WWF and the future of European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP)
OBJECTIVE

The objective of this paper is to contribute to the future of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), in particular its Southern dimension at a time of major political transformation. It follows up on the proposals expressed by the Commission and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy in its communication ‘A Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity with the Southern Mediterranean’ of March 2011 and provides suggestions in particular for the upcoming Annual ENP report and future strategic documents.

The proposals presented in this document complement and further develop those presented in a position paper on the Union for the Mediterranean in October 2010, and those submitted to DG RELEX by WWF in November 2010 in the context of the NGO consultation on the ENP strategic review.

INTRODUCTION

Today a review of the ENP is becoming increasingly crucial and urgent. Following revolutions in certain Arab countries, the case for reviewing the EU Neighbourhood Policy, and in particular the ENP South, has been highlighted by different parties. President Van Rompuy recently said: “What is happening on Europe’s Southern borders is truly momentous. Many people have compared it to the events in Central and Eastern Europe two decades ago; and rightly so”.

In fact, the review and re-launch of the Neighbourhood Policy is a major opportunity to enhance its effectiveness in improving our relations with EU neighbours and to promote change towards democracy and sustainability. The EU has committed to increase its support to neighbouring countries, promising “more for more” following a differentiated approach linking support to progress on reforms. For WWF this is also an opportunity to associate these countries to the EU ambition to move towards green economy and social-economic development that is coupled with environmental protection. This would imply supporting democratic reforms, besides cooperating on security, creating economic development opportunities, besides pursuing market liberalisation, and enabling investment in critical natural capital assets while recognising the links between security, natural resources and human well being. Convergence with EU strategies, policies and principles is something needed more than ever.

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4 President Van Rompuy at a press conference following to the Extraordinary European Council, March 11
5 This has been put forward in many occasions in recent Council meetings (e.g. March 11, March 24) and COM/HR documents notably in the COM/HR communication COM(2011)200 Final.
WWF VIEWS AND PROPOSALS

Following the Joint Communication of the Commission and the High Representative ‘A Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity with the Southern Mediterranean’\(^6\), the participants to the European Council meeting of March 24 and 25 have agreed to develop a “new partnership” with the Southern ENP founded on deeper economic integration and closer political cooperation. Priority next steps indicated in the declaration are to: i) step up humanitarian aid, ii) screen and refocus ongoing aid programmes, iii) increase support from the European Investment Bank (EIB) and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) and iv) enhance trade and foreign investments in the short term.

These measures are important but need to be accompanied by additional efforts and new approaches, as suggested below.

1) A “new partnership” with a clear strategy

In the current context of economic, security and ecological crises, the new partnership should first of all involve all neighbouring countries, ENP South and East. The “differentiated approach” to bilateral relations, necessary to pursue the “more for more” approach, should however not preclude the enhancement of the regional and sub-regional cooperation. Secondly, the new partnership should be extended to other areas of cooperation, notably embracing human rights and democracy and environmental protection and green economy. In these and other areas, key initiatives and strategies of the EU should be shared with EU’s neighbours, with their full participation to the policy developments at the earliest stage becoming more than essential.

Achieving alignment and convergence with selected EU policies would more than ever be required. In terms of environment, this would involve in particular alignment with horizontal legislation relating to environmental impact assessment and strategic environmental assessment, as well as access to information and public participation in “ecosystem based” framework legislation such as Water Framework Directive, Marine Strategy Framework Directive, Recommendation on Integrated Coastal Management (in connection with the Barcelona Convention ICAM Protocol) and Habitat Directive. The main vehicles to promote convergence will be the negotiation of new Association Agreements where governance reforms and environment sustainability should find a larger space.

The negotiation of “advanced status” should lead towards deeper reforms and association to EU key strategies and initiatives such as the EU 2020 Strategy and its flagship initiative on resource efficiency. Speeding up negotiations of “advanced status” with Tunisia and Egypt would be a clear sign of support from the EU for the democratic reform process.

2) Developing a strategic approach to EU’s Neighbourhood: taking into account natural values and capital

The new partnership would require a coherent and long term strategy and many voices are calling for one that would be focused on support for governance reforms and the economic and social parameters. For WWF, it is high time that the strategy also acknowledges and addresses the role and value of ecosystems (natural capital) in providing a wide range of benefits that are essential for human well being and economic development perspectives. These would range from provision of goods, such as food and water, to services like carbon storage, flood regulation, soil formation as well as recreation and spiritual values. Generally the economic benefits of these services are not recognised or captured in markets, resulting in ecosystem degradation and the irreversible loss of natural capital.

