

Manifeste des Young Mediterranean Leaders

« The Mediterranean is a machine that produces civilization », said Paul Valéry at the beginning of the 20th century. But today, it seems like the machine is jammed. One can wonder: is the Mediterranean still a reality? Everyone acts as if the answer were obvious. But in fact, the two shores of the *Mare Nostrum* have gradually been growing apart from each other, politically, economically and culturally.

On the cultural level, ideological tensions are strong, particularly in a context of latent islamophobia. On the economic level, if we compare the present situation to the previous decades, the two shores have clearly drifted apart. Indeed, Europe still represents more than 50% of exports for North African countries but the economic integration has declined with the diversification of representatives who are no longer European only, but also American and Arab. Regarding the political dimension, one can only note that in spite of the goodwill and energy deployed, the progress made is insufficient.

Is it yet a fatality? The importance of trade, the thousands of men and women who cross the sea on daily basis are proofs of the enduring links between the two regions. Must we speak of a « necessary » or « urgent » bridging? It is no longer time for semantic debates, but for action.

The launching of the Union for the Mediterranean has put the North-South integration back on our leaders' agenda. In this context, the creation of the YML expresses our belief that the new generation will be the one to rebuild weakened ties: because the upcoming generation is capable of moving past historical divides, because they know that old frontiers will make less sense in the future and that it is necessary to invent a way of being modern, while respecting each other's identity. Finally, because Young Leaders are all, one way or the other, profoundly Mediterranean: they were educated and now work on each side of the sea, and thanks to their energy, they build an integrated space in their own way, through their companies or their projects, should they be scientific, cultural or artistic.

The YML was launched with the desire to make this new generation -who has already demonstrated its talent and who will be tomorrow, the leading force of the region- meet. The YML is not only an annual forum but also a platform for expression, influence and action. A physical and virtual place where young leaders can know each other, reflect together and gather their will and energy to develop concrete initiatives and build the Mediterranean. We wanted the YML to be a platform for exchange, free dialogue and mutual understanding where each individual could express his or her solutions and chose the initiatives the network will carry.

In Tunis, on October 16th-18th 2008, over 250 young leaders came together and lived a strong experience, full of meetings, dialogue and friendship. A true moment of birth for the YML, the 1st Forum in Tunis marked the beginning of a collective adventure full of hope.

We are counting on you, in Seville, for the 2nd edition of the YML Forum (5-7 November 2009) to make the adventure live on.