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23-02-2017

## PAM 11TH PLENARY SESSION - PAM's role in regional affairs increasing year after year



The 11th Plenary Session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean (PAM) was inaugurated today in Porto, Portugal. The opening ceremony was introduced with a welcome note by Mr.H.E. Eduardo Ferro Rodrigues, President of the Assembly of the Republic of Portugal, who is hosting the PAM event.

Mr. Ferro Rodrigues appealed to Europe to dedicate more attention to the Southern shores of the Mediterranean and called for a common policy towards Syria, Libya and other issues in the region. Regarding the rights of immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers, Europe should express further solidarity which should translate in bridges and not walls. In this scenario PAM will continue to promote a culture of dialogue, to inspire governments,

together with regional and international organizations, to work harder so that the Mediterranean will not turn into a cradle of terrorism and barbarism but remains the cradle of civilization.

PAM President, Sen. Lhou Lmarbough in welcoming the PAM delegates and the regional and international organisations recalled that in the last year the Assembly has been able to successfully face the most important challenges in our geopolitical reality, such as terrorism and trafficking of human beings, which made our region insecure and transformed our sea into a cemetery.

"The Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean must continue to face a very difficult situation in the region. Indeed, the worsening of the crisis in Libya, the impasse in the peace process between Israel and Palestine, the continuation of the civil war in Syria and the consequent crisis of the refugees, as well as the essential efforts for the possible reunification of Cyprus, are problems and challenges that require the commitment and attention of our Assembly", Sen. Lmarbough added.

PAM must continue to contribute to the regional parliamentary debate, and conduct parliamentary diplomacy through two modes of operation. On the one hand, it must ensure that its members are the voice and ambassadors of the Assembly's values in international and regional contexts, On the other hand, PAM must continue to reflect on the challenges of the region during the PAM meetings, while taking into account the practical concerns of the region's peoples.

The Head of the Portuguese Delegation to PAM, Hon. Renato Sampaio, underlined the main issues, namely migration, cooperation, and terrorism, which PAM must address on a regular basis. Hon. Sampaio also referred to the socio-economic crises, which requires active and decisive parliamentary cooperation. PAM also has an important role in promoting security for the 22 member countries with a total population of 550 million.

In a message to the PAM delegates the Holy See extended Pope Francis' wishes for the Plenary Session and renewed its commitment to support PAM's goals for security and stability bases on the full respect of the basic principles of human rights. The Holy See welcomes the emphasis of PAM on intercultural dialogue recalling that Pope Francis insists that the ultimate scope of religions is to promote peace. The Holy See referred to PAM's key role in fighting the threat of terrorism, whether its root causes are social, political or economic. Finally the message underscored the importance that the Catholic Church dedicates to education and religion to bring about authentic social harmony in a modern multicultural society.



A message by H.E. Antonio Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations, was read by the Head of the delegation of Egypt to PAM. H.E. Guterres expressed the importance attached to the work of PAM in the rapidly changing world. The Un Secretary General confirmed there will be future strengthened cooperation between the UN and PAM in wider context to support sustainable development in respect of human rights and the achievements of the Sustainable development Goals, so that all people may benefit from a healthy planet.

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