The Mediterranean Discourse on Regional Security (MDRS) evolved from a series of conferences organized by the George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies, with various partners from around the Mediterranean. MDRS adopted shared responsibility in security partnerships as the perspective from which to consider security in the Mediterranean region.

The second annual MDRS workshop was held in Larnaca, Cyprus, on 1st and 2nd October 2018. The meeting was organized in partnership with the Diplomatic Academy of the University of Nicosia, MDRS invited members or officials of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, the George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies, and various non-governmental organizations and academic institutions, coming from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cyprus, Germany, Greece, Jordan, Latvia, Lebanon, Malta, Montenegro, Morocco, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Tunisia, United Kingdom and the United States of America, to discuss three topics, MDRS considers to be of specific importance with regard to security partnerships in the Mediterranean region: human security, and, more specifically, the inclusion of youth and local government.

Based on the workshop deliberations MDRS issued the following statement:
COMPREHENSIVE HUMAN SECURITY IN THE MEDITERRANEAN REGION IS CRITICAL

1. We focus on the Mediterranean region and privilege the Mediterranean perspective, emphasizing that shared security threats in the region require shared solutions.

2. Security partnerships must consider a people-centric approach

The usual state-centric approaches to security have contributed to increasing human insecurities. We require a people-centric approach that strikes a balance between security and investment in human beings. The channeling of resources into strong human security programs that address social injustices can provide immense opportunities to enhance security in the Mediterranean region for its states and citizens.

3. Human security policies should be designed and implemented through appropriate partnerships that are based on shared norms, interests, objectives and actions, without compromising international or national laws

Being founded on such a shared platform will help create a common language, and will nurture transparency and accountability; disrespecting these conditions may produce undesirable or unintended consequences.

4. A thorough needs assessment is necessary before any human security intervention is designed

Such an assessment must include an awareness of the disproportionate impact of human insecurity on women, youth, migrants and other vulnerable groups. Solutions should aim at the equal representation of these groups in the implementation of desired solutions. Failing to account for the different dimensions and drivers of security and insecurity within their specific contexts or for specific target groups will translate into less, rather than more, security.
5. The role of the state needs to be redefined in response to shifting power dynamics and needs

Drivers of insecurity, the general trust deficit, social injustices, and the increased role of non-state actors have all challenged the traditional role of the state and the social contract between state authorities and citizens, particularly in the Southern Mediterranean region. The result is that the educated, well-connected and exposed young generation no longer sees its government as part of the solution, but as part of the problem.

6. Local government must play a critical role in ensuring regional security

Local governments / local governance structures have the unique potential to provide continuity, sustainability and institutional memory. Local initiatives can create an enabling environment for dialogue and foster space for local actors, especially youth and women. Technology provides the opportunity to project these dialogues and initiatives onto the national and international stages. Multi-level governance creates relations based on trust among local, national and international security actors, and enables those at the local level to participate and contribute to security frameworks.

7. Governments must tailor their security strategies to the particular situation on the national and local levels

A top-down, one-size-fits-all approach will not lead to more security. Developing a common regional security narrative framed by inclusive, active and participatory governance and citizenship is what is needed in today’s Mediterranean security environment. But such an approach also depends on minimizing the potential negative effects of local dynamics and interests, locally contested legitimacy, diverging interests and the ‘not in my backyard’ (NIMBY) attitude. Likewise, care must be exercised not to overburden local actors without providing adequate financing.

8. State and non-state actors should foster greater collaboration and cooperation to guarantee regional security

Besides local government, various non-state actors such as civil society organizations and the private sector play a vital role in ensuring human security. These actors should work in complementary ways.
9. In some cases, armed non-state actors may be considered as partners in security

Particularly in fragile or failed states, armed non-state actors often undertake vital security functions that state agencies fail to fulfill. Their engagement in security partnerships must be considered on a case-by-case basis. There should be no blanket exclusion, as this might lead them to actively jeopardize regional, national and human security. If they successfully fulfill their functions as security providers, they may even become accepted partners after the end of conflict.

THE ROLE OF YOUTH IN SECURITY PARTNERSHIPS

10. Youth, both female and male, must be integrated as indispensable stakeholders in security partnerships

Youth should be recognized as invaluable stakeholders in security, especially as they make up the majority of the Middle East – North Africa (MENA) population. They may bring fresh and innovative visions and strategies for ensuring security, which, if ignored, could result in a loss of this valuable human energy. Exclusion of youth may lead to a state of hopelessness and lack of a sense of belonging, as well as discrimination, frustration, and the search for alternative ways of engagement, such as radicalization and violent extremism.

11. Educational and economic opportunities for male and female youth should be prioritized to promote security at all levels

The access of youth to adequate education and employment can ensure a long-term demographic dividend for both shores of the Mediterranean. Education and employment programs must emanate from the reality that youth is not a homogeneous group with identical needs. Programs need, therefore, to address equally those who do not belong to the “youth elite”. This group includes young refugees, young women, minorities and other vulnerable groups of young people. There must be a special focus on the NEETs - the young persons who are not in education, nor in employment or training.

12. Youth participation in governance and policymaking must be encouraged

The future generation of leaders will emerge from among the young generation of today. Therefore, it is paramount to prepare them for their future roles as leaders in all sectors of society and government, besides providing them with education and job opportunities.