

Paris, 21 February 2006

Speech by Mr Bernard Deflesselles,

**Chairman of working group no. 6 of the
Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly
on the results of the work by the working group and
the motion for a resolution adopted on 9 January 2006**

*Meeting of the committee of improving quality of life,
exchanges between civil societies and culture*

- Monday 27 February 2006, Rome -

Mr Chairman, Dear colleagues,

I first wish to thank Chairman Mario GRECO for his excellent welcome which will allow me to present you the results of working group no. 6 in the climate of confidence and friendship which he has always managed to bring to the EMPA culture committee.

I would also like to thank the working group vice-chair, Mrs Ebtessam MIKHAÏL, and all the members whose active participation has allowed it to reach a motion for a resolution in the allocated time period.

Working group no. 6, created at the initiative of the EMPA Bureau on 24 May 2005 to propose ways for the assembly to participate in bodies of the Anna Lindh Foundation, **has fulfilled its mission in three steps**. It had its formative meeting on 19 October 2005 at the European Parliament in Brussels. I then held talks with the officers of the Anna Lindh Foundation in Alexandria, on 24 October 2005, particularly with its executive director, Dr. Traugott SCHOEFTHALER, and the leader of the Egyptian national network and director of the AlexMed centre at the Bibliotheca Alexandrina, Dr Mohamed AWAD. Lastly, the working group met on 9 January 2006, at the National Assembly in Paris, first to hear Dr Schoefthaler state to it the challenges which this young foundation must rise to, and then to examine and adopt a motion for a resolution.

Dr Schoefthaler recalled that the Foundation, created by the Valencia ministerial conference of 2002, effectively came into being with the adoption of its statutes by The Hague ministerial conference in November 2004. The Foundation has been allocated a global

budget of 11 million euros until 2008, and has established a three-year programme aimed at teaching cultural diversity in the Euro-Mediterranean area, in accordance with an educational, cultural and scientific pluridisciplinary approach.

It must currently meet **four major challenges**.

The first is to establish on an equal footing the partnership between the North and the South with ten States from the South and twenty-five from the North, whereas parity requires the association of at least two countries from the North and two countries from the South in any project, in accordance with the '2 + 2' formula.

The second concerns the Foundation's resources after 2008, regarding which the greatest uncertainty reigns.

The third relates to the rigidities of the present financial regulations which prevent the organisation of co-fundings by the ALF of Commission funded projects.

The fourth, the most difficult, concerns the operation of the 35 national networks created in November 2004. Dr Schoefthaler recalled that: if, in the next two years, national networks cannot operate correctly with an appropriate legal status and sufficient human and financial resources, the Anna Lindh Foundation will not survive.

The motion for a resolution presented to you is the fruit of substantive debates between the twelve working group members present. Ten amendments have indeed amended or completed the initial text I proposed. It now comprises six paragraphs, the first two of which endeavour to respond to the mission entrusted to the working group.

Paragraph 1 proposes to base the link between the EMPA and the Anna Lindh Foundation on four provisions.

Point a) sets forth that the EMPA is represented on the Board of Governors of the ALF by **three members appointed by the culture committee within itself, among whom its chairman**. This way each component will be represented and the chairman of the culture committee will be the representative of one of them.

Point b) lays down that EMPA representatives on the Board of Governors of the ALF **participate in the debates without the right to vote**, for there is no question of organising co-responsibility or scrutiny by the EMPA over the ALF, which scrutiny is a matter for the sole political authorities funding the ALF, in other words the 35 governments and the Commission. Also the text **assigns the post of spokesperson of the EMPA delegation to the chairman of the culture committee** to give clout to the EMPA's remarks, since he is the person who exercises the highest responsibility within the EMPA as regards culture. Lastly the text reserves the possibility, exceptionally and at his initiative, of participation of the president of the EMPA in a meeting of the Board of Governors, and in this case he leads the delegation.

Point c) sets forth the **appointment of a rapporteur to follow up the evolution of the ALF**. He may or may not be the chairman of the culture committee. In any case he is one of the three representatives of the EMPA on the Board of Governors.

The rapporteur's post would be worth being developed as part of the EMPA's general operation. In particular it would help avoid the creation of working groups on subjects that are a matter for only one of the three committees. In the future the 'heavyweight formula' of working groups would be reserved for transversal topics concerning several committees.

Point d) strives to **organise a genuine strategy of influence of the EMPA over Euro-Mediterranean cultural dialogue** by establishing a relationship of confidence between the EMPA and the ALF, on the basis of a regular exchange of information and consultations.

Paragraph 2 provides for the **representation of the EMPA on the Euromed Committee**, as a standing observer, by the president of the EMPA or, by delegation, by the chairman of the culture committee or another member, with the right to speak without the right to vote. This representation of the EMPA is necessary, for the Euromed Committee is situated above the Board of Governors and takes important decisions such as amending the ALF's statutes.

The working group could have confined itself to these two paragraphs to comply strictly with its mission. **But it considered that other questions decisive for the ALF's success should be raised**, particularly in the following two paragraphs concerning two of the challenges mentioned by Dr Schoefthaler.

Paragraph 3 calls for an **amendment of the financial regulations** applying to the ALF, so as to authorise the co-funding of projects by the Foundation and the European Commission, to put an end to a rigidity denounced by Dr Schoefthaler and also by the leaders of ALF national networks.

This desire is likely to be achieved for the European Commission has tabled a proposal for a revision of the financial regulations which is being examined before the European Parliament and addresses in particular the co-funding question.

Paragraph 4 calls on the European Commission and the governments of the thirty-five member countries of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership to explore means and mechanisms to **promote the setting in place, strengthening and development of the ALF's national networks** throughout the thirty-five partner countries.

This text takes up the initiative by the European Parliament, in its resolution on the Barcelona process revisited, adopted on 27 October 2005, and supported by the Joint declaration of the leaders of the thirty-five ALF national networks, of 27 November 2005.

There is no need to emphasise **the absolute necessity** to settle this **crucial issue** for the ALF's very survival, at a time when the cartoons crisis has shown more than ever the interest of strengthening the essential instrument of dialogue between cultures and religions represented by the ALF.

Paragraph 6 aims at ensuring **full compliance with the use of the three working languages** - French, English and Arabic - in all the ALF's documents and communication materials.

I will finish with *paragraph 5* on the **extension of the ALF's geographic scope** which has given rise to lengthy discussion.

This text has been introduced in the motion for a resolution to meet the ALF's desire to be able to call on experts from States currently non-members of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership, without having to ask for a derogation each time.

The debates of 9 January showed reservations against the mentioning of a **list** of countries concerned.

In conclusion, I therefore proposed a new wording:

– **First**, which eliminates the notion of the extension of the geographic scope, which is too imprecise and can lend itself to several interpretations;

– **Second**, which also deletes the list of countries concerned, and sets forth:

➤ That the countries concerned are neighbouring and non-member countries of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership, and,

➤ If it deems it advisable, the Foundation may call on experts from those countries and may propose to those countries to participate in its projects.

The amended paragraph 5, meeting the remarks by the working group members, now reads as follows:

‘Calls for the Anna Lindh Foundation to be authorised, if it deems it advisable, to call on experts from neighbouring and non-member countries of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and propose to those countries to participate in Foundation projects;’

Therefore, dear colleagues,

The work carried out has been done so in a spirit of conviviality, consensus and responsibility, with a simple but fundamental aim: strengthening the mission and role of the Foundation for the dialogue between cultures.

That is what we have been doing here together for two years now. We feel that, today more than yesterday, it is the best way to get nations and peoples to understand each other.