

# **Mediterranean Academy of Diplomatic Studies (MEDAC)**

**The United Nations General Assembly and  
the Mediterranean  
Ambassador Saviour F. BORG**



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# About the author

## Ambassador Saviour F. BORG

— Profile —



 Ambassador Saviour BORG

Ambassador **Saviour F. Borg** served as Malta's Permanent Representative of Malta to the United Nations in New York from August 2007 to January 2012. During this same period he was elected and served as the Rapporteur of the United Nations Committee on the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. From July 2003 to July 2007, Ambassador Borg served as the Permanent Representative of Malta to the United Nations Office in Geneva serving concurrently as Malta's Permanent Representative to the WTO and Head of Malta's Observer Delegation to the Conference on Disarmament, the Commission on Human Rights and its successor the United Nations Human Rights Council. From April 1999 to April 2003, Ambassador Borg served as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Malta to the People's Republic of China, serving concurrently as Malta's Ambassador to Japan, the Republic of Korea and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. From January 1997 to March 1999, Ambassador Borg served as Ambassador Permanent Representative of Malta to the United Nations Office in Vienna, and to UNIDO, serving concurrently as Malta's first Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the IAEA and to the Preparatory Commission of the CTBTO,

to UNEP and the OPCW. In 1996, Ambassador Borg formed part of the International Observer Monitoring Mission of the OSCE for the first elections held in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In 1990 Ambassador Borg was a Member of the Executive Staff in the Office of the President of the Forty-Fifth Session of the United Nations General Assembly.

From 1978 to 1982 he served as First Secretary and Deputy Permanent Representative of Malta to the United Nations Office in Geneva, and from 1983 to 1987 to the United Nations Organisation in New York. From January 1983 to December 1984, Ambassador Borg served as Malta's Deputy Representative of Malta to the United Nations Security Council as well as its Committee on the Arms Embargo Against South Africa during Malta's first ever term of Office.

Ambassador Borg joined the Maltese Civil Service in 1965 and was posted to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1977 where he occupied the post of Section Head in charge of the Eastern and North European and Nordic countries. In 1988 he was appointed as Section Head, and in 1992 as Director of the United Nations, International Organisations and Commonwealth Division at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In February 1994, Ambassador Borg was appointed as the first Director of the Multilateral Affairs Department in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. During this period Ambassador Borg formed part of, and on a number of instances also led Maltese Delegations to, several International Conferences and Meetings. Ambassador Borg served as Chairman as well as a Member of several National Committees, Commissions and Tasks Groups. He served also as Chairman of the United Nations Sanctions Monitoring Board.

Ambassador Borg is the author of various books and a number of articles in peer review journals. Ambassador Borg holds an M.Phil Degree from the University of Malta and a Certificate in Diplomacy from the same University. Ambassador Borg is an 'Alumni' of the International Ocean Institute and a Board Member of the Diplo Foundation. He is also a Visiting Lecturer at MEDAC and IMLI.

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# « The United Nations General Assembly and the Mediterranean »

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by ***Ambassador Saviour F. BORG***

**Former Permanent Representative of Malta to the United Nations in New York, and UN Offices in Geneva and Vienna**

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It has been recognized that in our interdependent world it is often impossible for one State to achieve lasting security at the expense of the security of other States. This idea underlies the concept of common security, which places greater emphasis on non-military as opposed to military approaches. To achieve common security requires co-operative measures taken at the regional or global level.<sup>1</sup>

Mediterranean co-operation might seem an extremely ambitious objective owing *inter-alia* to the vastness of the geographic area in question, the diverse and complex nature of the problems arising in this semi-enclosed sea and the large number of countries involved, each with its own specific characteristics. Moreover, the repercussions of crises and conflicts that have broken out in the bordering regions such as the Iran/Iraq War, and the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq, continue to have a lasting detrimental effect on the human dimension of the Mediterranean littoral.

The political situation in the southern flank of Europe, which was relegated to the sidelines during the Cold War period on account of the East-West confrontation which had Central Europe as its main

1 Fischer, Dietrich ‘Nonmilitary Aspects of Security’, Chapter 1.6 - Growing Interdependence, page 12. UNIDIR Publication, 1993.

theatre, has become increasingly important since the end of the East-West divide. The North/South dimension became more focused on the Mediterranean particularly because of the increasing economic and social disparities in levels of development and conflicts in the region. The Middle East problem took centre stage with the situation then emanating in Algeria, the sanctions against Libya, the Cyprus question, the Balkan debacle, and the Turkish-Greek divergences compounding the already dramatic reminders of world-wide conflicts.

There is now more awareness than previously of opportunities for co-operation and partnership between Europe and the Mediterranean and the advantages these opportunities could bring. Protective measures and actions in the environmental field have brought Arabs and Jews, Turks and Greeks, Moroccans and Algerians to sit together with European Mediterranean States as well as with the European Union, to implement an Action Plan and Protocols to safeguard the Mediterranean from pollution. These measures and actions have given the Regional Seas Programme, through the Mediterranean Action Plan, within the institutional framework of the Barcelona Convention, a prescription for successful regional co-operation. The numerous other initiatives to strengthen regional co-operation, such as the Euro-Mediterranean Process, the Mediterranean Forum, and others, have been responding, even though in a limited form, to this awareness.

