

## Odyssey of the Alternatives Ibn Battuta

From 7-18 November 2016, the 22nd *Conference of the Parties (COP) to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change* will be held in Marrakech, Morocco.

A year after the *Paris Agreement on Climate Change*, the official agenda of the COP22 will include funding and adaptation strategies. These two topics are crucial to countries in the Mediterranean basin, which are already experiencing the consequences of global warming. Within this context, a group of civil society organizations used the momentum for strengthening a Euro-African movement for climate justice. An “**Odyssey of the Alternatives**” has been sailing across the Mediterranean since 19 October. It stopped in three countries already (Spain, France, and Italy) to participate in local forums and festivals for shining light on three crucial issues in the region – climate change, migration, and social justice – and for supporting existing solutions and alternatives from the two shores of the Mediterranean. The initiative aims at building capacities, information sharing, and supporting experiences of transition led by local communities within their ecosystems. After docking in Barcelona, Seyne-sur-Mer, and Porto Torres, the two ships of the Odyssey arrived on 27 October in Bizerte (Tunisia), to participate in the Gabes Forum for Environment and Climate alternatives.

Tunisia and all of the Mediterranean countries are already affected by climate change. Problems of drought and rising salinity in sweet water add to already challenging conditions regarding the access to water and harm biodiversity. Massive socio-economic and particularly humanitarian consequences await the region, especially its most vulnerable inhabitants. This crescendo will certainly worsen the existing conflicts, many more of which will find their only solution in the irregular migration to Europe, even if their fate can be death at sea.

The “Odyssey of the Alternatives” is an opportunity to carry alternatives and dynamic initiatives emerging from thousands of people and dozens of organizations believing that change is not just an option, but an obligation. The southern Tunisian coastal city of Gabes, the meeting’s venue, is symbolic for the urge to change, as it suffers from very high pollution due to the “development” model completely dependent on extractivism and the depletion of natural resources, where the local population is collectively mobilized to change the situation.

From 27 October to 1 November, many social movements, groups, associations and people have met along with the Gabes section of the UGTT (Tunisian General Labour Union) and LTDH (Tunisian Human Rights League), STOP POLLUTION and the

"Tunisian support group of the Odyssey of the Alternatives" to welcome the ships that reached the port of Bizerte on 27 October, and then headed to Gabes for the forum.

The first two days of the Gabes Forum for Environment and Climate alternatives focused on the Tunisian situation and set the context to strengthen networks and relations between the participating associations and organizations from different Tunisian regions, working to achieve social and environmental justice. The third and fourth day, with international participation, were dedicated to the exchange of experiences in the struggle against climate change and debates about how challenges can be faced jointly.

After embarking the Tunisian participants on 1 November, the ships sailed on to the following destinations: Algiers, Oran and Tangiers. On 11 November they will reach their final destination, Marrakesh, to participate in the civil society forum, the alternative meeting to the official COP22.

