



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

**1<sup>st</sup> MEETING OF THE SECRETARIES GENERAL  
OF THE PAM MEMBER ASSEMBLIES  
CONRAD HOTEL**

**ISTANBUL, TURKEY  
25 OCTOBER 2009**

**Sunday, 25 October 2009 (Morning)**

H.E. Ali Osman Koca, Secretary General of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey (GNAT), welcomed the distinguished participants on behalf of the Turkish Parliament, and recalled that PAM Member States were linked to one another by historical, cultural, economic and social bonds which meant that they not only shared a common heritage, but also a common destiny. He informed the participants that Turkey was currently one of the most active parliamentary organizations, participating in no less than eight international parliamentary assemblies, and not only hosting events, but also taking part in training programmes and staff exchanges, thus allowing it to consolidate its own tradition of parliamentary diplomacy. EU accession talks were mobilising a good number of GNAT staff as well.

The PAM Secretary General, Dr. Sergio Piazzì, thanked the hosts for their exceptional hospitality, and informed the participants of how important it was for the Secretaries General of the PAM member Parliaments to meet on a regular basis, as they were the driving force behind the work of their parliamentarians. They, therefore, represent the continuity of the work of the delegates, forming an important bridge between parliaments and the people of the Mediterranean. The objective of the Secretaries General meeting, as expressed by the Bureau, was to exchange experiences, information and learn about each others' best practices, as well as benefit from the vision and knowledge of the participants in developing the strategies and working procedures of PAM.

PAM President, Hon. Rudy Salles, participating as an observer to the meeting, also briefly welcomed those in attendance, thanking in particular H.E. Koca for his participation and intervention, with its expert assistance and competence. Hon. Salles felt that PAM had an important mission to fulfil in representing the vision of the Mediterranean, and the fact that some fifteen parliaments were present for that first meeting in Istanbul and would play an important role in laying down the foundation stones for future dialogue. He underlined the invaluable role played by national parliaments when hosting PAM meetings. In 2009 alone, PAM meetings had been hosted in Istanbul, Limassol, Cairo, Rome and Lisbon. It was key for PAM to be visible locally in order for a "Mediterranean community spirit" to thrive.

Hon. Mrs. Aşkın Asan, Head of Turkish delegation to PAM thanked all the participants for attending and reminded them that Istanbul had been the homeland of many past civilisations. She described PAM as an important instrument for safeguarding and building democracy in the Mediterranean region. In this context, she observed that PAM had instituted a “Mediterranean Day” on 21 March, which sent out an important message to our respective peoples that this basin was the cradle of our civilisations.

The PAM Secretary General then gave an overview of the milestones surpassed by PAM since its establishment in 2006, and stated that he was proud to announce that the organization is now regarded as an important partner by the international community in dealing with the critical issues related to the security, stability and prosperity of the region. Several international and regional organisations, as well as national administrations are interested in PAM’s work, including the United Nations, the European Union and the Council of Europe, in addition to the US Administration. Moreover, the UN had sought PAM’s assistance on issues pertaining to the Balkans and the Middle East. Dr. Piazzi also referred to the fact that Mr. Jacques Barrot, Vice President of the European Commission, had recently asked for PAM’s support in improving its relations with Libya in its endeavour to resolve the problem of immigrants departing for the northern Mediterranean shores by boat.

PAM is also instrumental in developing parliamentary diplomacy beyond the geographical limits of the region itself. More specifically, a Memorandum of Understanding had been signed two weeks ago between PAM and the League of Arab States at PAM Headquarters in Malta. PAM has also exchanged Observer Status with the Parliamentary Union of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (PUIC) and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (PABSEC).

Dr. Piazzi commented on the recent mission by a PAM delegation to the United States. In New York, the delegation had met with, among others, the UN Secretary General, H.E. Ban Ki-moon. Additionally, he confirmed that PAM is currently in the process of becoming a permanent Observer at the General Assembly. PAM has also been accepted as an Intergovernmental Organization at the Copenhagen Summit on Climate Change in December 2009, and the UN has asked for PAM help in organizing various international meetings, including:

- A roundtable of parliamentarians on Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation, to be held in Malta in November 2009;
- A parliamentary meeting on the Peace Process in the Middle East, in February 2010 in Malta.

During the same visit to the US, the PAM delegation had also met, in Washington, DC, high-ranking officials from the US Administration and Congress, all of which had positively welcomed PAM’s efforts towards peace in the Middle East.

