

EMHRN Executive Committee Meeting

Ljubljana 28-30 September 2007

Minutes

Approved

The EMHRN Executive Committee (EC) convened in Ljubljana, Slovenia, on September 28-30 2007. At the meeting, the EC members discussed amongst other the key developments in the Euro-Mediterranean region and the EMHRN position paper for the EuroMed Ministerial meeting on migration on November 18-19. Furthermore, the Annual report and Financial audit report 2006 were presented, the Work Program for 2008-2009 was adopted as well as a document on EMHRN internal and external communication, and the preparations for the EMHRN's 10th anniversary were discussed. Finally, the EC agreed on a press statement from their meeting.

In relation to the EC meeting, on September 27, EMHRN President Kamel Jendoubi and EMHRN Executive director Marc Schade-Poulsen met with Ambassador Veronika Stabej, Head of delegation of Slovenia for Euromed, Nina Cinkole from the Directorate for European Affairs and Bilateral Political Relations Ministry of Foreign Affairs Republic of Slovenia; Darja Fabjancic, Division for International Organisations and human security, and Lev Kreft from the Peace Institute to discuss the developments in the Euro-Mediterranean and the priorities under the Slovenian EU Presidency. Furthermore, on September 28, EMHRN President Kamel Jendoubi, EC member Michel Tubiana and EMHRN Executive director, Marc Schade-Poulsen met with Blaž Kovač, Amnesty International; Neva Miklavčič, Helsinki Monitor of Slovenia on Human Rights; Marina Uzelac and Tereza Novak, Slovenska Filantropija; Gorana Flaker, SEECRAN advocacy of children; and Spela Veselic, Drustvo SOS, to discuss the human rights situation in Slovenia and the EuroMed region. The meeting with the different local NGOs was kindly hosted by Amnesty International.



PARTICIPANTS

Participants from the EMHRN Executive Committee (EC):

Kamel Jendoubi (President), Eva Norström (Vice president), Michel Tubiana, Birgit Lindsnæs, Moataz El Fegier, Wadih-Ange Al-Asmar, Nina Atallah, Colm Regan and Iain Byrne.

From the Secretariat:

Marc Schade-Poulsen (EMHRN Executive director), Sandrine Grenier (Advocacy director, Brussels), Chadi Sidhom (projector coordinator, participated on September 28) and Maibritt Damgaard Nielsen (Executive secretary, rapporteur).

Absent:

Nizam Assaf (Treasurer), Maria De Donato and Rabéa Naciri - all with notification.

DOCUMENTS FOR THE MEETING

Documents for the meeting:

1. Draft agenda
2. Minutes EC meeting Lisbon March 16-18 2007
3. Minutes from the meeting on working groups Lisbon March 18 2007
4. EMHRN Position paper for the Euromed meeting of Ministers of migration
5. News Exchange 8-14 (summary)
6. Work programme 2008-2009
7. Audit report 2006

8. Budget 2008-2009
9. Annual report 2006
10. Revision of Statutes
11. Document on Economical and Social rights
12. Work program 2007
13. Work program 2007 Brussels

Documents presented at the meeting:

14. Draft communication strategy

If you wish to consult the documents, please contact Maibritt Nielsen from the EMHRN Secretariat at mdn@euromedrights.net

FINAL AGENDA ADOPTED AT THE MEETING

1. Welcome, approval of minutes from last Executive Committee meeting and agreeing on meeting agenda
2. Film from the HRE summer school
3. Political developments in the region with specific reference to the situation in the Mashrek
4. EMHRN Position paper for the Euromed meeting of Ministers of migration
5. Secretariat report
6. Work program 2008-2009
7. EMHRN Finances
8. Revision of Statutes
9. Point of information on progress as regards the EcoSoc proposal
10. EMHRN Communication strategy
11. Forum for a Just Peace in the Middle East
12. EMHRN 10th anniversary
13. Membership issues (applications etc.)
14. Preparing the next EMHRN General Assembly
15. Urgencies: risk assessment and urgent missions



Day 1, September 28 (Friday)

1. **Welcome, approval of minutes from last Executive Committee meeting and agreeing on meeting agenda** (moderator: Kamel Jendoubi)

EMHRN President, Kamel Jendoubi welcomed the Executive Committee members to Ljubljana, Slovenia, and reported back from the external meetings that had taken place before the EC meeting.