\( ^6 \) COM(2011)200 final
The EU spearheaded the valuation of natural capital in the economy and human well being by the supporting study, “The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity” (TEEB). TEEB shows that investing in the conservation and even restoration of natural assets saves societies from facing the cost of the loss of fundamental ecosystem services, ensures the maintenance of non-marketed services that are essential for human well being, and creates new business opportunities.

In this respect, WWF recommends favouring investment in the natural capital of neighbouring countries (forest/rural areas, water ecosystems, coastal landscapes, fisheries, sun and wind energy – are all critical assets in Mediterranean countries) over « hard » investments (grey infrastructure development) as well as promoting innovative tools for environmental integration and the protection of natural resources, such as Payment for Environmental Services initiatives or the implementation of the Ecosystem Based Approach in ENP projects. ENPI funds should support investment in natural capital (e.g. restored wetlands for flood control) that can help adaptation to a changing climate and avoid financing measures that work only under present climatic conditions.

In the context of promoting investment in natural capital protection and restoration, the EU should also help Southern Mediterranean countries to achieve the 2020 goals agreed in the Convention of Biological Diversity especially in terms of: 1) technical assistance and capacity building targeted to environmental and conservation bodies, and ii) development and implementation of nature protection legislation and proper management of existing and future protected areas.

3) Increasing the role and the participation of civil society and civil society organisations

The changes we are witnessing in North Africa are promoted by civil society and clearly show that these organisations are willing and prepared to participate actively in the policy making process, and only need to be empowered and enabled in a context of democratic governance. Sustainable development is unattainable without a strong civil society that keeps governments accountable and ensures stakeholders participation in policy making and project assessment. It has been recognised that the EU cooperation with Mediterranean neighbours has done so far too little to enable a thriving civil society. A new approach to partnership should not only include Governments but also define a new space for the full inclusion of civil society and their organisations in the process.

WWF welcomes the recognition of the role of civil society in democracy building and good governance as expressed in the Commission and the High Representative proposal for the Southern Mediterranean. The ENP South and the Union for the Mediterranean (UFM) should build opportunities to develop a strong dialog and partnership with civil society organisations in the Mediterranean region. The participation of the NGOs would give a major added value to the screening of the ongoing aid programmes for the ENP South called for by the European Council of March 24. This should also be applied in the Eastern Partnership context and the Western Balkans.

Appropriate and varied support and funding mechanisms to enhance public participation and to build the capacity of the civil society organisations should be integrated in the new ENP and its instruments. Such mechanisms should target a large spectrum of NGOs, including environmental, local and national, who are committed and active at field level. WWF welcomes the establishment of a Civil Society Neighbourhood Facility (CSNF) mentioned in the new communication of the Commission and the High Representative.

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8 The ecosystem approach highlights that damaging and/or neglecting the requirements of ecosystems negatively affects the economic and social status of communities whose livelihoods depend also on the services provided by them. The Integrated River Basin Management approach (under the EU WFD) is a good example.
9 A Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity with the Southern Mediterranean, HR/COM (2011) 200 final, March 8, 2011
The CSNF funds should allow building strong national and regional platforms on thematic policies/issues, participation of civil society organisations in programmes and projects, project support specifically targeted at civil society organisations, not limiting ENP support to broad regional platforms, such as the Euromed Civil Forum. Especially important to promote sharing of values and regional cohesion are programmes that support people to people exchanges, small grant programmes, twinning projects, cross border platforms and thematic networks.

The CSNF should take advantage of the experience gained in the context of the Instrument for Pre-accession Civil Society Facility (IPA CSF) (2007), which at the same time allows for support to i) field activities through small and medium size projects, ii) capacity building via in country seminars, exchanges, visits to Brussels and iii) policy dialogue with the national authorities. Environment is one of the sectors of cooperation under the IPA CSF. Within the IPA CSF, the Technical Assistance project for Civil Society Organisations (TACSO) provides technical support and funding to civil society organisations. The project encourages the cooperation between the large thematic NGOs and NGO networks with national, small and rural organisations which are the main beneficiaries.

4) Effectively promoting sustainable growth and green economy.