The PAM Secretary General stated that the organisation had “set the ball rolling”, but we need to work on follow up in order to ensure that our actions are transformed into concrete acts and initiatives at the national level. In this respect, PAM had instituted focal points within the national parliaments of the Member States, which are best placed to link with organisations and committees at the national level. PAM members themselves are also active in promoting its concerns at the national, regional and even local level. Dr. Piazzi described PAM’s work as the first loop in the chain of democracy-building, and thought it important to ask the question of whether, when PAM delegates return to their respective parliaments, the reports adopted by PAM are useful to the

parliamentary committees, and whether they contribute to national democratic processes, the academic world or are taken into consideration by NGOs.

With this in mind, Dr. Piazzini proceeded to make a proposal: each national parliament could undertake to dedicate one parliamentary session per year to Mediterranean issues. This would allow for each of the members to provide an overview of their work and share information amongst each other. Additionally, PAM delegates could also inform other parliamentarians of PAM's work within various specialised committees. There was a need to develop a stronger communication network between the Secretaries General and their respective PAM focal points. Alternatively, the national delegations could inform PAM of their actions in the form of a follow-up report once a year, to which Algeria and Albania replied that they are already doing this. Dr. Piazzini also suggested the possibility of organising internships at the PAM headquarters, and commented favourably on the fact that Hon. Francesco Amoroso (Italy) had proposed a bill for the establishment of "Mediterranean Day", 21 March, as an official celebration on the Italian calendar before the national parliament.

The Secretary General invited Mr. Sawicki, Director General of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), to share his experience on the coordination aspects of a regional assembly such as PACE.

M. Sawicki thanked the Secretary General for his invitation, and reminded the participants that the Council of Europe was the oldest European institution, and having been founded in 1949, is celebrating its sixtieth anniversary this year. Currently representing forty-seven States, its main aim is to safeguard human rights, democracy and the rule of law. As a parliamentary assembly, its composition reflects the political balance of the elected members of national parliaments, as well as gender balance.

Mr. Sawicki confided that PACE has essentially the same problems as PAM, in that it discusses issues at the heart of democracy, but lacks information on the follow-up actions taken at the national level. He therefore questioned whether or not there were too many international fora, or whether the problem was simply one of coordination, or again, whether there was too much duplication of debates. A further problem, which has been exacerbated by the economic crisis, is that all too often the Council of Europe is confronted with a situation in which decisions are taken by members from the wealthier parliaments in the absence of the members from the poorer countries. How can parliamentary assemblies purport to democratically implement their actions without the participation of all its Members?

Mr. Sawicki thought it important for cooperation and dialogue to be instilled between delegations especially when discussing small or technical issues, while for issues of wider concern, Speakers of national parliaments could meet on a regular basis. In the Council of Europe, this occurs every two years so that issues can be raised relating to the work and functioning of the organization.

The Secretary General then asked the participants how they thought they could best support their national delegations, communicate, and create synergies as well as how to improve PAM's visibility at the national level. Mr. Abdelhamid Badis Belkas, Secretary General of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), and Secretary General of the Algerian National People's Assembly (APN), informed the participants that PAM would be welcome as Associate Member of IPU.

After a brief photo session and coffee break, the participants introduced themselves before opening the debate.

## Debate

M. Mohamed Basyoni, Chairman of the Arab, Foreign relations and National Security Committee of the Shoura Council (Egypt) stated that the Egyptian parliament is willing to offer any kind of assistance needed, and proposed the establishment of a monitoring mechanism with a budget to ensure that there was follow up to PAM's actions. He also believed that PAM has an important responsibility in the peace process in the Middle East.

M. Farag Hafez El Dory, Secretary General of the Shura Council (Egypt) also agreed with establishing a monitoring mechanism, and with regard to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, he argued that peace negotiations should resume expeditiously and tackled all key issues. He also asked for 450 political prisoners to be freed by the Israeli authorities.

Mr. Abdelraouf Alami, Palestinian National Council General Director, reported that, regrettably, the Israeli security forces had attempted to enter the El Askas Mosque in Jerusalem, and asked for the support of the other members for the Palestinian cause.

