



PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY OF THE MEDITERRANEAN
ASSEMBLEE PARLEMENTAIRE DE LA MEDITERRANEE
الجمعية البرلمانية للبحر الأبيض المتوسط

Statement by
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PAM President

On the occasion of the Plenary Session
of the Fourth SEECF Parliamentary Assembly

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Zagreb

Hon. President,
Excellencies,
Dear Colleagues,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to thank the President of the *Parliamentary Assembly of the South East European Cooperation Process* for the kind invitation extended to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean (PAM) to participate at this important event. It is a pleasure and an honour to address you all today and, as PAM, we praise this close bilateral relationship. I would like also to thank the kind hospitality of the Croatian Parliament.

As many of you already know, PAM has 30 member and associate States, and offers them a dedicated forum of discussion and information sharing, which provides national parliaments with concrete tools to address the many political, economic and environmental challenges affecting our region. I refer to the crises in the MENA - Middle East and North Africa, to the terrorism of ISIS, to the mounting of populist movements, to the many obstacles to free trade and foreign investments, to the mass migrations and to the climate change.

We are very close to the UN system: we are a privileged partner, which granted us the status of Permanent Observer at the General Assembly. In recent years, we have also deepened our cooperation with the European institutions, especially in the security and economic sectors.

In the present regional context, PAM main purpose is to promote international parliamentary dialogue to achieve stable and sustainable political, social, economic and cultural conditions. In this regard, cooperation is crucial.

Our two organizations share many member countries. Last February - at our 11th Plenary session held in Porto, Portugal - Romania became PAM full member. Currently, out of your 14 members, 11 are also PAM members, therefore it is easy to understand that we face the same issues, and that we have the obligation to cooperate and join efforts with sub-regional initiatives such as the SEECP.

On the Western side of the Mediterranean, as an example, there is another sub-regional initiative, the West Mediterranean 5+5 Forum, of which PAM assists the parliamentary dimension to ensure the coherence and complementarity of action.

Where many see possible duplications and waste of resources we see, on the contrary, a full range of opportunities to ensure a holistic approach in order to find the most adequate answers to the common challenges. **This is our experience: united we get better results.** We adopted this same approach with other inter-parliamentary assemblies. It is the case, for instance, of the PABSEC (with whom you share many member-states), the IPA-CIS, the Arab Parliament or the Pan-African Parliament.

Our problems are common, due to their inter-regional features, and they need to be tackled at an international level. **There is no solution for them at the national or close neighbouring level.**

I am referring to the return and activities on our territories of some 5000 Terrorist Foreign Fighters, to the possible imminent **migration of 90 million people** from Sub-Saharan Africa to Europe, and to the

threat to our Food Security due to Global Warming. But the list continues: unemployment, job creation, corruption, etc.

The challenges that we are facing are strictly interconnected to each other. Therefore, our action must address, at the same time, all these problems if we really want to positively impact on the stability and on the well-being of populations that we represent.

Migration, for instance, is a highly destabilizing factor for European Mediterranean countries. Many migrants who reach the Mediterranean shores are not Syrian refugees, but instead “famine refugees”, I mean economic migrants escaping from poverty, hunger and environmental disasters in sub-Saharan Africa.

For instance, in the last 30 years, Lake Chad has lost the most part of its surface. This puts in real risk local populations, which have no alternative to emigration, and they mostly move to the Mediterranean. This is happening within an explosive demographic trend that anticipates Africa to double its actual population to reach two billion by the end of our century, and with Nigeria alone to approach one billion people in the next 40 years.

Make no mistake: this is a time bomb, and not only for Europe.

I have just mentioned the importance of cooperation also among inter-parliamentary assemblies on this very issue; we are working in cooperation with the Pan-African Parliament to have also the direct input of the African parliaments concerned.

Terrorism and organized crime are for PAM main concerns. We are very active on this, and we are

proud of collaborating with the *United Nations Security Council Counter Terrorism Committee*, which is our partner in the organization of several meetings on these issues. The last one, held in Rome on 30-31 March 2017, was entitled “*Evaluation of the role of national parliaments in promoting States’ implementation of the United Nations Security Council’s resolutions on Terrorism and Foreign Terrorist Fighters*” and aimed at providing our parliamentarians with effective tools to face and to prevent terroristic and criminal phenomena. The next meeting will take place in St. Petersburg – Russia, in October as, at the request of the UNSC, we have also associated the national parliaments of Central Asia to our cooperation programme.

Our cooperation with the United Nations is not limited to this. PAM actively follows the Climate Change negotiations within the works of the *United Nations*

Framework Convention on Climate Change. On this, PAM is organizing a regional meeting, the Parliamentary MEDCOP, on the role of parliamentarians in fighting climate change, to be held in Ouarzazate, Morocco, in next October.

PAM is very keen also in supporting economic growth and job creation in the region, particularly the MENA area. This is necessary to counter violent extremism and radicalization. To achieve this, the Assembly decided to strengthen further its ties with the major international financial institutions in order to benefit from their expertise and to get first-hand information on the requirements of the region to get easier access foreign investments for both national critical infrastructures and the SMEs, which are the engine of Mediterranean economy.

As part of a cycle of dedicated events, PAM will organize in Casablanca, Morocco, next autumn, a high-level international parliamentary conference in collaboration with the World Trade Organization. Facilitating trade and supporting investments means stimulate employment and economic growth in general.

As you can see, there is no time for complacency. We must join our efforts to deal with such scenarios, we need to anticipate trends, to mitigate effects and promote initiatives at the global scale. We invest a lot on education and scientific research, and to achieve this have established an Academic Platform, which, for instance, has one of its strongholds at the University of Ljubljana.

I would like to express, once again, my sincerest gratitude to you for having invited PAM.

Thank you.

Hvala vam