On September 27, Kamel Jendoubi and Marc Schade-Poulsen met with Ambassador Veronika Stabej, Head of delegation of Slovenia for Euromed, Nina Cinkole from the Directorate for European Affairs and Bilateral Political Relations Ministry of Foreign Affairs Republic of Slovenia; and Darja Fabjancic, Division for International Organisations and human security. At their meeting with the MFA, Kamel Jendoubi and Marc Schade-Poulsen were informed that in relation to the Slovenian EU Presidency, different activities were foreseen; among others, the MFA would create a EuroMed university and give priority to intercultural dialogue and cooperate with the Anna Lindh Foundation in this regard.

On September 27 and 28, Kamel Jendoubi, Michel Tubiana and Marc Schade-Poulsen met different local NGOs, i.e. the Peace Institute, Amnesty, Helsinki Monitor of Slovenia on Human Rights, Slovenska Filantropija, SEECRAN advocacy of children; and Drustvo SOS. The organisations informed about the human rights situation in Slovenia and priorities to high light human rights violations in Slovenia during the country's presidency of the EU.

Finally, Kamel Jendoubi informed the EC members about the difficulties that the EC members coming from the South had experienced in relation to their visa applications and entry to Slovenia – despite of the fact that the Slovenian MFA had been very helpful in relation to the visa procedures.

Decisions:

- The EC members went through the minutes from the last EC meeting on March 16-18 2007 and approved them without any changes.
- The EC members also approved the minutes from the meeting on the working groups on March 18 2007 without any changes.
- The EMHRN to send a letter to the Slovenian MFA informing them of the strict visa procedures and control in the Slovenian airport.
- The EC to send a letter to Maria De Donato who could unfortunately not participate in the meeting due to illness.
- The Secretariat to look into access and printing problems in relation to the documents on the EC Internet Forum.

2. Film from the HRE summer school (moderator: Kamel Jendoubi)

The EC members watched the introductory film made by Marc Degli Esposti on the HRE Summer School that took place in July. A longer version (in English, French and Arabic) will document more in details what happened at the Summer School. The EC members congratulated the Secretariat on its good work noting that it was a new way of communicating within the EMHRN.

3. Political developments in the region with specific reference to the situation in the Mashrek (moderator: Birgit Lindsnæs)

Political developments in the region

Moataz El Fegiery informed the EC that the situation in the region was very alarming and that there were new challenges for the Human rights defenders. In Egypt, more than 10 trials in relation to the media had taken place and two NGOs had been closed by the government in the last months. In addition to this, there is a suggestion to draft a new association law that would put serious restrictions on the NGOs. He noted that there were similar situations in Syria and Tunisia but that the situation in these countries seemed to be met by silence from the EU countries.

Wadih-Ange Al-Asmar agreed with Moataz El Fegiery, saying that in the last year there has been a set back on the Human rights situation in the region, in particular as regards the political discourse. When the NGOs meet with the consulates and embassies, the NGOs are told that the latter will not interfere with internal affairs. Recently, a resolution was passed about the division of Iraq in the United States which is worrying as it could lead to internal wars in the region. As regards Lebanon, it is facing two difficult years until the next legislative elections. He added that a mini war between a terrorist group settled in the Nahar el Bard Palestinian camp and the Lebanese army had taken place and unfortunately led to an increase in xenophobic feelings against the Palestinians. In his opinion the situation in other Arabic countries would deteriorate, if the situation in Lebanon explodes.

Michel Tubiana noted that in the North there was also a change in the discourse, for instance in the interview given by the French President, Sarkozy on the Mediterranean where Human rights and democracy were not mentioned at all whereas Islam was referred to five times. As regards the South, he informed that he had taken part in a FIDH mission to Palestine in July and that the situation in Palestine is desperate and tragic: torture and arbitrary detentions have become common due to the internal conflict between the Hamas and the Fatah. He noted that the United States and the EU countries had called for democratic elections but had not approved the result of the democratic elections that had taken place.

