

## VII PAM Plenary Session in Malta opens a new chapter with the Strategy and Action Plan for 2013-2017

The VII Plenary Session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean came to an end today with the election of the President for the biennium 2013-2014. Senator Francesco Amoruso (Italy), was unanimously elected as PAM President to take over from Senator Dr. Fayez Al-Tarawneh, who was also the Prime Minister of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. According to the PAM Statute the Presidency is alternately held by the Southern and Northern countries. Candidates are proposed to the Assembly following the meeting of the Geo-political groups held every two years prior to the Plenary Session.

In his address to the Assembly, Sen. Amoruso, who was PAM Vice- President and President of the 2nd Standing Committee of the outgoing Bureau, committed himself to build on the sterling work done so far by the Assembly, adding that energies will continue to be dedicated to the priority issues of the changed Mediterranean scenario.

President Amoruso thanked his predecessors for the way they have worked to place PAM in the forefront of the regional parliamentary diplomacy activities, including its parliamentary dimension role in the 5+5 Dialogue, and in supporting all the initiatives of the United Nations System aimed at resolving sub-regional issues and assist populations in the region.

Before his election, Sen. Amoruso presided the Second Committee on Economic, Social and Environmental Cooperation, in the framework of the presentation of the Reports and Resolutions, which were later adopted by the Assembly. "The Mediterranean Environment in jeopardy: a call for urgent action" Report and Resolution was presented by Hon. Evi Christofilopoulou on behalf of Hon. Nikolaos Nikolopoulos of Greece. On his part, Senator Lhou Lmarbough (Morocco) gave a general overview on the Activities of the PAM Panel on External Trade and Investments in the Mediterranean, whose activities and achievements, were at the heart of Sen. Lmarbough's Report and Resolution.

The session was also addressed by Hon. Antonio Martino (Italy) who underlined the fact that the crisis in the countries on the Northern shore of the Mediterranean has its root causes in the 2007 financial crisis and in mistakes done at the time of the introduction of the Euro. When referring to the other side of the Mediterranean, Hon. Martino recalled that the destiny of democracy is in demography, and the Southern countries will be particularly interested by this phenomenon in the near future.

Another keynote speaker was Mr Riccardo Puliti, Managing Director of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD). He said that across the Mediterranean there is a special need to modernise and energise the region's economies by improving the investment climate and business environment. This, he added, is even more relevant as social and demographic dynamics will put more pressure on Governments in the near future, and therefore regional co-operation will be fundamental for this endeavour.

Senior Economist for the World Bank, Ms Manjula Luthria, underlined the fact that progress required trust building and cooperation and alignment was needed at all levels. She also referred to the Center for Mediterranean Integration in connection with the preparation of the regional and global labour markets, also in connection with mobility.

The session was closed by Mr. Mohamadou Mansour N'Diaye, from the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) Secretariat, who underlined that the Mediterranean region is the most affected by the desertification process.

The works followed with the Third Standing Committee on Dialogue among Civilisations and Human Rights, presided by Hon. Tayseer Quba'a (Palestine) on behalf of PAM Vice President and President of PAM's 3rd Standing Committee, Hon. Tevfik Ziyaeddin Akbulut (Turkey).

The Reports and Resolutions adopted by the Assembly, dealt with "Education", prepared by Hon. Maria de Conceicao Pereira (Portugal) and "Job Creation and Unemployment in the Mediterranean" prepared by Hon. Vural Kavuncu (Turkey) and presented on his behalf by Hon. Tonino Picula (Croatia).

The opening keynote speech was delivered by Hon. Justyne Caruana (Malta) who stressed the need for Parliamentarians to be the agents of change towards the goal of improving the individual's quality of life and conditions of society in general. Hon. Caruana focused on education, gender equality, immigration, youth employment and the role of cultural diplomacy, which are prominent topics of the 3rd Standing Committee.

Crimes against humanity were at the centre of the intervention of Dr Mukash Kapila, Special Representative of the Aegis Trust, who developed the idea of the establishment of a World Parliamentary Group against these crimes.

The inter-religious dialogue in the Mediterranean region from a historical and current perspective, was the theme of the interventions of Monsigneur Joseph Farrugia on behalf of the Holy See, and H.E. Prof. Mahmud Erol Kilic, Secretary General of the Parliamentary Union of the OIC Member States (PUIC).

Following the election of the new members of the PAM Bureau and the update on PAM's calendar for 2013 and the financial report, by PAM Secretary General, Amb. Sergio Piazzi, the candidates for the PAM Prize 2012 were presented with the commemorative plaques by PAM President, Sen. Amoruso and the Speaker of the Parliament of Malta, Dr. Michael Frendo.

Hon. Frendo also concluded the VII PAM Plenary Session by expressing his appreciation for the work done over the two day Assembly and reiterated his invitation to hold the Plenary Session in Malta every 4 years.