

# NEW REALITY



Bled  
Strategic  
Forum  
2017

4 – 5 September 2017  
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| Panel Discussion

## | SOUTHERN MEDITERRANEAN

The Southern Mediterranean has always been full of potential, but also of conflicting relationships that have hampered its complete fulfilment. The Arab Spring was a moment in history when everything seemed possible and nothing was out of reach. But it did not result in the desired change. Now, while we are still trying to interpret what happened, we clearly need a vision for the region. Where is it heading?

The countries of the region are facing great challenges; whether they are met successfully or not will have a decisive effect on the future of the region and beyond. External pressures, internal divisions, economic uncertainty, migration, unemployment and a lack of opportunity for young people, terrorism, extremism and radicalization are major concerns that are shared on all shores of the Mediterranean.

In this context of global instability and, at the same time, of immense regional opportunity, the value of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership is at its highest. Bilaterally, through the European Neighbourhood Policy, and multilaterally, through the Union for the Mediterranean, it sets solid foundations for a sustainable future, project by project, day by day.

However, there is scope, and a need, for more multilateralism, and even more importantly, for more integration in the South. Is there too much South-North and not enough South-South cooperation? How can Europe, on the 60th anniversary of the Rome Treaty, help to boost meaningful regional cooperation in the South? Which good practices can we build on? What is the role of the Union for the Mediterranean? Where does civil society come in? Is there a possibility for a Western-Balkans-like Berlin process for the South Mediterranean?

And most importantly, is the South ready? Is there political will and commitment for real regional integration, based on genuine political ownership of the process? At the moment, for example, only 1% of trade in the Euro-Mediterranean region flows between the Southern partners. What are the obstacles, where are the solutions? What about the region's structural interconnectivity, people's mobility and cultural exchanges? What is the promise of the Fourth Industrial Revolution in this regard?

There is now growing consensus that security and stability, which are prerequisites for progress, can only be dealt with comprehensively by addressing in parallel "hard" and "soft" security

issues. Strengthened cooperation with (EU, NATO) and among Mediterranean partners is necessary in the fields of conflict prevention, crisis management, maritime security and building defence capacity.

On the other hand, we should consider which lessons learned, and which mechanisms and instruments of European integration processes could be useful for the Southern Mediterranean in building resilient, sustainable and peaceful societies: a positive agenda for youth; knowledge empowerment; intercultural and inter-faith dialogue; human rights education; school mediation academic mobility, joint research, and job creativity. Which lessons learned could be applied, and what are their limits?