Kamel Jendoubi informed that in the Maghreb region the main characteristic was the terrorist and suicide attacks in Algeria. He added that in Morocco there had recently been elections and only 37% of the population had voted at the elections showing that the population thinks the elections are in vain. In addition, there are a lot of law suits and judicial proceedings against journalists in Morocco and many human rights defenders have been victim of physical violence, among them EMHRN members. Kamel Jendoubi stressed the importance of showing solidarity and supporting the EMHRN members in this difficult situation. Furthermore, he informed that he had participated in a 40 day commemoration of the Moroccan Human rights defender, Driss Zekri's. Driss Zekri had worked his entire life to promote human rights and thousands of people had participated in his funeral. Finally,

Kamel Jendoubi noted that in Tunisia, lawyers are being persecuted and repressed. In the region as such the human rights defenders' lives are in danger and the EMHRN should look at how it can show solidarity to these activists.

Iain Byrne informed the EC members that there had been political changes in the United Kingdom in relation to Iraq and Palestine since Gordon Brown had taken over as the new Prime Minister. There might be opportunities to influence the UK government, and changes in the UK might lead to changes in the US.

Colm Regan agreed with Iain Byrne saying that the EMHRN should seize the opportunity in London. He furthermore reminded the EC of the discussion in Lisbon; the EC should request of the working groups to provide the EC suggestions within their field of expertise. He said that the EMHRN should make sure to produce a document that states EMHRN fundamental principles in an accessible language to encourage the EMHRN's networks to lobby their governments.

4. EMHRN Position paper for the Euromed meeting of Ministers of migration (moderator: Iain Byrne)
Chadi Sidhom, coordinator of the project on migration and asylum seekers, presented the first EMHRN position paper on migration and asylum seekers that had been made in view of the first EuroMed Ministerial meeting on migration that will take place in Lisbon on November 18-19 2007 (see document 4: EMHRN Position paper for the Euromed meeting of Ministers of migration). After specifying the different rights of migrants and the rights of asylum seekers, the document presents the common rights and the effects of the policy of the countries in the Euromed Partnership on the rights of migrants and asylum seekers and gives recommendations to the different countries and institutions.

After the presentation of the position paper, the EC members congratulated Chadi Sidhom and the working group on their great job.

Decisions:

- The EC adopted the EMHRN position paper on migration with minor adjustments.

Day 2, September 29 (Saturday)

5. Secretariat report (moderator: Moataz El Fegiery)
Marc Schade-Poulsen presented the secretariat report (see document no. 5: News Exchange 8-14);

Working groups - general

Due to the difficult situation in winter, the EMHRN had not been able to follow up on the meeting on working groups that took place on March 18 in Lisbon.

Freedom of Association

A report on Freedom has been drafted and 10 country reports have been made in consultation with members.

Justice

High quality meetings on justice have taken place in Lebanon and Tunisia and the debates have been very good.

Women's rights

Due to staff changes, the working group faced some difficulties and was not able to follow up on the Ministerial meeting in Istanbul. However, the EMHRN organised a training seminar in Lebanon for the working group and has an interim coordinator in place in Egypt for the rest of the year. The EMHRN hopes to be able to reopen the office in Jordan by January 2008.

Human Rights Education

The summer school that took place in Cyprus in July succeeded in setting up a group of young people that is extremely active. The EMHRN will now study alumni networks to get inspiration as to how the group can work in a good way in the future. It was however noted that the EMHRN should be careful not to structure too much around the group. By the end of the year, several reports on HRE will normally be finalised.

Palestine, Israel and Palestinians

The EMHRN is continuing its fundraising to employ a coordinator in 2008 with a high profile on lobbying.

