



Slovensko predsedstvo EU 2008  
Slovenian Presidency of the EU 2008  
La Présidence slovène de l'UE 2008

## FIRST EUROMED MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE ON TOURISM

Fez (Morocco), 3 April 2008

Mr Andrej Vizjak

Minister of the Economy, Republic of Slovenia

Excellencies, Dear colleagues,  
Distinguished guests and participants,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

I am pleased to be with you at this First Euromed Ministerial Conference on Tourism. As a Slovenian, I come from a Mediterranean country too, and I can appreciate the immense benefits that closer cooperation can bring to our countries and, in particular, to the further development of Mediterranean tourism.

I would like to thank our hosts and co-sponsor of the conference, the Kingdom of Morocco, for organising the conference here. Fez is an ancient metropolis, with a unique cultural heritage, and a very attractive tourism destination. As such, it is an ideal place to discuss the relationship between the economy, culture, the environment and tourism. This will be a unique opportunity for all of us to see – up close – the considerable potential of Mediterranean tourism. I would furthermore like to take this opportunity to thank Portugal, the previous Euromed Presidency, for its sponsorship and wise support during the preparatory work and, also, the European Commission for all its assistance.



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Following on from the 8th and 9th meetings of Euromed Ministers of Foreign Affairs in Tampere and Lisbon, I would like to emphasise the importance this Presidency attributes to the centrality of the Barcelona process as the best means to address the challenges faced by the Mediterranean in endeavouring to promote an area of peace, stability, prosperity, mutual respect and understanding between our peoples. We will pursue the realisation of the objectives of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership by continuing to implement the Euro-Mediterranean Five-Year Work Programme, the Euro-Mediterranean Code of Conduct on Countering Terrorism, and the Euromed Work Programme for 2008, adopted at the Euromed Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Lisbon in November 2007.

With this, the first Euromed conference on Tourism, we would primarily like to send out a message. Tourism covers a whole spectrum of activities and involves a wide variety of stakeholders and policy-makers at various levels. Cooperation and dialogue between everyone involved in tourism is an absolute necessity, especially when the issue is how best to address the economic, social and environmental challenges of the Mediterranean, one of the most visited tourist regions in the world. To enable the region to continue to exist and to develop, we need to ensure the environmental sustainability of its coastal areas and islands, particularly in response to the effects of climate change. This is achieved by raising awareness and promoting better water management, the use of renewable energy sources, sustainable approaches to urbanisation, integrated waste management strategies, enhanced civil protection systems as well as impact assessment studies and procedures to optimise investment in the region. **(The Facility for Euro-Mediterranean Investment and Partnership, FEMIP,** an EU support fund promoting sustainable economic growth through investment in infrastructure and especially in private sector development is the EIB's dedicated Euro-Mediterranean arm which supports the most effective environmental and economic objectives of Euro-Mediterranean tourism.

Tourism in the countries of the Mediterranean has a long history and, in most of them, has become a growth sector. This is primarily due to the region's natural and cultural resources, a desirable climate, and a location close to key markets. How this potential will best be used depends mainly on how governments address the need for institutional change and an appropriate private sector role in the process. Mediterranean countries can become some of the strongest tourist destinations worldwide if they take the advantage of their basic potential and the historic preference of tourism consumers in Europe, who often still look for the sun, sea and magic of the south.

Not only is this first Euromed ministerial conference important for the further development of sustainable Euromed tourism in terms of strengthening economic and environmental partnership, but it also supports the objective of achieving a common area of peace, stability



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and prosperity, in which cultural affairs and mutual respect and understanding between societies throughout the Mediterranean region are promoted.

In our conclusions, we should aim to send out a strong message and assume in full our responsibilities with regard to the safety and security of tourists, training for professionals and ensuring healthy market conditions with a view to the liberalisation of tourism-related services, in accordance with internationally-recognised good practices.

The Euromed partnership has been bolstered by the European Neighbourhood Policy. We should strive to benefit from all the new opportunities offered by the ENPI, such as twinning schemes or educational activities, a field in which we hope the Euro-Mediterranean University with its seat in Slovenia will play a key role by enabling appropriate networking.

One specific lasting contribution which Slovenia is offering within the scope of dialogue between cultures in the Mediterranean is a specific initiative to establish a Euro-Mediterranean University in Piran, an attractive medieval town possessing a unique Mediterranean character on the Slovenian Adriatic coast. The formal inauguration of the Euro-Mediterranean University will take place in June 2008. The main reason for establishing an international institution of this kind is the need to draw inspiration from the whole legacy of the Euro-Mediterranean area – our cultural, natural, religious and human inheritance. The cultural and natural assets of the Mediterranean carry with them the basic parameters for sustainable tourism but at the same time represent Mediterranean tourism's greatest comparative competitive advantage in the global tourism market. A Euro-Mediterranean University – with postgraduate study programmes that will include courses on sustainable tourism – has every prospect of becoming a genuine meeting place for young people, researchers and academic staff from the entire Mediterranean area and will offer an ideal opportunity, for example, to acquaint Europe with Arabic language and culture.

This is an important first gathering, a milestone in the history of our cooperation. I am sure that the challenge of responding to the expectations of our citizens will keep us focused on aiming at making a worthwhile contribution. In the Five-Year Euromed Work Programme of 2005, tourism is mentioned only in the context of employment, infrastructure and transport development, sustainable development and intercultural understanding. With this conference, however, tourism is becoming an independent aspect worthy of consideration and one of the priority fields of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership. The stakes are high but so are our ambitions, and I am confident that the road on which we are setting out from such a good starting point can lead only to success.



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The Slovenian Presidency is looking forward to fruitful cooperation in pursuit of our common objectives in the field of Euro-Mediterranean tourism in future.

Thank you for your attention