For nearly thirty years efforts have been made to identify the range of political problems the Mediterranean region presents, as they relate to the security of Europe and the non-European countries along the shores of the Mediterranean. In turn, efforts have also been made to consider appropriate ways by which they might be resolved and the prospects for establishing a system of security and stability acceptable to the entire region. The efforts by the Mediterranean countries in meeting common challenges through coordinated overall responses are therefore commendable. These responses are based on a spirit of multilateral partnership with the general objective of turning the Mediterranean basin into an area of dialogue, exchanges and co-operation. This partnership would in turn guarantee peace, stability and prosperity and encourages Mediterranean countries to strengthen such efforts through, a lasting multilateral action-oriented co-operative dialogue among States of the region.

## *Mediterranean Cooperation Initiatives*

It is difficult to produce an exhaustive list of the many initiatives taken by various parties to try to address the search for co-operation and collaboration in the Mediterranean area. With few exceptions, many of these initiatives have generally been unsuccessful in overcoming the political problems that have plagued the regional scene.

The scope of strengthening relations between the northern and southern shores of the Mediterranean region has troubled the imagination of many scholars and specialists in their own field.<sup>2</sup> The approach for a more dynamic and sustained partnership among and between Mediterranean States has as its principal focus the task of increasing awareness towards the problems and concerns emanating in the Mediterranean. Not only, but this approach creates the appropriate dynamic process in the search for finding solutions to a number of long-standing problems that have been weakening the economic and social fabrics of the Mediterranean littoral.

International Organisations have played and continue to play an important role in seeking to identify areas to strengthen co-operation between and among Mediterranean countries. Individual and group of countries have taken initiatives to launch ideas, proposals and to make recommendations that had or have as their main objective the enhancement of co-operation among the littoral States of the Mediterranean and in certain instance co-operation with countries outside the region. A number of these initiatives saw their birth during the four and a half decades of the Cold War era while others are of more recent origin. Some of these initiatives have succeeded, others have not.

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2 F. Stephen Larrabee, Ronald D. Asmus and Ian O. Lesser, Senior Analysts, Santa Monica, California; Pierre Cornillon, Secretary-General, Inter-Parliamentary Union; Prof. Adalberto Vallega, ICCOPS, Italy; Prof. Evangelos Raftopoulos, Lecturer in Law, Athens University; Dr. Gabriela Kutting, Research Associate, University of Wales College of Cardiff; Prof. Elizabeth Mann Borgese; Prof. Arvid Pardo; Prof. Victor-Yves Ghebali, Graduate Institute of International Studies, Geneva

The end of the Cold War in 1989 witnessed extraordinary changes in the world political environment. As a result, the approach for Mediterranean co-operation opened the door for many initiatives at the regional and sub-regional level. The pioneering role played by the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, and its projection of the Mediterranean dimension, contributed towards 'newly-found' regional arrangements that have validly contributed and continue to contribute towards a more open and balanced perspective of the aspirations of the Mediterranean population.

The outcome of the Helsinki Conference in 1975 opened the path for a series of initiatives that began to focus their attention on the Mediterranean region. It will be recalled that the Conference in its Final Act adopted the Mediterranean Chapter specifically relating to security and co-operation in the Mediterranean, which among other things recognised the concept that the security of Europe is extricably linked to world security, in particular with that of the Mediterranean area.

The Final Act of the Helsinki Conference consisted of a declaration on principle guiding relations between participating States. It included a list of confidence-building measures relating to security and disarmament, as well as provisions on the prior notification of military manoeuvres. In addition, the Final Act included provisions for increased co-operation in the field of economics, of science and technology and of the environment; and provisions relating to co-operation in humanitarian and other fields, including human contacts, the exchange and dissemination of information, cultural co-operation, and educational co-operation and exchanges.

While in retrospect it can now be said that the Mediterranean began to receive particular attention, at the same time it is relevant to highlight the fact that issues pertaining to this region continued to be looked upon with certain diffidence, if not neglect. Indeed, it was only after the demise of the Cold War that greater attention began to be given to the Mediterranean region.

Notwithstanding this fact, it would be amiss if particular reference is not made to what followed the CSCE (now OSCE) process. Indeed, international, regional and sub-regional organisations and

bodies started to recognise the Mediterranean dimension as an ‘issue’ in itself and therefore took the initiative to develop ideas that, in certain instances, have been transformed into programmes and projects of particular benefit to the littoral states of the Mediterranean.

### **The United Nations and the Mediterranean**

Among the international organisations that have given a political impetus to the Mediterranean question is the United Nations and particularly its General Assembly one of the five Principal Organs of the United Nations. While the decisions of the Assembly have no legally binding force, they nevertheless carry the weight of world opinion on major international issues, as well as the moral authority of the world community. With its current Membership of 193 States, the United Nations General Assembly serves as a vehicle for setting policies as well as goals for global co-operation in various fields. In fact, the General Assembly considers on an annual basis issues relating to situations prevailing in particular regions of the world. Specifically in the First Committee, which deals with Disarmament and International Security issues, delegations from different Member States, deliberate and present their own national and regional perspective to the successes and failures of initiatives and efforts to deal with the ills and problems facing their respective countries and regions.

The Mediterranean dimension is one of these regional issues that the First Committee gives thorough consideration during the annual sessions of the United Nations General Assembly. The discussion and detailed analysis in the region in the First Committee attracts the attention of all Mediterranean countries and also of countries from other regional groups including the Arab Group and the Western European Group, where a detailed analysis of developments in the region is held. It is appropriate here to highlight the fact that consideration at the United Nations relating to the Mediterranean, when compared to other long-standing issues concerning the Middle East question or the Cyprus question, was only taken up in a holistic manner by the General Assembly in the 1980s.

In fact, eight years had to pass after the adoption of the 1975

Helsinki Final Act, before the Member States of the United Nations were able to discuss in a more detailed manner and take action on such a specific agenda item of the General Assembly.