Emilie Dromzee and Sandrine Grenier have conducted very good ENP training in Israel and Palestine and the EMHRN members are motivated to work on EU issues. The EMHRN also published the 3rd EU-Israel Review. Marc Schade-Poulsen had been in dialogue with the Aprove group and Charles Shamas in order to find out how the Review could include the everyday concerns of the members, and he had suggested that the report match both issues dealt with by members in their work and the question of EU responsibilities as a third state actor.

In July, the convener of the working group, Stefan Lutgenau, had gone on a mission to Gaza with individual member Per Stadig and met with the EMHRN members. Marc Schade-Poulsen had been on holiday and the mission team had de facto decided on mission dates and composition on its own. After the mission, a press release had been issued but the EMHRN is still waiting for the report from the mission.

Migration

The EMHRN is currently trying to redefine the scope of the Machrek reports on migration. The project coordinator, Chadi Sidhom, had been in contact with the Commission to amend the project. The Ford Foundation supports the EMHRN to set up a loose network that should be able to follow up on violations of migrants' and refugees' rights.

Economical and Social rights

Iain Byrne had drafted a paper on Economical and Social rights (see below). Marc Schade-Poulsen had been involved in the project on Right to employment but the project failed to produce a final report as the key persons involved had found employment elsewhere, and he had not yet seen the final report from the project.

Communication

The EMHRN web site has now 10 000 hits/ month and 70% of the hits are registered for the Arabic pages. Furthermore, the EMHRN is working on setting up a common database for the Copenhagen and Brussels offices.

Solidarity

From autumn, the EMHRN will try to channel the solidarity work to the working groups. The working groups will become more activists than they are now.

Training

(See ENP below).

Partnerships

Sandrine Grenier is cooperating with NGOs in Brussels (see information on the EuroMed NGO Platform and the EMHRF below).

After Marc Schade-Poulsen's presentation of the EMHRN activities, Sandrine Grenier presented the activities in Brussels (see document no. 13: Work program 2007 Brussels);

ENP

Sandrine Grenier and Emilie Dromzee had worked on the ENP and went to Ramallah and the West Bank to do the training course on the ENP (it was not possible to go to Gaza due to the security situation) and then to Tel Aviv where they presented the EU-Israel Review. Representatives of the EU and a large number of NGOs attended the seminar. Emilie Dromzee and Sandrine Grenier are currently organising a seminar in Morocco in collaboration with the Moroccan Platform.

Country work

Sandrine Grenier informed that the EMHRN had sent letters to EU association councils in Algeria, Morocco and Egypt in collaboration with other NGOs, in particular the FIDH. A sub committee on Human rights was held in Lebanon, and the Commission consulted the NGOs, among others Wadih-Ange Al-Asmar. As regards Syria, there are no association agreement between the EU and Syria but Sandrine Grenier was consulted by the Commission that wanted to know how the EMHRN can work on Syria. A European Parliament delegation went to Syria and met with EMHRN members.

Furthermore, Sandrine Grenier and several EMHRN member organisations had participated in the International conference of civil society in support of Israeli-Palestinian peace organised by the UN Committee for the exercise of the inalienable rights of Palestinian people in the European Parliament on August 30. However, the focus of the meeting was mainly on political affairs, security and environment, and the Human rights issue was not addressed.

In July the EMHRN had been invited for the first time to a political commission on Human rights and security at the European assembly. The EMHRN gave a presentation of the work of the EMHRN and the overall situation in the region.

Thematic activities

Finally, Sandrine Grenier informed that Fabrice Liebaut would come to Brussels in October to prepare the draft of the regional report on Justice reform initiatives, and that the Foundation and the EMHRN would meet with the Commission and the Parliament in October.

EuroMed NGO Platform

Michel Tubiana informed the EC members about the latest developments within the EuroMed NGO Platform. Kamel Jendoubi added that the Platform is facing some difficulties..The EMHRN members should be mobilized to participate in the General Assembly of the Platform in November.

