



Permanent Mission of Italy  
OSCE

## STATEMENT BY ITALY

MEDITERRANEAN PARTNERS FOR CO-OPERATION GROUP

Vienna, 12 July 2021

*“Promoting youth participation and engagement to enhance dialogue  
and co-operation in the Mediterranean”*

Mr. Chair,

Italy aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the EU and would like to add some remarks in its national capacity.

I would like to thank the Polish chair for organizing this meeting devoted to a key topic for the Mediterranean region and beyond.

We welcome the presence of speakers coming from our Mediterranean partners and thank them for their rich contributions to the debate. Once more, we believe that this group must be an opportunity to hear their voices.

We are impressed by the amount of initiatives going on in our Partner Countries. We wonder whether it could be possible to collect them in a unique document, divided by subject. We have also very much appreciated the sharing of shortcomings and new proposals, which are critical information for our purposes and deliberations.

As to today's topic, we have witnessed a **growing momentum** concerning the advancement of the **youth and security agenda** at the OSCE.

Let me recall that in the **Declaration on Security and Co-Operation in the Mediterranean**, our Ministers (and I quote): “encourage OSCE initiatives aimed at

promoting youth participation and youth engagement, which foster dialogue and co-operation” among Partners and participating States.

Today, we should translate our engagement into enhanced action-oriented dialogue.

Therefore, we welcome today’s debate since this is another step in our efforts to **shift the narrative around young people** from stigmatization – individuals seen just as a security threat – to the celebration of **youth’s** important and positive **contribution** to the promotion of sustainable peace and security.

It is also important to recognize that youth is not a homogenous social category, since the reasons for their **exclusion and marginalization** may differ, depending on nationality, class, location, education status, religion or gender.

Unfortunately, the **pandemic** has multiplied the occasions for marginalization and, for this reason, it is urgent to redouble our efforts in the respect.

Against this backdrop, the OSCE should and could do more, much more, to support youth in the Mediterranean region as an indispensable pillar of sustainable peace and security. Italy has been trying to do its part, by funding a number of **extra-budgetary projects on youth**, focused on the **common ground** rather than the differences that may exist among us.

I would like to recall the project called GEMs: an award for **young Green Entrepreneurs in Mediterranean Partner Countries**, launched in 2017. This well-tailored initiative could be included, in our view, among the good practices for at least two reasons: first, because in the Mediterranean region, **small and medium sized enterprises** represent the vast majority of firms, accounting for almost three-quarters of total employment; second, because **climate change** is one of the most serious concerns for the Mediterranean region and has an impact both on OSCE participating States and Partner countries.

In the same vein, Italy welcomes the Polish Chair’s initiative to relaunch the **ODIHR training course for young civil servants from the Mediterranean Partners**, held for the first time at the European University Institute in Florence in November 2019. We are convinced indeed that, for our future, it is very important to strengthen youth’s knowledge of democratic institutions, as well as of the OSCE commitments in the field of democratic governance.

Notwithstanding these significant projects, as I said, **the OSCE could do more for youth in the Mediterranean region**, as the Organization specific expertise remains a great opportunity to achieve a set of important goals, such as: closer connection between young women and men and decision makers; youth direct participation in the decision-making, in particular on forward looking issues including climate change; youth economic empowerment with special attention to women.

Mr. Chair,

A couple of remarks in conclusion of this statement.

At the OSCE, we have addressed today's topic in the past. **It is important that we do not lose memory** of what has been done in order to build upon it, as we define a more strategic approach to ensuring the continuity and sustainability of the Partnership's achievements.

Finally, allow me to remind, once more, that, unfortunately, the well-known limitation on the use of the **"Partnership Fund"** in the territories of our partners continues to represent an unjustified obstacle to our purposes.

I thank you for your attention.