The first resolution relating specifically to security and co-operation in the Mediterranean was that adopted by the thirty-eighth session of the United Nations General Assembly in December 1983.<sup>3</sup> The 38th Session of the General Assembly was acting as a result of the decision taken in its previous session<sup>4</sup> to include in the provisional agenda of the General Assembly's thirty-eighth session an item entitled "Strengthening of security and co-operation in the Mediterranean region."

It is interesting to note that until the thirty-seventh session, matters relating to the Mediterranean were covered under a totally different agenda item that was entitled "Review of the implementation of the Declaration on the Strengthening of International Security."<sup>5</sup> The process of consideration by the United Nations of the Mediterranean question started to be indirectly addressed in 1975. This followed the introduction by the United Nations Secretary-General of a reference in his Annual Report<sup>6</sup> on the Work of the Organisation: 16 June 1974-15 June 1975, to the signature by 35 Governments in Helsinki, Finland, on 1 August 1975, of the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe. In his Report, the Secretary-General, without making a specific reference to the Mediterranean Chapter of the Helsinki Final Act, described this Act as the outcome of long-drawn-out efforts to agree on principles on the basis of which peace in Europe could be preserved and strengthened and on which the broad economic and cultural interchange which was vital to the strengthening of that peace could be developed.

As a result of the Secretary-General's Annual Report the resolution adopted by the thirtieth session of the United Nations General Assembly on 18 November 1975,<sup>7</sup> by a recorded vote of 109 in

3 UNGA resolution 38/189 of 20<sup>th</sup> December 1983.

4 UNGA resolution 37/118 of 16<sup>th</sup> December 1982.

5 UNGA resolution 2734 (XXV) of 16<sup>th</sup> December 1970.

6 Doc. A/10001/Add.1, August 1975

7 UNGA resolution 3389 (XXX), preambular para. 4.



favour, nil against with 19 abstentions, while not mentioning by name the Mediterranean, welcomed, among other things, the successful outcome of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe. Of particular relevance was the intervention made on this issue by the representative of Italy, on behalf of the States Members of the European Communities. Italy stated that the Member States of the European Communities considered it important that it had been possible in the Final Act to confirm common principles of conduct in relations between the participating States and to express the intention of States to permit and encourage the development everywhere in Europe of co-operation, exchanges and contacts in which an important place would be accorded to individuals. The representative of Italy continued by pledging to co-operate in a multilateral dialogue initiated by the Helsinki Conference and to further the continuation of the process of détente and of constructive dialogue in Europe and in the world.<sup>8</sup>

Notable is the fact that the Mediterranean is not mentioned in the 1975 resolution. This can be attributed to the fact that the Final Act of the Helsinki Conference was a fairly new document having just been adopted three months earlier. Member States of the United Nations had not had the time to analyse fully its implications and portent and therefore did not seem to have enough time for reflection in the resolution. It was too early to start quoting parts of the document without raising the concerns of such delegations as the United States and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, which had for a long time opposed the inclusion of the Mediterranean Chapter in the final document of the Conference.

The first direct and important references to the Mediterranean were in fact inserted in the resolution which was adopted the following year by the United Nations General Assembly. In this resolution, adopted by the thirty-first session of the General Assembly,<sup>9</sup> by a recorded vote of 95 in favour, 0 against, with 17 abstentions, on the implementation of the Declaration on the Strengthening of International Security, the General Assembly:

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8 United Nations Yearbook 1975, page 103.

9 UNGA resolution 31/92 of 14<sup>th</sup> December 1976.

‘Noting the successful outcome of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, emphasising that the security of Europe should be considered in the broader context of world security and is closely inter-related, in particular, to the security of the Mediterranean, the Middle East and other regions of the world, and expressing its conviction that the Final Act of the Conference through agreed means would contribute to the strengthening of international security.’<sup>10</sup>

Operative paragraph 8 of the same resolution invited the States which participated in the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe ‘to implement fully and urgently all the provisions of the Final Act, including those relating to the Mediterranean, and to consider favourably the conversion of the Mediterranean into a zone of peace and co-operation in the interests of international peace and security.’

Here it must be noted that among the thirteen countries that co-sponsored the draft resolution in the First Committee,<sup>11</sup> which draft was later adopted by the General Assembly, eight countries were Mediterranean countries and also Members of the Non-Aligned Movement. These countries were Algeria, Cyprus, Egypt, Malta, Morocco, the Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia and Yugoslavia. Notably absent was Libya.

A relevant aspect of this sponsorship of a resolution adopted by the most representative body in international relations is that, for the first time, a number of Mediterranean countries had joined and co-operated together, to bring to the attention of the international community, the Mediterranean. Here also it must be recalled that the Final Communiqué of the Ministerial Meeting of the Bureau of Non-Aligned Countries held at Algiers, Algeria, from 30 May to 2 June 1976,<sup>12</sup> and the Fifth Conference of Heads of State or Government of Non-Aligned Countries held in Colombo from 16 to 19 August 1976,<sup>13</sup> referred to the situation in the Mediterranean. It was precisely at the instigation of these countries led by Malta that a reference to the

10 United Nations Yearbook 1976, pages 104-105.

11 UN Doc. A/C.1/31/L.42, December 1976.

12 UN Doc. A/31/10, June 1976.

13 Colombo Summit, *New Delhi: People's Publishing House*, 1976.

Mediterranean in the resolution was included.

