

## RECOMMENDATION 765

### *on developments in the Broader Middle East*

The Assembly,

- (i) Considering that the Middle East and North Africa is a vast region, the majority of which is Arab-Muslim, in which a number of conflicts are unresolved and where stability and security are under threat, while noting that it is also has the most extensive energy sources in the world;
- (ii) Noting that in many countries of the Middle East and North Africa almost 40% of the population is under the age of 16 and does not have access to a proper education; that power remains in the hands of an unelected elite which also controls the economy; that the countries in question are suffering from a lack of democracy and transparency, economic stagnation, poverty, unemployment, inequality and injustice all of which are conducive to terrorism;
- (iii) Noting that recent developments have resulted in a change of mindset and the increased attraction of extremist groups which exploit religion and manipulate thinking while having recourse to terrorism to pursue their goals;
- (iv) Aware that since the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks in particular, the Western world has come to understand that far greater efforts need to be made at all levels to improve communication and cooperation with the Arab and Muslim world and to promote political, economic and social reform in the regions concerned;
- (v) Noting, however, that the governments of most of the countries concerned now seem to have realised that reforms are necessary in order to meet the needs of their citizens and respond to changes in society with a view to ensuring peace and stability in the region, but that the reform process which has started is highly inadequate;
- (vi) Stressing that in recent years and as part of its Strategic Partnership with the Mediterranean and the Middle East, the European Union has embarked on comprehensive programmes and concluded specific agreements with countries of the Middle East and North Africa to help them guarantee peace, stability and prosperity for their peoples;
- (vii) Noting that the action plans which the EU is drawing up with Middle Eastern countries as part of the European Neighbourhood Policy contain a set of conditions that must be met by the country concerned in order to make further progress, but also aware that in the past the EU has not always been strict enough with partners which have not met certain conditions;
- (viii) Aware that the EU member states are sceptical about the likelihood of all-encompassing plans leading to the establishment of a new order in the Middle East and North Africa, and that they prefer cooperation agreements and complementary activities on a bilateral and multilateral level, tailored to the needs and capabilities of each partner or group of partners;
- (ix) Taking account of the Broader Middle East and North Africa Initiative (BMENAI) launched by the United States at the G-8 Summit in June 2004 with the aim of promoting economic, political and social liberalisation in a large number of Muslim countries;
- (x) Considering that the G-8 initiative supports the regional reforms proposed by independent intellectuals, civil society and governments and that they are superimposed on EU initiatives or are complementary to them, while aware that achieving these reforms in the Middle East will require an overall long-term and sustained commitment;
- (xi) Considering that if the West wishes to pursue a strategy of far-reaching reforms to help promote democratic change in the Broader Middle East and North Africa, the way to go about achieving that objective is to engage in dialogue, partnership and cooperation;

(xii) Considering that the West must in the first instance step up its efforts to help resolve the region's major geopolitical conflicts and crises – in particular the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the problem of instability in Iraq and Lebanon, the nuclear threat from Iran, the isolation of Syria and the precarious situation in Afghanistan – and that in order to create a secure and stable environment it is necessary to establish a system of mutual protection and cooperative security;

(xiii) Aware that if the European Union and the United States are serious about implementing their policies for the purpose of stimulating reform in the Broader Middle East and North Africa, they will have to strike a balance between their relations with authoritarian regimes in the region on the one hand and opposition reform movements on the other hand;

(xiv) Considering that “freedom”, as propagated by new Western initiatives and especially the United States initiative, includes not only civil and political liberties and therefore freedom from oppression, but also individual freedom and thus deliverance from anything that constitutes human subjugation and is incompatible with human dignity such as poverty, hunger, disease, ignorance, torture, the death sentence and a lack of work;

(xv) Considering that in the Arab world such freedom is threatened by undemocratic regimes which may sometimes find support in tribal culture and in ancestral or religious traditions;

(xvi) Considering that, with all the respect due to Islam, certain interpretations of Koranic law cannot be the lasting pretext for the oppression of women and non-respect of their individual and social freedom, and that the deprivation of recognised rights of the individual and citizen, and of sexual equality in particular, is contrary to the democratic process;

(xvii) Considering that in their efforts to engage in dialogue and partnership with a view to appropriate and acceptable reforms in the Broader Middle East and North Africa, both the United States and the European Union must take into account the place of Islam as a religion, a political force and a social force, and recognise that there is no inherent contradiction between Islam and democracy;

(xviii) Considering that in a democratic State religious beliefs and traditions may be a source of legislation provided they are not incompatible with the measures that are necessary in a democratic society in the interests of public safety, for the protection of public order, health or morals, or the protection of the rights and freedoms of others;

(xix) Disagreeing with the categorical statement by some regimes in the region according to which democratisation will bring radical Islamists to power, but considering that in an environment where freedom of speech, association and assembly are heavily restricted, Islamist movements enjoy the important advantage of being the only groups able to organise and express themselves in mosques and other religious institutions;

(xx) Taking note of the progress made in Iraq where the forthcoming adoption of a Constitution will pave the way for the establishment of a democratically elected parliament to which the government will be accountable;

(xxi) Welcoming the fact that free elections will shortly be held in Lebanon following the withdrawal of the Syrians, which should be complete;

(xxii) Considering it essential in the interests of future peace and stability in Iraq for the transitional government, with the help of the United States and the international community, to restore law and order, re-establish security and control terrorism;