H.E. Abdelhamid-Badis Belkas, Secretary General of the Assemblée Populaire nationale (Algeria) agreed that a key aim was to bring peace and stability to the region, as Secretaries General of national parliaments it was equally important to support the transformation of words into actions. PAM is an important organisation in a rapidly changing global scenario. He thought, however, that PAM needed to become more visible. To this end, he proposed the following: 1/ establish an information network whose prime responsibility would rest with PAM focal points; 2/ establish internet links between the PAM websites and national parliaments; 3/ organise open days within national parliaments about PAM and its work; 4/ involve more national press media contacts in each country in order to give Pam more visibility; 5/ technical cooperation between the national assemblies ("jumelage") so as to exchange best practices; 6/ organise a yearly meeting of Secretaries general.

H.E. Said Mokadem, Secretary General of the Maghreb Consultative Council, who was invited as an Observer to the meeting, stated that his organisation represented more than 100 million people, geographically covering 40% of the Arab region and 18% of Africa. Its aim is to strive for peace through establishing partnerships in all directions. He referred to the many problems facing the Maghreb region: security, development, the environment, and south-north migratory flows in transit to the Northern Mediterranean. He also stated that there was a need to further collaboration and cooperation on cultural economic, social, and agricultural questions. He concluded by suggesting that the Secretaries General could meet on an annual basis.

H.E. Mrs. Adelina Sa Carvalho, Secretary General of the Portuguese Parliament reminded that Secretaries General were not politicians, but rather high civil servants of the national parliaments, and as such, had to create the conditions to enable politicians to carry out their policies in the national interests. H.E. Mrs. Carvalho suggested to the participants that in order to heighten PAM's visibility, the Secretaries General could share among themselves the names of the other regional assemblies they were collaborating with. Portugal, for instance, is a member of the Community of Portuguese speaking countries (CPLP) and the Ibero-Latin American Parliamentary platform. She emphasised, however, that the main problem was uniting delegations, since, at times, parliamentarians stand by their own ideals and agendas. She therefore considered the main function of the Secretaries General to be that of "liaising". Although it might be difficult to achieve, she thought that it would be useful to set up a youth parliament for the Mediterranean, which could meet, for example, every three years.

Mr. Hafnaoui Amrani, Secretary General of the Conseil de la Nation (Algeria) commented that in many ways the work of the Secretaries General resembled that of a travel agency; organising travel, preparing documents, obtaining visas and securing accommodation for their respective parliamentarians. He therefore suggested bringing together the meetings of the three Standing Committees with those of the Plenary. In other words, to organize the Standing Committee meetings one or two days before the Plenary Session. This would avoid additional travel costs, ensure greater participation, and make the follow up work of both the Secretaries General and the PAM Secretariat easier. He also suggested thinking about a structural framework to consider how best to develop PAM activities, perhaps by creating a Committee to that effect.

The PAM Secretary General fully agreed with the idea of bringing the work of the Committees closer to the Plenary. Given, however, PAM's very limited financial and human resources, this could only be logistically possible with the collaboration of additional staff provided by national parliamentary delegations to assist with, for example, the finalisation and translation of documents. Furthermore, as expensed related to PAM meetings are covered by the host parliament, this proposal means that the host parliament would be required to shoulder the costs related to a full working week rather than a few days.

Mr. Amrani thought that designating assistants to help share the workload would be feasible.

Mr. Josip Sesar, Secretary General of the Croatian Parliament thought that PAM could follow the example of the IPU whereby each Member prepares a report on how it has followed up on the decisions adopted. He commented on the fact that these issues are included on the specific committees' agendas in their respective national parliaments, and that in Croatia this system creates a snowball effect. As regards the reflections by Mr. Sawicki - that there may be too many parliamentary fora - Mr. Sesar argued that there had been a general shift away from parliamentary democracy towards executive decision-making, which urgently needs attention. He touched upon the usefulness of having a quality questionnaire sent to the focal points to assess PAM's work.

The PAM Secretary General referred to the fact that PAM had already circulated quality questionnaire last year but that only four Member States had provided follow-up reports on the actions taken at the national level to implement PAM's decisions. Given the good attendance at this meeting, he was confident that the Secretariat would now receive more replies.

Mr. Dionysis Kombos, Senior International Relations Officer (Cyprus) agreed with the Portuguese suggestion of making PAM more known to youths through the establishment of a specific youth assembly, but considered it nonetheless more pressing to make PAM more visible to all of society. He proposed that after the Plenary finished, each Member State delegation could organize a press conference in each of their respective States with the presence of mass media. That way, national parliamentarians would also gain knowledge about PAM activities.

Hon. Mrs. Aşkın Asan informed the participants that this was already the case in Turkey.