This fact is being mentioned because in the years to follow, when a resolution specifically concerning the situation in the Mediterranean was submitted for consideration, not all of these countries continued to sponsor the resolution. It is also to be noted that no Mediterranean Member of the then European Communities sponsored the draft resolution. Indeed, the two Mediterranean countries, namely, France and Italy, which were at that time, Members of the European Communities abstained on the draft. The other Mediterranean European country - Spain - which in 1976 was not a Member of the European Communities, voted in favour.

These positions are being pointed out because it was only after twenty-years that all European Mediterranean countries, from the North and the South, came together and joined the Mediterranean countries in submitting and co-sponsoring the draft resolution concerning the Mediterranean.

Another Mediterranean country, namely Israel, abstained on resolution A/31/92. While not pronouncing itself on why it had abstained, it was considered that the position it took was more on the resolution as a whole than on the reference to the Mediterranean context.

Austria, a neutral country, which at that time was not a Member of the European Communities, explained its positive vote after the recorded vote in Plenary.<sup>14</sup> The representative of Austria stated that his delegation had voted in favour, but expressed reservations concerning the operative paragraph by which States that participated in the Helsinki Conference were invited to implement the provisions of the Final Act relating to the Mediterranean. This paragraph made special reference to one part of the Final Act, Austria noted, but all provisions had to be considered as having the same weight and ought to be applied on an equal footing.

Canada, a Participating State in the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE), which had abstained on resolution 31/92, expressed opposition to the paragraph in which it was stated

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14 United Nations Yearbook 1976, page 102.

that all signatories of the Final Act of the Helsinki Conference had agreed that the security of Europe, the Mediterranean and the Middle East were interconnected.

The latter point of linkage raised by Canada, was many years later to be gradually accepted as an important dimension of the Mediterranean situation.<sup>15</sup>

An element which had been included in the 1976 resolution and which was given a higher emphasis at the 1977 session of the United Nations General Assembly<sup>16</sup> was what can be described as a mandatory aspect. In operative paragraph 7 of the 1977 resolution, adopted by a recorded vote of 118 in favour 2 against, with 19 abstentions, the General Assembly supported ‘the conversion of the Mediterranean into a zone of peace and co-operation in the interests of peace and security;’

It must be noted that while the 1976 resolution ‘invited’, the 1977 resolution went further and ‘supported’ the conversion of the Mediterranean into a zone of peace and co-operation. This new concept was something that the Non-Aligned Mediterranean countries had worked assiduously in order to gather support. On the other hand, a number of other countries were not ready to accept this innovative concept, particularly in view of their military and political involvement in the region.

For this reason, the inclusion of this concept in the resolution led to reservations by a number of countries including the United States that stated that the reference to the Mediterranean zone of peace ‘interfered with collective security arrangements.’<sup>17</sup> The United States, being a NATO country, could not accept measures or decisions that would have curtailed its military activities in the Mediterranean and freedom of the seas, particularly when the Cold War was at its height. Moreover, the Arab-Israeli conflict had expanded into Lebanon and was beginning to involve other states in the region. Israel, on its part, considered the resolution remarkable for glaring omissions, for example, nowhere were States urged to initiate dialogues or enter into

15 UNGA resolution 33/75 of 15<sup>th</sup> December 1978, para. 10.

16 UNGA resolution 32/154 of 19<sup>th</sup> December 1977.

17 United Nations Yearbook 1977, page 112.

direct negotiations.

Austria and Sweden also had reservations on the operative paragraph 7 mentioned above. These countries were unable to support at that stage the conversion of the Mediterranean into a zone of peace. These two neutral countries believed that such a zone could not be created unless there was an agreement to such a measure among all concerned States, a situation that was not possible at the time. The resolution adopted by the 1978 Session of the General Assembly<sup>18</sup> by a recorded vote of 119 in favour, 2 against, with 19 abstentions, gave more flesh to the operative paragraph relating to the Mediterranean. In this regard, the General Assembly whilst commending the decision of the Belgrade meeting of the CSCE on the continuation of efforts aimed at implementing fully all the provisions of the Final Act of Helsinki, particularly the agreement on the implementation of the Declaration on the Mediterranean, went into more detail when it came to the transformation of the Mediterranean into a zone of peace and co-operation.

Once again, the Mediterranean Non-Aligned countries got together to introduce new elements which in future resolutions submitted to the United Nations General Assembly became the premise for the elaboration of a specific resolution on the Mediterranean.

The new language (*in italics*) which was included as operative paragraph 10 of the 1978 resolution reads as follows:

‘Commends the decision of the Belgrade meeting of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe on the continuation of efforts aimed at implementing fully all the provisions of the Final Act of Helsinki, particularly the agreement on the implementation of the Declaration on the Mediterranean, supports, bearing in mind the close relationship between security in Europe and security in the Mediterranean, the Middle East and other regions of the world, *the proposal of the non-aligned countries for the transformation of the Mediterranean into a zone of peace and co-operation with a view to promoting good neighbourly relations, the settlement of all disputes between States by peaceful means, and concrete measures of co-operation among States of the region, in accordance with their mutual*

18 UNGA resolution 33/75 of 15<sup>th</sup> December 1978.

*interest to concert their views and to seize opportunities to contribute to the strengthening of international peace and security, and, in this context, takes note of the meeting of experts being held in accordance with the decision referred to above;*'

Besides the new language added to the 1977 text, the 1978 resolution also underlined in the text of the operative paragraph, the 'paternity' for the proposal advanced the year before for the transformation of the Mediterranean into a zone of peace and co-operation, namely '*the non-aligned countries*'. The relevance of this inclusion to this group of countries, which had met in Belgrade from 25 to 30 July 1978 at the level of Ministers of Foreign Affairs,<sup>19</sup> was in itself an important political endorsement which would have a tremendous input in future action relating to the Mediterranean in the international fora and particularly in bringing together, at the political level, the Non-Aligned Mediterranean States.

