

MEDIA : Ministry for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Hungary
TITRE : Hungary considers it a matter of importance that the EU develop relations with its eastern and southern neighbours in a balanced way – László Várkonyi's address to the MEDays conference in Tangier
DATE : 28 November 2008

Foreign Ministry State Secretary László Várkonyi on November 26-27 participated in and addressed the MEDays conference in the Moroccan city of Tangier, where the main subject was how to deepen political and economic dialogue in the Mediterranean region.

Mr Taieb Fassi Fihri and Mr Angel Moratinos, the Moroccan and Spanish foreign ministers respectively, and Mr Shlomo Ben-Ami, a former Israeli foreign minister, were also present at the conference. Business people, diplomats and high-ranking state officials of the Mediterranean countries debated the political, economic and social conditions and perspectives with regard to strengthening regional co-operation.

Mr Várkonyi stressed Hungary considered it a matter of importance that the European Union should develop relations balanced equally with its eastern and southern neighbours.

The Hungarian senior diplomat, the only one to attend from Central Europe, pointed out that it is a common interest to make the area - ranging from Gibraltar to the Bosphorus - a region of democracy, economic prosperity, stability and security, so that the Mediterranean should not divide but unite Europe and the Arab world. For this to happen, continuous and productive political dialogue is required between the region's European and Arab countries, he added.

Mr Várkonyi noted that EU-member Hungary, which has a tradition of maintaining good relations with the Arab world, was both capable of, and willing to, participate in Euro-Mediterranean political, economic, commercial as well as development co-operation. The Hungarian government - he added - has supported the European Union and its Mediterranean partners' evolving co-operation.

The Barcelona Process, which previously secured the framework for co-operation, was superseded this year by the new "Union for the Mediterranean region" framework. The latter includes plans for wide-ranging regional investments, too.