Foundation (EMHRF)

Kamel Jendoubi briefed the EC members about the developments in the Foundation that was created by the EMHRN and supports emergency actions and new projects. He noted that since its establishment, the EMHRF receives more and more funding applications, however, the EMHRF cannot respond to all the requests. He noted that a lot of the EMHRN members do not know the EMHRF and that the EMHRN should do more to promote the EMHRF. The EMHRF receives funds from the MFAs in Denmark, Sweden and the Netherlands. However, in the future, the EMHRF should diversify its funding and look for other funding possibilities, i.e. in particular private and American funding. Finally, he informed that the EMHRF is currently considering hiring a director for the EMHRF.

Following the presentations of the EMHRN activities, the EC members thanked Marc Schade-Poulsen for his hard work during the difficulties that the EMHRN has faced.

6. Work program 2008-2009 (moderator: Michel Tubiana)

Marc Schade-Poulsen presented the work program 2008-2009. He had started to draft the work program after the EC meeting in March and held a working meeting with Kamel Jendoubi and Rabéa Naciri and a meeting with staff to discuss thing further. After the EC meeting, the document should be finalised in order to make the final budgets.

At the General Assembly in 2006, the GA had agreed on a work program and to set networking and the working groups at the heart of the EMHRN working methods. It was decided at the EC meeting in Barcelona to work on two programs, i.e. democratization and human rights and security of human beings. However, shortly after adopting these two programs, the momentum to promote democratization had been weakened, even disappeared in the region, and with the war in Lebanon and the situation in Gaza, the human security significantly decreased.

After the GA, the EMHRN had spent a lot of time on building up the organisation and creating the working groups through a transparent procedure. Afterwards, the EMHRN started implementing the projects of the working groups. According to the work program, the EMHRN should try to consolidate its work in the coming two years and stick to the agenda. This also means that the working group should make fewer reports and instead be able to respond to urgent needs and organise solidarity actions. In short, the working groups should work in a more activist way.

Marc Schade-Poulsen noted that there is a crisis for Human rights in the region right now, and that the Human rights defenders should discuss how to react to the current crisis in the region. Therefore, different meetings in the region prior to the General Assembly in 2008 were foreseen, and a report on the situation in terms of democratization and security in the region and EU reactions in this regard would be made on the basis of these discussions and discussed further at the GA. The report would also be used as a lobbying tool. He noted the importance of thinking through how to make this report so it would not end up being too time consuming.

Furthermore, Marc Schade-Poulsen mentioned that there was a proposal to do more on external communication and have somebody to do media work in Brussels and Marc Degli Esposti to be employed full time. He added that at the time being there was no momentum to establish a working group on the ENP but there were possibilities for doing training in the region. Finally, Marc Schade-Poulsen mentioned that during the staff development days on September 18-20, the staff members had drawn his attention to the fact that the EU's bilateral relations with the South are getting more comprehensive and that the EMHRN has difficulties responding to many requests in this regards as the EMHRN work is more focused on regional issues than on country issues.

The EC members congratulated Marc Schade-Poulsen on his good work and made the following comments;

In principle, Iain Byrne agreed on the idea of issuing a report on the developments in the region but questioned what kind of resources the EMHRN would need to fulfill the intentions to make the report and the activities as such for the next two years. He suggested having an external evaluation of the EMHRN work and perhaps getting support in relation to fundraising.

Kamel Jendoubi agreed to the idea of having an external evaluation of the EMHRN work every two years. He added, that the EMHRN had to react to the developments in the region, ensure coherence in its work and visibility in the region (for instance promote the work of the working groups and employ a media officer). The report would be able to help the EMHRN a lot in its work. Moataz El Fegriy agreed with Kamel Jendoubi that the EMHRN has a problem of making its activities visible in the region and he suggested that the EMHRN should make a public outreach to affect the actors in the region on a daily basis.

Michel Tubiana noted that the objective of this report should be clear. A Human rights report on the North and the South issued every three years in all three languages would be an impossible task. Marc Schade-Poulsen added that the publication of the report would also have budgetary consequences.

Finally, Colm Regan informed that he disagreed with the reasons given in the work program as to why the EMHRN works with young people: according to him, young people do not join human rights organisations because the organisations are conservative and runned top-down – and not because they are not interested in human rights. As a way forward, the EMHRN should talk with for example youth councils and find ways to attract young people.