### **Developments in the 1980s**

It is relevant to record here the fact that the Havana Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement was the prime catalyst that launched a new process that during the 1980s resulted in three meetings of the Non-Aligned Mediterranean countries.

By General Assembly resolution 34/100, which still bore the title 'Implementation of the Declaration on the Strengthening of International Security', adopted on 14 December 1979,<sup>20</sup> the question of the Mediterranean again featured and again raised reservations.

The resolution adopted by the General Assembly by a recorded vote of 104 in favour 2 against with 24 abstentions, commended among other things (initiatives), the convening in 1980 of the Madrid meeting of the CSCE, and expressed the hope that the Conference would result in further strengthening security and co-operation in Europe in all spheres, including arms reduction and a halt to the arms race. It welcomed the recommendation of the September 1979

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19 UN Doc. A/33/206, September 1978.

20 UN Yearbook 1979, pages 143-145.

Havana Conference of Non-Aligned Countries<sup>21</sup>, for a meeting in 1980 of Mediterranean countries - those participating in the Madrid Conference and the Non-Aligned - to prepare for the Conference and to launch co-operation projects. It also urged all States to co-operate in applying a decision of the Havana Conference on transforming the Mediterranean into a zone of peace and co-operation.

The references to recommendations concerning the Mediterranean contained in resolution 34/100 raised a number of objections, which reflected in some way the mistrust and divergence of opinions on the involvement of the Non-Aligned Movement in the political scenarios emanating in the different regions of the world. Moreover, 'given the elaborate efforts to discredit Cuba's chairship and to destabilise the Non-Aligned Movement for having selected a Marxist-Leninist state as host of its Sixth Summit',<sup>22</sup> the industrialised and developed countries, led by the United States, saw in the Havana Summit as an intensification of the criticism of their policies.

Among the objections raised at the General Assembly<sup>23</sup> were those registered by:

- Finland, which said the recommendations were not supported by all parties in the respective regions.
- Ireland, on behalf of the Member States of the European Communities, which could not accept mention of controversial decisions taken outside the United Nations that the Member States did not endorse.
- Turkey which said it had not been consulted on the proposal of a regional meeting (Turkey was a CSCE Mediterranean Participating State but not a Member of the Non-Aligned Movement).
- the United States, which did not share all conclusions of the Havana Conference.

Finland, Spain, Turkey and the European Communities also

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21 UN Doc. A/34/542, October 1979.

22 AW Singham & Shirley Hune, *Non-Alignment in an Age of Alignments*, (The College Press, Harare) Chapter 8, page 210.

23 UN Yearbook 1979, page 139.

voiced objections in regard to the paragraph by which the Assembly commended the convening of the Madrid Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, with Ireland for the EC countries, stating that the provision interfered with issues falling within the competence of the participating States and sought to prejudge the content of the Conference.

The resolution adopted in 1980 by the thirty-fifth session of the General Assembly,<sup>24</sup> adopted by a recorded vote of 120 in favour 0 against, with 24 abstentions, in its operative paragraph 11, listed a number of principles which have become a permanent feature in resolutions adopted by the General Assembly specifically dealing with the Mediterranean.<sup>25</sup> These principles, identified by the Mediterranean Non-Aligned Countries themselves as laying the basis for efforts to transform the region of the Mediterranean into a zone of peace and co-operation, were:

- equal security
- sovereignty
- independence
- territorial integrity
- non-intervention and non-interference
- non-violation of international frontiers
- non-use of force
- peaceful solution of disputes
- respect for sovereignty over natural resources
- the inalienable rights of peoples under colonial or racist regimes, foreign occupation, or alien domination to self-determination and independence.

In 1981, by operative paragraph 15 of resolution 36/102 adopted on 9 December,<sup>26</sup> by a recorded vote of 127 in favour, 0 against, with 20 abstentions, the General Assembly took an important decision whereby, for the first time, a separate and specific report on the Mediterranean<sup>27</sup> had to be prepared and presented by the United

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24 UNGA resolution 35/158 of 12<sup>th</sup> December 1980.

25 UN Yearbook 1980, page 173.

26 UN Yearbook 1981, page 145.

27 UN Doc. A/37/355, August 1982.



Nations Secretary-General, an action which meant a break from the usual report prepared by the Secretary-General on the 'Review of the Declaration on the Strengthening of International Security.'

Operative paragraph 15 of resolution 36/102 stated as follows:

'Calls upon all Governments to submit to this effect, before the thirty-seventh session of the General Assembly, their views on the question of the strengthening of security and co-operation in the region of the Mediterranean and requests the Secretary-General to submit the report on this question to the Assembly at its thirty-seventh session;'

Yet, perhaps, the most important decision taken by the General Assembly was when in 1982 the thirty-seventh session<sup>28</sup> by its resolution 37/118 adopted by a recorded vote of 116 in favour, 0 against with 19 abstentions, decided to include in the provisional agenda of its thirty-eighth session an item entitled 'Strengthening of security and co-operation in the Mediterranean region'.

This decision brought to a climax the aspirations of a large number of Mediterranean States that had co-operated together to promote the Mediterranean dimension at the political level. Indeed this decision gave birth to what was to become a permanent agenda item of subsequent General Assembly resolutions. It was also the last time that the question of the strengthening of security and co-operation in the Mediterranean region would not feature at all or would feature under another item.

