

Site RVE. Discours de bienvenue de C. ESTROSI

Christian Estrosi's welcome speech

Over 50 cities are represented in this chamber, the ambassadors of twenty countries covering the whole Mediterranean basin and part of Europe.

This is a wonderful demonstration of confluence and cooperation.

And we cannot help seeing it as an extension of the fresco in front of you, outlining the civilisations that have succeeded each other on our shores.

We are the Mediterranean and we are Europe.

Your presence, dear Johannes Hahn (European Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations), is a living proof of this.

I am delighted that the European Union has chosen greater cooperation with its neighbours and partners, particularly to the South. Stronger partnerships for a stronger neighbourhood, as you have firmly reasserted.

And I am delighted that your priorities include employment and economic development.

These are the keys to resolve many of the difficulties assailing our world.

Your ambitions in these areas are of course the same as ours.

Regarding your presence, dear Sofiene Essid (cabinet chief representing the Tunisian Minister Riadh Mouakher), it shows the role that your country has always been playing in the reinforcement of the ties between our two shores.

Working for the flight of our cities' economies, is working for peace. We all know that.

And your speech, dear Ihab Fahmy (Union for the Mediterranean), comforts me with the idea that we are in a fair way.

This Union for the Mediterranean is a constant struggle. And we must, more than ever, firmly hold the helm on the diverted sea of History.

We, people from the Mediterranean, look at the world from a different perspective, because we see it in the long-run.

At the time of sustainable development and with the great choices that will decide our fate, it gives us a certain advantage.

Together, we can make a better world by accepting the challenges that are ahead of us. Our solidarity will be absolutely necessary to face them.

There is terrorism.

On the 14th of July, last summer, you know it, Nice was hit by a terrible attack, the most terrible in its history, inspired by blind hatred.

86 men, women, children lost their lives, here, on our « Promenade des Anglais », this Promenade, the very image of our happy lifestyle on these shores.

Far more monstrous crimes inspired by the same ideology were committed on the two shores of our Mediterranean littoral, and elsewhere in the world.

Today, this is a global challenge.

Harsh realities were reminded to us, and the migrant tragedy is also a terrible wound for all of us.

To human madness, one must add the destroying effects of climate change. Our sea is threatened by climate warming, with already very practical consequences. It is urgent to act. Acting before our situation becomes irrevocable.

Finally, there is another challenge, that of the development of a sustainable and prosperous economy, and for all. The three continents that make our union are at the heart of globalization.

In this respect, we have an immense potential: economic, cultural, and geostrategic. Together, peoples from Europe and the Mediterranean, we have a large area of peace and prosperity to build.

Euromed is engaged in this challenge that sums up all the others. Our first mission is to pursue and intensify a coordinated strategy in favor of sustainable development. In this field, our expertise is admitted by everyone.

I am very proud that we have been chosen as the privileged interlocutor of the EU on an essential topic: “The energetic performance of public buildings in the Mediterranean”.

This operation of cooperation and communication covers 13 countries, from Cyprus to Portugal, in the framework of the European Program Interreg Med.

The lessons that we will learn from it will help to cross a major step towards the setting up of a Mediterranean norm on the energetic performance. The reduction of greenhouse gas emission is necessarily at the heart of every project of sustainable development. And this goes to a decrease in the level of energetic consumption.

Climate change is not a fatality. It is by coordinating our policies in the field, near our fellow citizens and their immediate needs, that we will be able to face the state of disorder that threatens us.

It is the strength of our network, and the EU is fully aware of it, dear Commissioner, as it trusts us by selecting our candidatures for calls to projects that focus on environmental and sustainable development issues.

It was the case with the MED-3R Euro-Mediterranean project on waste management. Our metropolis was the leader of this operation that currently ends.

Lebanon, Jordan, Tunisia, Italy, Belgium and France were its partners. Euromed is engaged in the fight for the preservation and transmission of resources.

And our waste is tomorrow's resources.

Energetic efficiency is another essential dimension of this project.

The MEDNICE consortium will be the privileged interlocutor of the EU during the time of this new program. It will offer a real proposition for an ecologic management of public buildings in a Mediterranean area that has its climate particularities.

We proved, and we will continue to do it, that our network with its 100 cities based on three continents, and all its associated partners, is in line with the EU priorities, and can contribute to a better understanding of the challenges that our Mediterranean cities face today.

Realist and shared perspectives are open to us.

It is the aim of our network to exchange, assist each other, gather our energies, and increase the cooperation between our two shores.

Your projects, dear Johannes Hahn (European Commissioner), are the same as ours, for economic development, sustainable development, and support to education, research, innovation and technological development, fight against poverty.

And I do not forget the adaptation to climate change.

But there is a condition to success for these projects that will assure a better future for the next generations, this condition: it is economic vitality, growth and thus employment. Under-development is the worst of advisors. We will not resolve migration issues if we do not engage in development programs in a long-run perspective.

This is what Europe wants to do, what it does, what it must do resolutely. And what we will do with Europe. But we also need the support of the Union for the Mediterranean, dear Ihab Fahmy.

Jobs are needed, and our priority is youth employment. Many projects focus on the formation aspect, and our network wants to go further by cooperating with companies that engage themselves to recruit young individuals on concrete economic projects.

A first experimentation will be done in Sfax, for waste management in a big Tunisian food-processing company.

It is this type of testing, matching with local realities, which we want to set up in the framework of the European Project for youth employment in the whole Mediterranean basin.

And it is not a hazard if this first test takes root in a circular economy.

Economies and ecology are allies for our cities. The ecologic transition is a necessity if we want to protect our planet, but it is also a great opportunity for economic growth.

The convention of partnership that we are going to sign in a moment with the “Centre de Formation et d’Appui à la Decentralization” de Tunis is in line with this spirit.

Our cities are the transformation engine of our territories; they are those who support economic development, innovation and progress.

We know, us, Mediterranean peoples, that the only great wealth is the man, and Euromed, it is this humanity with all those shared experiences.

Paul Valery, who was the inspirer of the “Centre Universitaire Méditerranéen”, where we are gathered today, often evoked the sea, “generative of extraordinary forms and projects”.

But civilization is never done or finished. It is a constant battle.

We are responsible for the Mediterranean just as were responsible for the planet. Our meeting here, in Nice, in this month of November 2016, beyond concrete projects of cooperation that it promotes and supports, delivers a message: we will do everything, together, to make our sea great again, with lively societies and responsible cities.