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PLENARY SESSION CONSOLIDATES PAM'S UNIQUE LEGISLATIVE HARMONISATION ROLE IN THE EUROMEDITERRANEAN REGION

The 13th Plenary Session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean took place in Belgrade on 21-22 February 2019, hosted by the National Assembly of Serbia.

Some 200 participants, from 26 national parliaments, as well as delegates, experts and guests from regional parliaments, the UN system, WTO, the Council of Europe and other International Organisations, senior members of the Serbian Government, Diplomatic Corps, and representatives of the civil society contributed to the debates that enriched the high-level event. In Belgrade, delegates elected a new PAM Bureau, and Senator Alia Bouran of Jordan has been unanimously chosen to lead the works of the Assembly.

Welcomed by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia and the Deputy Speaker, PAM delegates engaged in concrete debates and exchanged views and experiences on regional security, political developments, terrorism, economy, climate change, human rights, and migration. They unanimously adopted the six resolutions presented on these themes, and which provide the strategic framework for the activities of the Assembly in the coming months.

The Assembly praised the commitment of PAM delegates, the Secretariat and the special envoys who, operating throughout the region, thanks to a decentralised structure, provide the Assembly with a unique platform to coordinate with political partners, international organisations, the productive sector, academia and civil society. An expanded office in the *Grand-Genève*; a PAM Euro-Mediterranean Regional Research Center in Naples, hosted by the Campania Region; and a reinforced liaison in Marseille - all at no cost to PAM - will integrate the existing PAM structures. These allow for a rationale and effective use of the available resources: reinforced partnership with the UN and WTO in Geneva; better cooperation with the NATO Southern Hub and the PAM's own academic projects in Naples, including the forthcoming MEDCOP 2019; as well as for a regular cooperation in Marseille in view of the *Sommet des deux Rives* and those key academic institutions with which PAM enjoys a strategic partnership in the areas of agri-food sustainability and youth employment, in cooperation with the PACA and Piedmont Regions.

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In regards to the evolution of the terrorist threat, the challenges posed by returning / relocating Foreign Terrorist Fighters were identified as critical areas which need a coherent and harmonised legislative action at the regional level. Particular emphasis was placed on Prevention of Radicalization, and it was agreed to establish a special PAM Committee on Terrorism, chaired by Italy, which will also look at the delicate theme of “youth and prevention”, and this segment will be facilitated by France. Delegates reviewed political and military developments in Syria and Libya, and committed to sustain national reconciliation processes. They also pledged to fully support the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations in a spirit of constructive dialogue aiming at a comprehensive peace process, ultimately resulting in the Two-State solution.

On the economy, concern was expressed on the signs of a new recession, and a more active role by the EU was solicited, especially for what concerns SMEs, Startups and vocational training. The dynamic partnership between PAM and WTO was praised and it was agreed to establish a joint WTO/PAM Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Forum on Trade and Investment Facilitation, which will benefit from an annual conference to foster commerce and investments. The next joint conference will take place in Geneva hosted by WTO. Delegates also welcomed the new partnership with OECD. On environment, having the PAM rapporteur attended the COP 24 in Poland, the absolute need for countries to implement, at the legislative level, the provisions agreed on in Paris, was emphasised. The Assembly will also work at reinforcing its Panel on Economy.

Concerning Human Rights, delegates reiterated their commitments to foster and guarantee human dignity and rights in the region. Delegates adopted the UN Principles on Parliaments and Human Rights and endorsed a work-plan, which includes a series of annual seminars in Geneva and Strasbourg for PAM MPs to be fully familiar with the regional context and the Universal Periodic Review processes. On the issue of migration, the debate highlighted the global scope of the phenomenon, and recalled the absolute need for humanity, rule of law, burden sharing, and a pragmatic and coordinated approach rooted in shared responsibility, also in light of the different sensibilities expressed by PAM countries in relation to the Global Compact on Migration.

The laureates of the annual PAM Prize included four individuals from Israel, Lebanon and Syria, and a community from Italy, who with their example operate in favour of peace, stability and humanity, and deserve the admiration and gratitude of the entire Assembly.//