A further outcome of the decision was that during the thirty-eighth session of the General Assembly, the Mediterranean question would receive the specific attention and consideration by the First Committee of the Assembly concerned with Security and Political agenda items. Furthermore, the question would give those countries that had co-operated together and advanced the proposal, to submit for consideration by the First Committee a draft resolution that would totally concentrate on the specific issue of the Mediterranean.

Thus in 1983, acting on the Report of the United Nations

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28 UNGA resolution 37/118 of 16<sup>th</sup> December 1982, operative para. 17.

Secretary-General,<sup>29</sup> which contained an analysis based on replies of 27 Governments to resolution 37/118 of 16 December 1982, adopted without a vote resolution 38/189 entitled 'Strengthening of security and co-operation in the Mediterranean region'.<sup>30</sup>

In view of the relevance of this resolution, it is appropriate to quote its operative part, which reads as follows:

"The General Assembly,

"Recognizes

(a) That the security of the Mediterranean is closely linked with international peace and security;

(b) That further efforts are necessary for the reduction of tension and or armaments and for the creation of conditions of security and fruitful co-operation in all fields for all countries and peoples of the Mediterranean, on the basis of the principles of sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity, security, non-intervention and non-interference, non-violation of international borders, non-use of force or threat of use of force, the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force, the peaceful settlement of disputes and respect for sovereignty over natural resources;

(c) The need for just and viable solutions to existing problems and crises in the area, on the basis of the provisions of the Charter and of relevant resolutions of the United Nations, the withdrawal of foreign forces of occupation and the right of peoples under colonial or foreign domination to self-determination and independence:

"2. Encourages efforts for intensifying existing and promoting new forms of co-operation in various fields, particularly those aimed at reducing tension and strengthening confidence and security in the region;

"3. Urges Mediterranean States to inform the Secretary-General of any concerted efforts aimed at promoting and strengthening security and co-operation in the Mediterranean;

"4. Urges all States to co-operate with Mediterranean States in efforts to enhance security and co-operation in the Mediterranean;

"5. Invites the Secretary-General to give due attention to the question of pace, security and co-operation in the Mediterranean

29 UN Doc. A/38/395, September 1983.

30 UN Doc. A/38/642, December 1983.

region and, if requested to do so, to render advice and assistance to concerted efforts by Mediterranean countries in promoting peace, security and co-operation in the region;

“6. Requests the Secretary-General at its thirty-ninth session, on the basis of all replies received and notifications submitted in the implementation of the present resolution and taking into account the debate on this question during its thirty-eighth session, a comprehensive report on strengthening security and co-operation in the Mediterranean;

“7. Decides to include in the provisional agenda of its thirty-ninth session the item entitled ‘Strengthening of security and co-operation in the Mediterranean region.’”

The operative paragraphs of the 1983 resolution are important for various reasons, including:

- the resolution was adopted without a vote, thus giving its contents a universal endorsement by the international community represented by the Member States of the United Nations.
- the universal recognition of the concept of the close linkage between Mediterranean and European security and the wider dimension of international peace and security.

During the years that followed while few substantial changes have been made, the resolutions on the Mediterranean adopted unanimously by the General Assembly have maintained the important and critical elements of the 1983 resolution. Noteworthy during this period was the fact that this resolution saw its evolution into one which mustered the support, in particular of the European Union recorded by the sponsorship in 1993 of the resolution<sup>31</sup> first by the five Mediterranean countries of the Union (France, Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain), and later in 1996 by all Members of the European Union and the majority of the non-European Mediterranean States. Israel, Lebanon and Syria have until today refrained from co-sponsoring the resolution even though these same countries continue to join the consensus.

The fact that the resolution continued to be adopted without

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31 UNGA resolution 48/81 of 16<sup>th</sup> December 1993.

a vote indicated that the language and wording of the resolution as well as its contents could be accepted by all concerned including the United States of America and the European Union, even though a small number of elements had been introduced by the Mediterranean countries of Non-Aligned Movement. Interesting to also note that in subsequent years changes recorded in the text of the resolution were those which updated the references to meetings and conferences of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, the Inter-Parliamentary Union, the Euro-Mediterranean Process, and the Non-Aligned Movement among others.

These references were at first included in the preambular part of these resolutions and were inserted to record the important conclusions of international and regional gatherings particularly those adopted at the Heads of Government and/or at the Ministerial level. The reason for not including these references in the preambular part of the resolutions was solely for procedural purposes in view of the fact that not all Member States of the United Nations were Members of all the above-mentioned bodies and therefore could not participate in the meetings and conferences of these bodies. Consequently, they were not in a position to adhere to the contents of the conclusions or final documents of the meetings referred to in the resolution. Indeed, in recent years the specific naming of such events was dropped to avoid any controversial issues or even confrontation thus gaining the unanimous support of the resolution adopted by the General Assembly.

The parts of the resolution that really mattered, that is the operative parts did not undergo any changes except to strengthen and to ameliorate the language. This decision was taken in order to keep what had been achieved in the previous years without creating unwarranted problems that would destroy the understanding and compromises reached on such an important Mediterranean resolution. It was also the time during which calls were being made to strengthen the dialogue between the non-European countries and the European countries particularly those bordering the Mediterranean Sea. Therefore, the main co-sponsors of the Mediterranean resolution believed that it was critical that the balance achieved should be maintained if not even enhanced.

In this context, special attention was thus being given to those areas where consensus was evident and could be achieved. It was also recognized that to achieve the aims and objectives of Mediterranean co-operation the participation and contribution of all concerned countries, particularly those on the southern and northern shores of the Mediterranean, was essential and imperative. In fact, more attention was being given to those issues that unite rather than to those that divide. Soft security issues took priority over military and security issues but without abandoning the latter hard issues.

