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EIN Seminar on: "EU Transatlantic dialogue in the Mediterranean region", Brussels

Chair:

- **Andrey KOVATCHEV MEP**, *Vice-Chair of the EPP Group in the European Parliament responsible for Enlargement and Mediterranean Policy*

Guest Speaker:

- **Amb. Suela JANINA**, *Ambassador of the Republic of Albania to the European Union, Belgium and Luxembourg*

Speakers:

- **Ian LESSER**, *Vice-President for Foreign Policy at The German Marshall Fund of the United States (GMF)*
- **Walid PHARES**, *Co-Secretary General, Trans-Atlantic Legislative Group on Counter Terrorism*
- **Prof. Yossi MEKELBERG**, *Senior Consulting Research Fellow, Middle East and North Africa Programme, Chatham House*

- > The region is mostly seen as a burden and not as an opportunity of cooperation. This is not caused by the lack of economic interest of the region, but because of the security and defence issues it poses. However, there are still areas where we can cooperate and the Western Balkans can be a bridge between the two parts of the region.
- > It is in the interest of both sides of the Atlantic to be attentive to this region. Otherwise, other actors gain relevance. It is not about exporting stability, democratic values or the rule of law; it should be about making use of comparative advantages in a complementary manner. Dialogue is the key word.
- > The general approach of the EU towards the region has been bilateralism. This fragmentation is prejudicial to the EU that should be speaking in a single voice.
- > The USA has been a Mediterranean power for over 200 years. However, EU/US structural difference of perspective on the region makes this dialogue more difficult: The US does not use the Mediterranean term in its foreign policy, clearly separating between Europe, North Africa and the Middle East.
- > There are three categories of reasons why the US has been engaged in the region (and the emphasis has been changing over time): The region through the lens of European stability and security (e.g. Cold War); The region and the sea as a way to get into other places (links to the Gulf and the Black Sea); The collection of problems and crisis in the Mediterranean.
- > It is important to understand that the political and emotional perception of migration is very different for the EU and the US. For the US, the security perspective is based on terrorism (specific organisations like ISIS), and the geopolitical conflicts relevance of the region, where the US is actually involved (Syria and Libya).
- > The European perception on the root causes is to find economical solutions to the countries where these migrants are coming from, while the American one is orientated to fix the security situation in the areas that are causing these migration flows; and on democratisation, while the US focuses on democratisation and development, in Europe there is a more developed doctrine not only on democratisation, but mainly on its social and economic roots.
- > A major part of the migrants coming from Syria are from an educated middle class that can be integrated with the right policies.
- > Development aid should not be limited to humanitarian and disaster aid, but to sustainable development aid that can lead to results in the eyes of the young people of this region. We need to be more cautious on the importance of the security and development nexus, and start to address the root causes: Human development (specially providing more opportunities to the younger generation).
- > There is an enlargement of actors in the region (Russia, the Gulf, and China). It is crucial to include China on this debate agenda as it represents a much more relevant stakeholder in Mediterranean affairs.
- > We cannot ignore the different perspective on democracy and rule of law that brings Turkey and the EU apart. However, we should not disregard the fact that Turkey is a key neighbour, with whom we need to cooperate.
- > The role of Turkey can be seen from two perspectives: its integration into the West (values and democratisation), or its geopolitical interest. At the moment, both dimensions are showing real problems because of the deterioration of the internal conditions in the country.
- > Iran is a missed opportunity, and its tensions with the rest of the region must be taken into account on the transatlantic dialogue, as it is a country endowed with human and natural resources.
- > A triangular summit between European and American lawmakers, and elected legislators of countries of the Mediterranean, would allow us to form a true forum through which to engage in a variety of crucial issues.

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