With the foreseen strengthening of public and private investments and the Mediterranean free trade zone, the economies of the EU Member States and the ENP Partners will be increasingly interlinked. New developments need to be carefully planned to avoid irreversible damage to natural capital, the environment and human health. Systematic assessment and implementation of the Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) and Strategic Environmental Assessments (SEAs) would be required. Promoting green economies, sustainable growth, green jobs and the exchange and development of new technologies would be an important part of the solution at a time when the recovery of the partner countries is a major priority on the agenda.

The new partnership strategy could take inspiration from the Europe 2020 “Strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth”\(^1\) (so called the EU 2020). Certainly, the EU 2020 has a too competitive and Eurocentric approach and does not necessarily address the basic requirements to achieve sustainable development. According to WWF the goal should not simply be to ‘reduce pressure on resources’ but rather to move towards economies that reduce resource use to sustainable levels. By associating the neighbouring countries, the EU 2020 process could be improved and create opportunities for sustainable and effective use of the region natural capital (e.g. solar energy).

One of the EU 2020 objectives - sustainable growth - is the basis of a specific flagship initiative on resource efficiency\(^2\) where the global dimension of the “key environmental issues” such as climate change, biodiversity, land use or deforestation are clearly highlighted. The implementation of this flagship initiative includes a road map with initiatives in different areas: biodiversity, agriculture, fisheries or energy policies, all critical for Southern Neighbours.

WWF believes that the ENP countries should be closely associated to this process. While ensuring recovery and improvement of the Mediterranean economies, the road-map\(^3\) would allow e.g. extending the protection of biodiversity, the restoration of ecosystems (especially needed for forest/rural ecosystems and water ecosystems) and the implementation of the green infrastructure concept to the entire region.

\(^3\) Annex 1, page 11.
5) Supporting transition to a more sustainable energy mix

In ENP South countries, primary energy demand is predicted to increase by 70% in the next 20 years\(^4\) if no serious energy conservation measures are taken. Only a rapid growth in renewable energy combined with energy efficiency measures, both based on comprehensive and balanced energy reforms, will prevent a twofold increase of CO2 emissions by 2050. But today, southern ENP country economies are strongly dependent on fossil fuels with some countries also trying to develop nuclear energy capacity.

It is highly desirable to help these countries into diversifying their energy mix and reducing their dependency on fossil fuels, while avoiding the need to depend on dangerous nuclear energy. Renewable energy can serve as a peace factor in the region. A new perspective should be offered to the South Med countries with the objective of meeting their own energy needs (notably rural electricity) and building their own local renewable industry.

Out of the many instruments and projects that have shown some success in supporting a transition to a more sustainable energy mix, and which have been set up\(^5\) most recently, include the well known Mediterranean Solar Plan (MSP). For WWF the time is right for an increase in such activities, in order to tap the great potential for energy efficiency and renewable sources in the region.

WWF notes with satisfaction that energy is highlighted as a key area of cooperation in the “new partnership”\(^6\) and welcomes the proposed integration in the EU internal energy market and the potential creation of an EU South Med Community. Setting up such initiatives would notably require the strengthening of national institutions to deal with such a transition and proper planning of renewable technology development, with due attention to land and water use planning for renewable energy parks.

With this in view, WWF has proposed a road map towards sustainable energy for Mediterranean countries that includes the following six steps:

1. A strategic country-wide vision, in consultation with all major stakeholders, ensuring proper implementation through institutional strengthening.
2. Three energy policy pillars: an effective energy supply security system, guaranteed access to energy, and phase-out of fossil fuel and electricity subsidies.
3. Structural measures for efficient energy use: consumer behaviour analysis, efficient regulation, accompanying measures and incentives, and adapted financial packages.
4. Assessment of renewable energy needs and potential, together with a regulatory framework, a feed-in tariff and innovative finance mechanisms.
5. A model partnership with the MSP: diverse MSP projects and electricity trading in the region are fully integrated in the national energy strategy.
6. Long term urban plans with denser and more efficient cities and buildings, connected with a reliable public transport scheme, and closer distances between working, living and leisure centers. The new vehicles combine low energy consumption and new energy sources, such as renewable electricity.

Further details about this roadmap can be found in WWF’s Heliosthana brochure\(^7\).