Decision:

- The EC members reaffirmed the general orientation of the work program 2008-2009 (priorities to be defined according to the available funds).
- The EC agreed to have a report on the developments in the region every three years (prior to the General Assemblies). The report should be made according to the available funds.

7. EMHRN Finances (moderator: Kamel Jendoubi)

Marc Schade-Poulsen presented the audit report 2006, the accounts 2007 as well as the budget for 2008 and 2009. The final version of the audit report and the long form report would have to be signed at the next EC meeting. These two reports will be put on the EMHRN web site attached to the narrative report 2006.

Audit report 2006

As regards the audit report, Marc Schade-Poulsen noted that there had been an increase in activities in 2006 and that approx. 50% of the funds had been spent on activities, the remaining 50% on human resources. The EMHRN would arrive at a small profit of 2837 Euros which was better than expected. Kamel Jendoubi added that 2005 was a difficult year for the EMHRN and that a tremendous effort had been made in 2006 to ensure that the activities could be carried out.

Budget for 2006 and 2007

Marc Schade-Poulsen informed the EC members that the budget was based on political translation of the audit report 2006. At the General Assembly in 2006, the percentages to be spent on the different items had been decided, and the political budget showed that the EMHRN would end up with more or less the same percentages as agreed upon.

Kamel Jendoubi said that it was an achievement to arrive at this result that was very close to the budget approved by the GA (50% to activities and 50% to support activities). He furthermore noted that there were only few percentages used on communication and training. Finally, he thought that the EC members should have an overview of the liquidity at its meetings. In this regard Marc explained that the EMHRN is not facing liquidity problems.

Budget 2008 and 2009:

Marc Schade-Poulsen presented the budget 2008-2009. A part from the current staff members, he had upgraded the communication officer in Copenhagen, introduced a media officer in Brussels and an administrative assistant in Brussels. The fundraising officer had however not been included in the budget. In relation to the budget, Colm Regan stressed the importance of putting project coordinators under programs and not under the administration.

Nina Atallah noted that an external evaluation of the EMHRN work would be important and help Marc Schade-Poulsen in his work. Kamel Jendoubi agreed and suggested to follow-up on the budget at the next EC meeting and adjusting it if necessary.

Decisions:

- The EC adopted the budget 2008-2009
- To hire a fundraiser (to save 5% of the expenses to pay the fundraiser's salary)
- In case it is not possible to find a financial controller, the EMHRN should appoint somebody at the mid management level and hire some financial control from the outside.

8. Revision of Statutes (moderator: Colm Regan)

Michel Tubiana presented a suggestion to the revision of the Statutes following the decision made at the EC meeting in Lisbon in March 2007 and invited the EC members to come up with suggestions and discuss problems that could be envisaged.

Decisions:

- The English version of the Statutes to be proofread
- EC members to send conditions for admittance of regular members to Michel Tubiana

Day 3, September 30 (Sunday)

9. Point of information on progress as regards the EcoSoc proposal (moderator: Nina Atallah)

Following the discussion on Economical and Social rights at the EC meeting in Petra in December 2006, Iain Byrne had updated his proposal for a manual on Economical and Social rights and added information on work and reports made in the region. He noted that the EC should decide to which extend the EMHRN should work on the Economical and Social rights based on the budget and the work program for 2008-2009. According to him, The EMHRN should not necessarily set up a working group but make the practical manual accessible for the EMHRN members and other NGOs.

Michel Tubiana suggested thinking about partnerships as other organisations in the region are focusing on Economical and Social rights. He however noted that the trade unions in the South of the Mediterranean are very sensitive and the least independent. Iain Byrne agreed adding that they do not have wide space to maneuver and are not very efficient. He mentioned that there is a EuroMed trade union platform that brings together trade unions from the North and the South and that it would be difficult to do something without clarifying the EMHRN's partnership with it. Eva Norström and Nina Atallah stressed the importance of having a clear strategy before contacting the Platform, also in order to be able to fundraise for the project. And Colm Regan ended the discussion by noting that the EMHRN should find a methodology for working and develop partnerships, and that the key issue in relation to Economical and social rights is whether the EMHRN would be able to find two credible partners, i.e. one in the North and one in the South, to pursue the project with the Network.