(xxiii) Expressing the hope that the Iraqi economy will pick up and that the Constitution that is to be drawn up will give the country the most appropriate institutional framework and will accord every respect to ethnic and religious groups on the territory of Iraq;

(xxiv) Considering that the settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is now an absolute priority and that it cannot be the result of a unilateral action on the part of Israel but that it must be achieved by a renewed initiative from the Quartet on the basis of the roadmap;

(xxv) Considering that the United States, the European Union and the Arab League states which have already taken initiatives (the Saudi Arabia Plan – Beirut 2002) together have the capacity to achieve common objectives for the region, which should rest on three pillars, namely, security, stability and prosperity;

(xxvi) Considering that in the immediate term the mutual ceasefire agreed at Sharm el-Sheikh must be complied with and violence kept under control; that terrorist acts against the civil population must cease; that Israel is committed to withdrawing from the Gaza Strip and certain settlements in the West Bank; that Israeli checkpoints in the West Bank should be opened to allow access to cultivated land and water sources; that prisoners must be freed when terrorist acts have ceased; and that the Palestinian Authority must continue to prove that it will not tolerate terrorist acts;

(xxvii) Considering that the Gaza Strip should be linked to the West Bank by a secure passage and that the administrative reorganisation of this area and its economic activity will not be viable unless access to the sea is assured and the port and airport in Gaza are free and operational;

(xxviii) Considering that peace between Israel and Palestine in this region will not be possible without a specific, comprehensive and lasting settlement that builds on all the various earlier commitments, namely: Israel's right of existence, the creation of a viable Palestinian State in one area lying within the 1967 confines and with East Jerusalem as its capital; the end of illegal settlements and the gradual dismantling of those settlements and the separation walls in the West Bank; the principle of the right of return for the refugees or financial compensation;

(xxix) Considering that the international community should take the initiative to organise an international conference in order to plan for phase 2 (the transition phase involving the creation of a Palestinian State with provisional borders) and then phase 3 (leading to a final agreement putting an end to the conflict) of the roadmap;

(xxx) Considering that lasting peace and stability in the region and the world as a whole depend on a solution to the existence of weapons of mass destruction, and in particular of Israel's nuclear weapons, and mindful of the disturbing possibility that Iran might possess such weapons in the near future;

(xxxi) Considering that it will never be possible to draw up rules to counter the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction if a policy of double standards is applied, and that it is preferable to continue with negotiations to persuade Iran to put a stop once and for all to its uranium enrichment activities and to other nuclear activities liable to lead to the acquisition of nuclear weapons;

(xxxii) Considering that under these circumstances and in the interest of a lasting peace in the region, it is necessary to envisage the full denuclearisation of the area by decreeing that the Middle East is a zone free of weapons of mass destruction;

(xxxiii) Considering that the Non-Proliferation Treaty is unfair and should be revised so as to put an end to a selective approach and to varying degrees of stringency according to the country concerned, and that a new definition of nuclear proliferation is necessary to draw a distinction between civil and military nuclear programmes, the various technologies, fissile material, and legal and illegal traffic;

(xxxiv) Considering the danger inherent in strikes against nuclear sites in Iran if the negotiations being conducted by France, Germany and the United Kingdom were to fail, unless the UN Security Council were to find a solution to this problem;

(xxxv) Considering that it is in the interests of peace in the region not to isolate Syria, a "country on the axis of evil", which is being threatened by the United States;

(xxxvi) Considering finally that the fight against corruption, organised crime, fundamentalism and terrorism is part of the same combat to ensure stability in the region, and that the disarmament of radical Islamic movements and their integration in the political process should be an objective of immediate priority,

RECOMMENDS THAT THE COUNCIL INVITE THE EUROPEAN UNION:

*As regards the Strategic Partnership with the Mediterranean and the Middle East*

1. To pursue dialogue, cooperation and the development of economic and trade relations in partnership and complementarity with the United States and the specific initiatives undertaken by the G-8 in the Arab-Muslim region in order to prevent a clash between civilisations;
2. To continue its specific financial transfers whose aim is to improve the situation of the populations; to accompany economic and social progress and to develop education, especially for girls;
3. To promote social and economic reforms and to initiate the process of democratisation of the states and regimes in the region;
4. To participate in the full emancipation of women and the repeal of the laws which subjugate them, especially in certain countries;
5. To improve control over the use of donated funds and to assess regularly the results of the programmes undertaken, which should lead to more security, stability and prosperity;

*As regards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict*

6. To take a fresh initiative within the Quartet and possibly to extend it to Egypt and Jordan;
7. To decide to hold an international conference in order to move on to phases 2 and 3 of the roadmap and arrive at a comprehensive and lasting settlement of the conflict;
8. To ensure that the organisations and states concerned implement the agreement that is concluded and decide in particular to denuclearise the region and guarantee its security, perhaps by establishing an international force there;

*As regards the other threats in the Middle East*

9. To actively pursue negotiations with Iran with a view to halting the development of nuclear facilities which may have a military application;
10. To work for a revision of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, which is no longer fair and requires a new definition of proliferation and a distinction to be drawn between civil and military nuclear programmes;
11. To prevent Syria from being isolated as this will do nothing to promote either peace or stability in the region;
12. To take steps to achieve the disarmament of radical Islamic groups and their integration in the political process.