Mr. Sawicki (PACE) mentioned that he believed that the key remaining issue was the question of the interest and participation of members. If members feel empowered, they will become interested. National delegations, however, are often represented by non-key players in their national delegations, therefore diluting the message. He suggested that more importance could be attached to an alternative exchange system, such as a form of tele-exchange.

Mr. Stanko Blagojevich, Secretary of the national delegation (Serbia) commented that while it was not possible to decide who becomes a member of a given delegation/committee, what is common to all Member States is the relationship between the permanent delegations and the Committees on Foreign Affairs in the respective parliaments. Serbia had recently revised its internal rules of procedures to take into consideration the special tasks/responsibilities of parliamentarians who become members of regional parliamentary organisations.

The PAM Secretary General thanked all delegations for their valuable input and invited M. Delcamp, Secretary General of the Senate (France) to put forward suggestions for future collaboration. Mr. Delcamp welcomed the various proposals made by the various participants. He stated that the Secretaries General should be practical and collaborate in an independent fashion from the MPs. They should also avoid reproducing PAM's debates. He mentioned that the Mediterranean as a political concept was to be defined and sought how the SGs could assist in that endeavour, following on the footsteps of the IPU and the EU whose SGs meet regularly in the framework of an "association":

1. Ahead of PAM's meetings, national parliaments could inform PAM of the work conducted nationally on the same topic. Such an alert mechanism would avoid duplication and enhance the quality of PAM's reports. We would need efficient focal points;
2. In order to increase PAM's visibility at national level, a monthly newsletter updating on PAM's activities could be sent out to the national parliaments for distribution;
3. The creation of a youth parliament is a very noble idea, but one which is very difficult to transform into reality. It may be more beneficial to distribute PAM brochures among Mediterranean universities and set up networks between university faculties. Additionally, an exhibition could be organised, together with a catalogue, which could travel throughout the Mediterranean states (The French Senate had recently hosted a similar photo exhibition on the theme of Europe, it had been very successful with the public) ;
4. As an association of PAM's Secretaries General, does the structure need to be formalised or are our commitments sufficient to bind us together? It is important to discuss how to interact with the public and find out what the needs of each parliament are. It was important for all parliaments to know how they each worked. He reminded the participants that their aim was to guarantee that the work of the parliaments is taken appropriately into account in the democratic process. It was important for regional parliaments to "enter" national parliaments and to make them better knows to the wider public.

H.E. Delcamp concluded by offering to host the next meeting of PAM Secretaries General to Paris.

Hon Mrs. Aşkın Asan (Turkey) informed the participants that PAM's visibility had been increased within the Turkish Parliament through the creation of a link to PAM on the GNAT's official webpage. The Turkish delegation also sends all information on a continuous basis to the Speakers of other parliaments. Moreover, it sends out press releases both before and after PAM meetings, and the Parliament TV channel also covered the PAM's Plenary while in Istanbul.

The PAM Secretary General thanked all the distinguished participants for their contributions, and noted that there was total convergence on the current problems faced by the Secretaries General and the actions which needed to be taken in order to improve communications and visibility. He strongly supported the idea of setting up exchange visits with national parliaments. An appropriate communications strategy was also fundamental to enhancing PAM visibility, and although PAM issues regular press releases (over 100 in the least two years) and newsletters, this can only be proportionate to its means. On a positive note, he referred to the fact that the PAM President, Hon. Rudy Salles, had signed a protocol agreement with the French "*Revue Parlementaire*", which

would publish, free of charge, the “Mediterranean Parliamentary Review/ *revue parlementaire de la Méditerranée*”. Exchange of information is always a two-way process, and the Secretary General commended Algeria for its updates on what is happening in its own country. As regards outreach activities targeting youth, Dr. Piazzì observed that the Council of Europe organises a North-South Youth Programme from its office in Lisbon, and suggested that PAM should institute a *Université d’été*, as had been stipulated in the Fez Programme. Moreover, a prize could be delivered for the best student thesis on Mediterranean issues. Finally, in order to make PAM function more efficiently, he foresaw applying a new-style programme in the future - should funds and staff be available - in which the Standing Committees could be organised in conjunction with the Plenary.

Dr. Piazzì concluded by stating that the 1<sup>st</sup> Meeting of the Secretaries General of the Member Assemblies of PAM had far exceeded expectations, while also sending out a strong message on how to improve our communications framework.

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