Decisions:

- Colm Regan and Iain Byrne will work on a strategy for Economical and Social rights.
- Colm Regan to explore the possibilities of raising funds at the Irish trade unions

- Michel Tubiana is to contact the Euromed Trade Union Platform to inform them about the EMHRN's intentions in relation to Economical and Social rights

10. EMHRN Communication strategy (moderator: Nina Atallah)

Wadih-Ange Al-Asmar presented a draft communication strategy document (see document 14: Draft communication strategy), with focus on the external communication, which he had elaborated in cooperation with Marc Degli Esposti. He noted that the EMHRN had not had a clear communication strategy before and stressed that the role of the EMHRN is to convey a clear message internally and externally. In order to do so, the EMHRN would need the proper means as well as the political commitment to have a clear strategy.

Wadih-Ange Al-Asmar noted that the EMHRN has a lot of different channels of communication (Newsletter, News bulletins etc.) but that the EMHRN does not know if they are being used by the EMHRN members. It would be important to measure the efficiency of the EMHRN communication and optimize the communication, not at least due to the fact that the EMHRN has little visibility despite of all the work done, and that there is a lack of ownership among the EMHRN members of the publications.

The necessary tools would have to be provided to the Secretariat, if the EMHRN wants an efficient communication, Wadih-Ange Al-Asmar noted. It should thus be clear who the staff members could contact on this and that issue, and what the deadline and communication channels would be.

In relation to press releases, he suggested setting a time limit for the drafting of press releases of 48 hours and to simplify the process in order to react urgently to developments in the region. In case of an urgent press release on a country, the country referent (to be defined within the EC) and the secretariat should validate it. In case of thematic press release, the EC and some of the EMHRN members should be consulted.

As regards the media, The EMHRN should target the media systematically. The contact should be made from Copenhagen and the referent country and, in case of thematic country, the EC member. The EMHRN should also organise press conferences and establish good contacts with the most important 4-5 media. The EMHRN members should be asked to send a list of the local media to be added to the media database of the EMHRN.

He noted that in order to ensure the communication strategy, the Communication officer would become a full time employee. In addition, it would be considered to employ two press officers, i.e. one in the North who would cover the activities in relation to the EU and lobbying, and one in the South who would contact the Arab media. In addition, an intern would be employed to ensure the establishment of the media database and the distribution of targeted faxes. He finally noted that a budget line for communication should be added to all EMHRN budgets.

The EC members agreed that communication should be a priority of the EMHRN but noted that the budgetary consequences should be taken into consideration. Birgit Lindsnæs also asked to have some indicators (who uses the web site etc.) in order to be able to set priorities in terms of communication.

Sandrine Grenier added that the Copenhagen and Brussels offices had worked hard on the database as it is the basis for all EMHRN communication. She agreed to have an intern to help in relation to the media database. She informed the EC that the Arab media is contacting her on a more regular basis to know about activities undertaken by the NGOs and that there is a big potential to explore in that regard. Finally, she noted that it would be very important for the media officer in the South to work with the EMHRN members and not on his/her own.

Moataz El Fegier stressed the importance of having a media officer who understands Arabic and the working methods of the Arab media. He furthermore suggested distributing the annual report in the region to disseminate the EMHRN activities. Finally, he informed that the Arabic web site was often outdated compared to the English version and that the site would need editing.

Kamel Jendoubi noted that in the South communication can be a matter of live and death and that the EMHRN members in the South had asked for a communication strategy. He suggested employing the media officer in the South before employing somebody in the North.

Finally, Nina Atallah also noted that the EMHRN should be careful in relation to the question of deadlines and not issue press releases without taking the proper time to do it as the EMHRN would risk losing its credibility.

