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CRUISE FOR PEACE AND RECONCILIATION IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

What could unite youth leaders from throughout the Mediterranean in a project that is open, tolerant, original and full of adventure? The Peace Cruise: an initiative getting under way in Egypt this August, and reaching Piraeus on 21 September.

In 1997 the World Organization of the Scout Movement identified the need for an open and volunteer -based project to encourage leaders of Mediterranean youth organisations to see the benefits of regional co-operation with the emphasis on toleration, and free from all prejudice. With the support of the Polish Scout Association, owner of a magnificent three-masted ship, the *Black Knight*, the Scout Movement launched the idea of a cruise bringing young people together from around the Mediterranean basin and recruited from the European Youth Forum and Mediterranean Youth Forum.

Innovative training courses will be held on each of the four legs leaving from Alexandria, Larnaca, Antalya and Istanbul. On each leg 24 men and women will make up the crew of Peace Sailors, supported by four trainers trained by the Geneva-based Centre for Applied Studies in International Negotiations. The boat will call at a number of ports to invite local young people to join this promotion of peace and reconciliation through major events: the Peace Events, to be held in Alexandria, Gaza, Haifa, Larnaca, Beirut, Istanbul and Piraeus.

The Scout Movement has sought support from the North-South Centre, DG XXII of the European Commission, UNESCO and the European Youth Forum to enable this ambitious project to become reality. A Partners' Committee was set up in April 1999 to support the initiative.

Richard Amalvy, Project Director, explained: *"The role of youth organisations in the development of the Mediterranean region should be better understood and supported. In fact, youth NGOs play a significant role in society and in cultural, political and economic life. They not only contribute to the training of managers, but they are also often found in the world of politics, social affairs and education. They are also part of the economy through the activities that they run and the funding that they raise or generate."* The Peace Cruise will thus contribute greatly to this recognition, and he added: *"the role of youth NGOs in the worlds of social affairs, education and culture help to strengthen society and democracy, and contribute to the development of society."*

The Peace Cruise will also demonstrate that youth NGOs are actors in the process of peace and reconciliation and in the struggle against all forms of prejudice. Bon voyage!

The Peace Events of the Peace Cruise

Alexandria : 8 August

Gaza : 12 August

Haifa: 16 August

Larnaca: 19 August

Beirut: 23 August

Istanbul: 10 September

Thessaloniki ; 14 September

Piraeus: 22 September