

**STATEMENT OF THE CLOSING CEREMONY OF
THE MEDITERRANEAN CITIES' CONFERENCE**

Barcelona, 9 March 1995

The Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, who is now actively involved in the Copenhagen Summit for Social Development, has asked me to convey to you the following message:

"I send my warmest greetings and best wishes to Mayor Pascual Maragall of Barcelona, and to his administration, for organizing and hosting this major conference.

For most of human history, everything in the world that is most interesting and significant has been within reach of these classic shores. Religion, philosophy, law, trade, architecture and every aspect of the life of the mind and the arts have arisen, been cultivated and enriched by cultural exchange on and around the Mediterranean.

No geographic position could possibly be more favourable than this great inland sea for people filled with the spirit of inquiry and alert to the necessity of cooperative interaction. The sea itself, the rivers that flow to it, the mountains and deserts that protect it and breed its great peoples, all have served to produce a distinctive array of varied societies. With its natural portal to the world from the western sea and its great man-made channel to the south and east, the world has come to recognize and admire the unique entity that is "The Mediterranean".

Foremost of its attributes are its cities. This initiative by the City of Barcelona brings together Cairo, Haifa, Tunis, Marseille and Rome as well as

Mediterranean cities whose stories run far back in time, and which represent a wealth of religious, cultural, political and human achievement. today, they have in common, -- in addition to their geographical situation -- a clear commitment to understanding, dialogue and democracy.

As we search for an improved structure of stability and progress in the new era we have entered, a commitment to peace, development and democracy is essential. Whatever achievements can be made in the fields of economics, social justice and security, none can be ensured over time in the absence of democratization.

Democracy was born, bred, defended and advanced in the city-states of Mediterranean society. Democracy will vary from country to country and from culture to culture, but its essence is everywhere the same: it allows the individual to take part in the decisions affecting his or her life. It recognizes, and thereby makes real, the worth of the human individual.

As urbanization increasingly affects virtually every country in the world, most people will exercise their democratic rights in and through the cities where they live. Thus world peace and security in the broader sense require well-administered cities in which democracy is practised and the vision of a better future is provided for all.

Cities can engender a sense of community. They enable ordinary people to participate in a variety of cultural, educational, religious and recreational opportunities. They have a human scale, yet they also open windows to the outside world. Of all the habitations of humanity, cities can best foster diversity and dialogue, and turn away from exclusion and prejudice. Cities are vital to the building of international peace and security in the world ahead.

This Conference of Mediterranean cities, by bringing together leaders from lands of different traditions but similar values, is an important contribution to the world for which the United Nations is working. I salute your constructive endeavour

and hope that other regions around the world will listen and learn from what you have achieved here in Barcelona."

As Director-General of the European Office of the United Nations I would like to add some observations with regard to the role of Mediterranean cities as seen from Geneva, the window of the United Nations.

The Palais des Nations in Geneva, where the spirit of Barcelona is constantly present in the murals of José Maria Serte, is the major conference and operational centre of the United Nations which gives Geneva a comparable advantage to feel not only visible trends but also the undercurrents of world politics.

Looking at the world scene from the Geneva circle I deeply believe that the changes we are facing today are not only changes from the cold-war to post cold-war systems it is a change of the civilisation paradigm, which affects not only the global situation of the role of states, but also human relations.

However, the change of civilisation paradigm does not mean the clash of civilisation. Rather, we are catering to a period of human-oriented interaction which will be characterized by the mutual enrichment of civilisation within an inter-dependent world.

In this period of transition, the Mediterranean as a cradle of civilisation, as the junction of three continents and of different religions has an historical destination to set a positive example, a kind of success story for the United Nations.

With all its problems and difficulties the Mediterranean has proved its ability to achieve peaceful coexistence between states. The United Nations General Assembly commended the efforts of Mediterranean countries in the continuation of initiatives and recognized that the elimination of economic and social disparities in levels of development will contribute to enhancing security and cooperation between Mediterranean countries and thus to peace in the world.

The intense climate at this Barcelona Conference has shown that in a period of transition it is indispensable to take stock of the past and present, not only to avoid mistakes but also to benefit from the positive experiences of the international community on the long march towards peace, development and democracy.