Through General Assembly resolutions, all Mediterranean States were now being invited 'to address, through various forms of co-operation, problems and threats posed to the region, such as terrorism, international crime and illicit arms transfers, as well as illicit drug production, consumption and trafficking, which jeopardize the friendly relations among States, hinder the development of international co-operation and result in the destruction of human rights, fundamental freedoms and the democratic basis of pluralistic society.'<sup>32</sup>

### **The Way Forward**

While substantive action by the United Nations has been holistically limited, the adoption by the General Assembly of a resolution specifically dealing with the strengthening of Mediterranean security and co-operation must be seen as a significant contribution to political co-operation in its wider sense. Indeed, the situation in Europe, the Maghreb and the Middle East continues to be recognized as forming an integral part of enhancing the positive developments and prospects for closer Euro-Mediterranean co-operation in all spheres.

The consensus approach and the favourable political developments in international relations following the demise of the Cold War facilitated open and frank discussions at the United Nations. This open dialogue also facilitated intensive consultations that represented concrete step forward towards the attainment of the goals and objectives of the operative parts of the General Assembly resolution.

Real and serious problems still remain in the Mediterranean. The closer involvement of the United Nations is a pre-requisite for enhancing the peace and cooperation between and among the littoral

32 UNGA resolution 52/43 of 9<sup>th</sup> December 1997.

States of the Mediterranean. In recent years and months, the role of the United Nations in responding to conflicts and in supporting peace processes, such as those which emanated in the former Yugoslavia, the Kosovo and more recently in Tunisia, Libya and Egypt, cannot be under-estimated. Moreover, the long-standing questions of Palestine and Cyprus and their reverberations in the wider context of the Mediterranean, require that the United Nations redoubles its efforts to assist in the search for a sustainable solution to all these questions. The situation in Syria, another Mediterranean country, is presenting to the United Nations a considerable challenge in its standing and principles as embodied in the Charter of the United Nations.

It is evident that the peripheral role that the United Nations Organisation has played in the past on Mediterranean issues is changing dramatically in efforts to contribute more significantly to matters related to the Mediterranean. Perhaps, the time has come for the United Nations to consider taking a more cohesive and coherent approach through the setting up of a liaison mechanism that would monitor more closely, together with the specialised agencies of the United Nations system, with regional and sub-regional Commissions, organisations and institutions, developments occurring in the Mediterranean. This mechanism could, among other things, provide analysis of agreements and measures being undertaken in the Mediterranean region itself, and in the adjacent regions of Europe, Africa and the Middle East.<sup>33</sup>

The crucial role of the Mediterranean countries themselves in such a mechanism cannot but be emphasized. Indeed, operative paragraph 3 of the 67<sup>th</sup> Session of the United Nations General Assembly resolution A/RES/67/75 adopted on 11 December 2012<sup>34</sup> recognises this role, as follows:

“3. *Commends* the Mediterranean countries for their efforts in meeting common challenges through coordinated overall responses, based on a spirit of multilateral partnership, towards the general objective of turning the Mediterranean basin into an area of dialogue, exchanges and cooperation, guaranteeing peace, stability and prosperity, encourages them to strengthen such efforts through, inter-alia, a lasting multilateral and action-oriented cooperative dialogue among States of the region, and recognizes the role of the United Nations in promoting regional and international peace and security;”



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33 UN Doc. A/46/523, October 1991.

34 UNGA resolution 67/75 - See Annex.

Sixty-seventh session

Agenda item 99

**Resolution adopted by the General Assembly**

[on the report of the First Committee (A/67/414)]

**67/75. Strengthening of security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region**

The General Assembly,

Recalling its previous resolutions on the subject, including resolution 66/63 of 2 December 2011,

Reaffirming the primary role of the Mediterranean countries in strengthening and promoting peace, security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region,

Welcoming the efforts deployed by the Euro-Mediterranean countries to strengthen their cooperation in combating terrorism, in particular through the adoption of the Euro-Mediterranean Code of Conduct on Countering Terrorism by the Euro-Mediterranean Summit, held in Barcelona, Spain, on 27 and 28 November 2005,

Bearing in mind all the previous declarations and commitments, as well as all the initiatives taken by the riparian countries at the recent summits, ministerial meetings and various forums concerning the question of the Mediterranean region,

Recalling, in this regard, the adoption on 13 July 2008 of the Joint Declaration of the Paris Summit for the Mediterranean, which launched a reinforced partnership, named the "Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean", and the common political will to revive efforts to transform the Mediterranean into an area of peace, democracy,

cooperation and prosperity,

Welcoming the entry into force of the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty (Treaty of Pelindaba)<sup>1</sup> as a contribution to the strengthening of peace and security both regionally and internationally,

Recognizing the indivisible character of security in the Mediterranean and that the enhancement of cooperation among Mediterranean countries with a view to promoting the economic and social development of all peoples of the region will contribute significantly to stability, peace and security in the region,

Recognizing also the efforts made so far and the determination of the Mediterranean countries to intensify the process of dialogue and consultations with a view to resolving the problems existing in the Mediterranean region and to eliminating the causes of tension and the consequent threat to peace and security, as well as their growing awareness of the need for further joint efforts to strengthen economic, social, cultural and environmental cooperation in the region,

Recognizing further that prospects for closer Euro-Mediterranean cooperation in all spheres can be enhanced by positive developments worldwide, in particular in Europe, in the Maghreb and in the Middle East,

Reaffirming the responsibility of all States to contribute to the stability and prosperity of the Mediterranean region and their commitment to respecting the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations as well as the provisions of the Declaration on Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations and Cooperation among States in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations,<sup>2</sup>

