevant challenges later on.

Such challenges cannot be faced by any country on its own. Cooperation and coordination are paramount in today's world. Jordan perceives NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue as a harbinger for the Alliance to move beyond its traditional area of operations, which used to focus on the defense of its member's borders.

In this regard, security in the Mediterranean region cannot be isolated from the core issue of that region: the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Though this conflict is not on NATO's agenda per se, the Alliance is starting to express its desire to see lasting peace and stability in the region more vocally. In a couple of days the second Foreign Ministers meeting of NATO and MD countries will take place in Brussels. It is expected to assess the situation in the region and explore future possibilities. It comes after the first very successful meeting which was convened at the beginning of this year just days after the Annapolis conference and during which the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was discussed for the first time at the NATO headquarters. This is a remarkable departure for NATO in the context of its security ideology. We aspire to the emergence of a new global security environment which would continue to encourage the Alliance to play a larger role in this conflict with far reaching consequences. Jordan and NATO complement the expertise and potential of one another in this context.

The Palestinian-Israeli conflict continues to be the core problem of the Middle East. Without resolving this conflict, it will not be possible to

address the region's other problems and associated crises. Turmoil and instability will continue to be the hallmark of the Middle East.

Jordan believes that peace, security and stability in the Middle East and in turn the world will only be achieved by reaching a negotiated solution that leads to the establishment of the Palestinian state and addresses Israel's security concerns. Otherwise the conflict will continue to be exploited to fuel extremism that spills over to countries in the Middle East and Europe.

The peace process has lost credibility in people's minds in the region. Pessimism prevails at this time when peace is at a standstill. If the peace process does not move forward, extremism and radicalization will continue to advance, at the expense of weakening proponents of peace, dialogue, cooperation, moderation and cohesion.

The situation in Gaza has reached catastrophic proportions. This is making the situation in the region even more vulnerable to any attempt to escalate and mobilize sentiments of hopelessness, and there are many. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a living proof that security and economic growth are interlinked. And I will link this dimension later to the economic expectations of the Union for the Mediterranean.

You cannot have one without the other; meaning security and economic prosperity. Military means have always failed to uproot extremism. Economic and social factors and other root causes for this abhorrent phenomenon need to be addressed properly in order to fully eradicate extremism and its manifestations. Therefore security and economic prosperity go hand in hand; it is not one that leads to the other. Actually I believe that in this context NATO has to start applying a wider notion of security that departs from hard security to soft security which comprises economic and cultural means in addition to security activities.

Now how does this apply in the context of the core issue of the Middle East? Well, the answer is simple: a just peace agreement for the Palestinians. One that promises true independence embodied in a sovereign, contiguous state, capable of fruitful economic life and secure sustainable national development. For the Israelis, such an agreement would provide true security which in turn will bring an end to conflict and establish relationships of respect and cooperation across the region.

But in this regard we need to move from the theoretical notion of security in the Middle East to that with its practical tools. On the ground this translates Israel taking tangible and serious steps to improve the living standards and economic conditions of the Palestinian people, in addition to removing obstacles that hinder progress in the peace process, most of which are settlement activities in the West Bank and the economic blockade and other violations against the Palestinians.

In other words, Israel must end closures, facilitate movement of goods and peoples, cease all settlement activities, remove settlement outposts, stop the construction of the separation wall and remove parts already constructed on occupied Palestinian territory, bring to a halt and rescind confiscation of Palestinian land and property in the occupied territories including East Jerusalem and release Palestinian prisoners.

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THE UNION FOR THE MEDITERRANEAN

In conclusion, a final element must be added to the aforementioned aspects: the Union for the Mediterranean.

As I mentioned earlier in my intervention, many of the problems the world faces today are of a global nature, and cannot be addressed within the boundaries of nation states. For example: economic and social development, world food security crisis, degradation of the environment (including climate change and desertification, with the view of promoting sustainable development) energy, migration, terrorism and extremism, as well as promoting dialogue between cultures.

Given the proximity of the Arab world and Europe to one another, these are problems that both regions share and can best be addressed in a collective manner. As described by the Paris Summit declaration, the Union is also the expression of a common aspiration to achieve peace as well as regional security according to the Barcelona Declaration.

Therefore and to finish, this very ambitious initiative can witness the creation of true notions of soft security. In other words, it can become a forum combining the economic welfare of the people on both rims of the Mediterranean, taking on board all above alluded to problems, with their physical security and regional stability. Thus, the Union must play an imperative role in addressing common challenges facing the Euromed partners. This renewed initiative, must play a complementing role to NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue, or may be the other way round. For it has to be kept in mind that the Mediterranean Dialogue was designed to complement and reinforce other international efforts and to establish and enhance cooperation with Mediterranean countries. This is a unique opportunity that we should grasp and utilize well to create an area of peace and stability in the Mediterranean.