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\(^4\) OME: Mediterranean Energy Perspectives, 2008
\(^6\) COM (2011) 200 final, page 10
\(^7\) www.panda.org/heliosthana
6) Promoting sustainable tourism

WWF notes with satisfaction that the Joint Communication on the New Partnership mentions tourism as an area for sectoral cooperation. Such cooperation should focus on promoting sustainable tourism destinations and practices. With the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty, the EU now has the possibility to support, coordinate and complement the actions of Member States in the field of tourism. This “new” common tourism policy builds upon consistent criteria and orientations developed in previous years in particular in the field of sustainability. The Southern Partners, as most of them are important tourism destinations for Europeans, should be closely associated to and benefit from the EU tourism policy.

In WWF’s view, this would involve creating: an independent Mediterranean observatory on sustainable tourism; promoting the use of environmental schemes at destination level; facilitating consumer’s awareness; a concerted effort to set tax policies encouraging sustainability in tourism practices; the development of a Mediterranean strategy for sustainable tourism; and better control and management of tourism activities in natural areas.

In the Mediterranean countries, efforts should also be pursued to reduce negative impacts from mass tourism, in particular preventing practices leading to irreversible damage to the natural capital such as current development projects on the coast of Morocco both Mediterranean (e.g. in Saidia, Tetouan, Nador) and Atlantic (e.g. in Tangiers, Larache, Guelmine) and inland (Marrakesh, Benslimane). Involving the CSO in the development of new touristic investments, in line with the Commission orientations of 2003, would ensure sustainability of this important economic sector.

7) Ensuring sustainable water management and agriculture

WWF notes with regret that the Joint Communication on a Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity with the Southern Mediterranean does not mention water issues. This is seen as a major gap, as water resources are particularly at risk in the Mediterranean region both in terms of quality and quantity. WWF recommends that a regional approach be strongly encouraged by the EU, building on existing structures, in particular Horizon 2020 and the Mediterranean Action Plan of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP/MAP), and the Mediterranean Water Strategy; which, despite the fact it has not been approved, represents a consensus as to the main objectives of a regional water policy.

In all ENP countries, EU support in the field of water should pay particular attention to the link between water and agriculture, with a focus on the promotion of sustainable agricultural (e.g. organic) practices and climate change adaptation measures e.g. through the use of crops not too demanding in terms of water and efficient irrigation technologies.

WWF welcomes the inclusion of agriculture among the sectors indicated for cooperation in the COM (2011) 200 and the proposal for a European Neighbourhood Facility for Agriculture and Rural Development. This sector is critical to address poverty eradication and food security in North Africa. It should address water-stewardship and efficient use of water, restoration of agriculture and forest landscapes (combat land erosion, restore forest ecosystem functions, biodiversity conservation in rural landscapes) thus leading to a sustainable agriculture production.

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20 Generally upmarket touristic resorts involving loose urbanisation, golf courses, villas, etc.
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T8j9FmV1v3c
8) Greening EU’s financial assistance

It is yet uncertain how the situation will evolve in the short term and when the ENP Partners will achieve/consolidate proper democratic regimes in their countries, in particular in the Mediterranean. Providing humanitarian aid is certainly a major priority in the short term, together with support to democratic transition and migration management. In the longer term a financial plan is needed.

The Council has requested that the ongoing aid programmes in the Southern Mediterranean countries (and possibly too in the Eastern Partnership) are screened and revised. WWF is concerned that the revision of the ongoing programmes should take into consideration sustainable criteria and not drop, but rather improve, existing environmental initiatives in the bilateral and regional context.

At regional level, WWF strongly supports the flagships initiatives on energy, notably the Mediterranean Solar Plan, and welcomes the proposed EU-Southern Mediterranean Energy Community as a means to promote policy coherence and convergence. Regarding the flagship initiatives on environment, besides the Horizon 2020 and the Eastern Partnership Environmental Governance, WWF is calling for new regional and national funding opportunities to ensure proper management of natural resources and to maintain the benefits provided by the ecosystems (see point 2).

The Neighbourhood Investment and Governance Funds will be refocused and public (notably the European Investment Bank and the European Bank for Reconstruction) and private investment will certainly increase. WWF is also concerned that enhancing the investments in the ENP, in particular in the South, may lead to negative and irreversible environmental damage if not properly addressed by proper strategic and environmental assessments involving the local populations.

In the revised financial framework the Cross Border Cooperation should gain efficiency and importance by better linking structural funds and neighbouring instruments. Cross Border Cooperation programmes and the development of macro-regions would offer increased opportunities for environmental cooperation.

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