

FACT SHEET ON THE MEDITERRANEAN DIALOGUE (MD) (For Public Release)

INTRODUCTION

1. The Mediterranean Dialogue (MD) was launched in 1994 by the North Atlantic Council (NAC) with the aim of contributing to regional security and stability through improved mutual understanding. Seven non-NATO countries currently participate in the MD: Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia.

2. At the Istanbul Summit in June 2004, Allied Heads of State and Government elevated the MD to a genuine partnership through the establishment of a more ambitious and expanded framework. Significant progress, both in the political and practical dimensions, illustrates a substantial and quality upgrade of MD partners' approach towards NATO. The Riga (2006) and Bucharest (2008) Summits welcomed and consolidated these developments.

POLITICAL DIMENSION

3. Since Istanbul, the political dialogue has gained both in regularity and substance: the first ever MD Foreign Ministers' meeting was held in December 2004 (in Brussels) and was followed by two MD Defence Ministers' meetings in 2006 (in Taormina) and 2007 (in Seville). The first high-level meeting in an MD country (Rabat, Morocco) in April 2006 was an important milestone in the evolution of the political dialogue. A very successful MD Foreign Ministers' meeting then took place in December 2007 (in Brussels).

4. It is also worth mentioning that the constant increase in the number, occurrence and quality of the NATO-MD political dialogue has recently reached a sustainable level. Consultations of the 26 Allies and seven MD countries take place on a regular basis in MCG+7 or NAC+7 format. MD partners are also invited to participate in the first Mediterranean Dialogue-Atlantic Policy Advisory Group (MD-APAG) meeting that will be hosted by Italy in the Spring of 2009.

5. Visits to MD countries as well as bilateral meetings between the Secretary General (SG), Deputy Secretary General (DSG), Assistant Secretaries General (ASGs) and MD officials are held frequently. More recently, the SG met MD high level representatives in the margins of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in September 2008. On 2 December 2008, the third MD Foreign Ministers' meeting should offer a renewed opportunity to discuss both the political and practical dimensions of the MD as well as issues of common interest related to security and stability in the region.

6. In addition, the Chiefs of Defence (CHODs) meeting held in November 2008 tackled an ambitious agenda including a discussion on NATO-MD common strategic vision on military cooperation which could significantly impact the future of our military to military cooperation.

7. MD partners have reiterated their support for enhanced political consultations to better tailor the MD to their specific interests and to maintain the distinctive cooperation framework of the MD.

PRACTICAL DIMENSION

Mediterranean Dialogue Work Programme (MDWP)

8. Since the Istanbul Summit in 2004, an annual Mediterranean Dialogue Work Programme (MDWP) focusing on agreed priority areas has been the main cooperation instrument available with more than 30 areas of cooperation open to MD countries. This momentum should be sustained in 2009.

9. Whereas, in 2007, the offer of cooperation to MD countries included 778 approved events, the MDWP for 2008 consists of 794 events. The draft 2009 MDWP includes, at this stage, 622 events.

10. While the MDWP is essentially military (85% of the activities), it comprises activities in a wide range of areas of cooperation including Public Diplomacy, Military Education, Training and Doctrine, Defence Policy and Strategy, Defence Investment, Civil Emergency Planning, Crisis Management, Armaments and Intelligence related activities.

Main tools open to MD countries

11. A number of cooperation tools were successively opened to MD countries, such as:
- a. The e-Prime database which provides electronic access to the MDWP allowing close monitoring of cooperation activities;
 - b. The Military Cooperation Division (MCD), which has been newly established at SHAPE since 1 September 2008 and which takes over the functions of the Partnership Coordination Cell (PCC), in order to enhance practical liaison arrangements and furthermore to facilitate coherence of practical military cooperation activities including exercises;
 - c. The Operational Capabilities Concept (OCC) to improve partners' capacity to contribute effectively to NATO-led Crisis Response Operations through achieving interoperability;
 - d. The Trust Fund mechanism that currently includes an ongoing substantial project with Jordan as well as a completed feasibility study for a possible project with Mauritania;

Individual Cooperation Programmes (ICPs)

12. The Individual Cooperation Programmes (ICPs) aim at enhancing the political dialogue as well as tailoring the cooperation with NATO according to key strategic national needs. Some MD partners have expressed a strong interest in making use of these tools.

13. Israel finalised an ICP with NATO in October 2006. Egypt developed an ICP in October 2007. Jordan presented a first draft ICP which has been submitted to Allies. Mauritania has also presented a draft to NATO's International Staff.

Public Diplomacy activities

14. NATO's Public Diplomacy activities for MD countries have been progressively reinforced since the Istanbul Summit, with an ad hoc NAC approved Public Diplomacy Strategy for the MD. All activities were organised by the NATO Public Diplomacy Division in concert with MD partner countries, in a spirit of joint ownership.

- a. A tailored visits programme has brought 47 groups of parliamentarians, policy makers, high level opinion leaders and journalists from MD countries to NATO since 2004.
- b. Sixteen international conferences and seminars have been organised by the NATO Public Diplomacy Division (PDD) in MD countries since 2004.
- c. Eight press tours of journalists from all MD countries were organised by NATO PDD during NATO Summit and Ministerial meetings including during MD Ministerial meetings in Brussels, Taormina and Seville.
- d. In terms of media relations, more than 169 interviews of either the Secretary General or the Deputy Secretary General of NATO have been organised by NATO PDD since 2004 with all the main media organisations of MD countries.
- e. A web module dedicated to the MD on NATO's internet site is regularly updated and is now available in Arabic and Hebrew, in addition to English and French.

NATO Training Cooperation Initiative

15. At the Riga Summit, the NATO Training Cooperation Initiative (NTCI) was launched in order for NATO to share its unique expertise in training and education with MD partners including through the establishment of a dedicated faculty at the NATO Defence College (NDC) in Rome. At a later stage, NATO could consider supporting the establishment of a Security Cooperation Centre (SCC) in the region.

16. The third pilot NATO Regional Cooperation Course (NRCC) was held at the NATO Defence College in Rome with the participation of MD countries. The fourth session started on 27 October 2008 and will, for the first time, last for four weeks. The full 10-week module course is supposed to be launched in Spring 2009.