Noting the peace negotiations in the Middle East, which should be of a comprehensive nature and represent an appropriate framework for the peaceful settlement of contentious issues in the region,

Expressing concern at the persistent tension and continuing military activities in parts of the Mediterranean that hinder efforts to

1 See A/50/426

2 Resolution 2625 (XXV)



strengthen security and cooperation in the region,

Taking note of the report of the Secretary-General<sup>3</sup>,

1. Reaffirms that security in the Mediterranean is closely linked to European security as well as to international peace and security;

2. Expresses its satisfaction at the continuing efforts by Mediterranean countries to contribute actively to the elimination of all causes of tension in the region and to the promotion of just and lasting solutions to the persistent problems of the region through peaceful means, thus ensuring the withdrawal of foreign forces of occupation and respecting the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of all countries of the Mediterranean and the right of peoples to self-determination, and therefore calls for full adherence to the principles of non interference, non-intervention, non-use of force or threat of use of force and the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force, in accordance with the Charter and the relevant resolutions of the United Nations;

3. Commends the Mediterranean countries for their efforts in meeting common challenges through coordinated overall responses, based on a spirit of multilateral partnership, towards the general objective of turning the Mediterranean basin into an area of dialogue, exchanges and cooperation, guaranteeing peace, stability and prosperity, encourages them to strengthen such efforts through, inter alia, a lasting multilateral and action-oriented cooperative dialogue among States of the region, and recognizes the role of the United Nations in promoting regional and international peace and security;

4. Recognizes that the elimination of the economic and social disparities in levels of development and other obstacles, as well as respect and greater understanding among cultures in the Mediterranean area, will contribute to enhancing peace, security and cooperation among Mediterranean countries through the existing forums;

5. Calls upon all States of the Mediterranean region that have not yet done so to adhere to all the multilaterally negotiated legal instruments related to the field of disarmament and non-proliferation,

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3 A/67/134 and Add.1.

thus creating the conditions necessary for strengthening peace and cooperation in the region;

6. Encourages all States of the region to favour the conditions necessary for strengthening the confidence-building measures among them by promoting genuine openness and transparency on all military matters, by participating, inter alia, in the United Nations system for the standardized reporting of military expenditures and by providing accurate data and information to the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms<sup>4</sup>;

7. Encourages the Mediterranean countries to strengthen further their cooperation in combating terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, including the possible resort by terrorists to weapons of mass destruction, taking into account the relevant resolutions of the United Nations, and in combating international crime and illicit arms transfers and illicit drug production, consumption and trafficking, which pose a serious threat to peace, security and stability in the region and therefore to the improvement of the current political, economic and social situation and which jeopardize friendly relations among States, hinder the development of international cooperation and result in the destruction of human rights, fundamental freedoms and the democratic basis of pluralistic society;

8. Requests the Secretary-General to submit a report on means to strengthen security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region;

9. Decides to include in the provisional agenda of its sixty-eighth session the item entitled "Strengthening of security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region".

48th plenary meeting  
3 December 2012

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4 See resolution 46/36 L.



Prof. Stephen Calleja, MEDAC Director, presenting his book "Security Challenges in the Euro-Med Area in the 21st Century: *Mare Nostrum*" to Ambassador Saviour Borg (left).



Amb. Saviour Borg at one of his numerous UN functions, photographed at the Ninth Session of the Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea UN Headquarters, New York 26th June 2008.

# About MEDAC



**T**he Mediterranean Academy of Diplomatic Studies (MEDAC) is an institution of higher learning offering advanced degrees in diplomacy with a focus on Mediterranean issues. The programme consists of courses in International Law, International Economics, International Relations, Diplomatic History and the practice of diplomacy.

MEDAC was established in 1990 pursuant to an agreement between the governments of Malta and Switzerland. The Geneva Graduate Institute of International Studies (HEI) was among its first foreign partners.

With Malta's membership in the European Union and with the financial support of the Arab League MEDAC, more than ever, is emphasizing the Euro-Mediterranean dimension by building bridges between Europe, North Africa and the Middle East.

MEDAC is a member of the International Forum on Diplomatic Training (IFDT), of the European Diplomatic Training Initiative (EDTI), a group of EU diplomatic academies training EU personnel, and a member of the Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network (EMHRN). Our institution is also part of the Advisory Board of the journal *Europe's World*.

MEDAC has established close strategic relationships with a large number of prestigious international diplomatic institutions including the Diplomatic Academy of Vienna, the Institute for Diplomatic Studies in Cairo, the Institute for Diplomatic Studies, Tunisia, Centre for European Integration Studies (ZEI) of the University in Bonn, Germany as well as Wilton Park – UK, Spanish Diplomatic School, Madrid, Spain, and Department of Mediterranean Studies, University of the Aegean, Rhodes, Greece.

## Academy Courses

- Master of Arts in Diplomatic Studies (M. A.)
- Master of Diplomacy (M. Dip.)
- **NEW** Joint M.A. with George Mason University (Virginia, USA) on Conflict Resolution and Mediterranean Security
- Diploma in Diplomacy (DDS)

The programme of Master of Diplomacy (M. Dip.) course is designed for junior diplomats with some field experience. They are instructed in the same core disciplines as the M.A. students ( Diplomatic History, International Relations, International Economics, International Law as well as selected lectures in diplomacy) but with a special emphasis on diplomatic practice, languages, public speaking and on-line skills.

The course covers two semesters, from October to June, and includes field trips to Switzerland and to Germany. (See details of all courses on the website: [www.um.edu.mt/medac](http://www.um.edu.mt/medac) )