Decisions:

- The EC adopted the Communication strategy as a road map
- The implementation of the Communication strategy to be discussed at the Quartet meeting on November 16 2007 and again at the next EC meeting on December 14-16 2007

11. Forum for a just Peace in the Middle East (moderator: Wadih-Ange Al-Asmar)

Marc Schade-Poulsen informed that the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs had funded the Forum for a just Peace in the Middle East organised by the Spanish Platform, and José Martín, ACSUR, had invited the EMHRN to participate. Upon the request of the EC, Wadih-Ange Al-Asmar had attended a preparatory meeting in July and there would be another meeting in October 2007 that Wadih-Ange Al-Asmar was however prevented from attending due to other obligations.

Wadih-Ange Al-Asmar noted several problems in relation to the Forum of a Just Peace project, in particular the fact that the Platform is mixing NGOs and political movements and that the documents from the meeting were prepared by a drafting committee without any prior validation, meaning that the statement was more an opportunity for the drafting committee members to voice out their own political positions.

Decision:

- The EC decided to withdraw from the initiative and to inform the organizers of this decision.

12. EMHRN 10th anniversary (moderator: Wadih-Ange Al-Asmar)

Marc Schade-Poulsen informed that in relation to the EC meeting in Brussels on December 14-16 2007, there would be a press conference on December 17 to celebrate the EMHRN's 10th anniversary and launch the Freedom of Association Review. Different victims of rights from Egypt, Syria and Tunisia would be invited to participate as testimonies at the press conference. Furthermore, on December 17-18 the Freedom of association working group meeting would take place. Finally, the EMHRN would try to set up different high level meetings, hopefully also with Mr. Barroso, however these meetings would be difficult to time.

In addition to the events in Brussels, a USB key with EMHRN reports on would be sent to the EMHRN members, and a poster and folder on the EMHRN would be launched as well.

Moataz El Fegiery suggested also to make an event in Egypt as the events in Brussels might not have an effect in the region. Nina Atallah also suggested that the EMHRN members could organise events on the same date. Marc Schade-Poulsen promised to look into it and ask Marc Degli Esposti to coordinate the events with the EMHRN members.

Decisions:

- To invite Abdelaziz Bennani, Morten Kjærholm and Driss El Yazami to the EC meeting and celebration of the EMHRN's 10th anniversary on December 14-16 2007 in Brussels (according to their availability)

13. Membership issues (applications etc.) (Moderator: Wadih-Ange Al-Asmar)

Due to time constraints, the EC decided to postpone the discussion of membership applications that the EMHRN had received for one of the next EC meetings.

14. Preparing the next EMHRN General Assembly (Moderator: Wadih-Ange Al-Asmar)

Marc Schade-Poulsen informed that the venue for the GA will be linked to the funding possibilities and the assistance in the country in question.

As regards the GA, Kamel stressed the importance of having candidates for the EC elections and thus begin raising awareness among the EMHRN members in order for them to suggest candidates for the elections. It would also be important to pay attention to the parity issue and try to ensure female candidates. Finally, Kamel reminded that the EMHRN would organise meetings in the region prior to the GA to discuss the developments in the region and the GA which would also require some financial resources.

Decisions:

- To hold the next EMHRN General Assembly on December 12-14 (arrival on December 11) 2007
- The Quartet to discuss the possibilities of venues (France, Poland, Czech Republic and Spain were suggested as possible venues for the GA) at their next meeting on November 16.

15. Urgencies: risk assessment and urgent missions (moderator: Eva Norström)

a. Risk Assessments and mission to Gaza

In relation to the mission to Gaza, Iain Byrne had sent information on risk assessments to the EC and he stressed the importance of having a proper assessment in case things go wrong during missions. He suggested contacting other organisations, for instance associate members as Amnesty that have a lot of experience in this area. Nina Atallah agreed with Iain Byrne; however she noted that some organisations have a tendency to exaggerate in relation to the security issues.

Decision:

- Iain Byrne to draft a suggestion for risk assessment to be presented at the next EC meeting.

Postponed for next EC meeting on December 14-16 2007:

- a. Follow-up to Istanbul Action Plan
- b. Follow-up to the meeting on the working groups
- c. Membership applications