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# Press Release

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## **PRESS RELEASE BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

### *18<sup>th</sup> Autumn Meeting of the OSCE PA*

A delegation of the Maltese Parliament, led by the Head of Delegation Rosianne Cutajar and comprising Frederick Azzopardi and Etienne Grech was one of around 50 delegations to participate in the 18<sup>th</sup> Autumn meeting of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE PA), held in Marrakech, Morocco, between 4 and 6 October 2019. The Autumn Meeting included a Mediterranean Forum, three plenary sessions, and a meeting of the Standing Committee.

The meeting started with the Mediterranean Forum, which discussed the North-South Cooperation Models and Economic Connectivity of the Mediterranean Region in a Globalised World. The forum was addressed by Mr Pascal Allizard, OSCE PA Vice-President and Special Representative on Mediterranean Affairs, Mr George Tsereteli, President of the OSCE PA, Mr Mavroudis Voridis, Greek Minister of Rural Development and Food, Ambassador Igli Hasani, Chairman of the OSCE Contact Group with the Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation, Permanent Representative of Albania to the OSCE and the partner countries of the OSCE. The speakers held the common view that there is no security in Europe if there is no security in the Mediterranean and vice-versa. Both the speakers and the delegates who intervened in the debate which ensued emphasized the need for cooperation between their countries, for the common good of the Mediterranean region and the neighbouring countries.

Mr George Tsereteli, President of the OSCE PA, Mr. Hakim Benchamach, President of the House of Councillors of the Kingdom of Morocco, and the State Secretary of Morocco addressed the opening session and welcomed the delegations while encouraging dialogue and cooperation at a time when many countries are facing common challenges.

The first plenary session focused on the OSCE and the African Regional Cooperation for Innovation and the Exchange of Good Practices. It was addressed by Mr Alassane Bala Sakande, President of the African Parliamentary Union, Mr Moustapha Cisse Lo, Speaker of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Parliament Presentation and Ms Mbarka Bouaida, President of the Guelmim-Oued Noun Region. Mr Alassane Bala Sakande spoke about today's reality, where the challenges that are being faced mean that sustainable responses to global threats need to be found and how only global concerted answers can allow us to face these challenges. Ms Bouaida said that 60% of the Mediterranean population is aged under 30 and this puts a greater responsibility on states to provide for their youth without further delay.

**Attachments: none**

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In his address during the debate, Frederick Azzopardi mentioned the importance of a sustained Euro-Mediterranean dimension in debates within the OSCE. He welcomed the Mediterranean countries' political will to promote energy interconnectivity and gave an overview of Malta's projects in this field as examples of the basis of regional cooperation.

The second plenary session, discussing the Euro-Mediterranean region and the challenges posed by climate change, together with economic development and environmental migration, was addressed by Mr Moustapha Cisse Lo, Speaker of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Parliament, Ms Teresa Botella, Deputy Chief of Mission of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Morocco and Mr Ralf Ernst, Deputy Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities, Head of Environmental Activities. The three speakers described the effects of climate change at a global level and with particular reference to the Mediterranean basin. They discussed environmental migration as a consequence of climate change and encouraged states to cooperate in the practical implementation of measures to counter the effects of climate change, whilst protecting the people who are forced to move away from their home due to these effects.

Etienne Grech addressed the delegates stressing the need for cooperation between countries in combating this global phenomenon. He encouraged more awareness and educational campaigns as well as government initiatives that would trigger people into action to protect the environment through simple measures that will have a long-term effect. He concluded his address with an emphasis on parliamentarians' responsibility to raise awareness and to hold their Governments accountable for the policies and legislation needed to counter the effects of climate change.

Frederick Azzopardi called on the parliamentarians present to adopt a can-do attitude and a belief that progress can be achieved through working together as equal partners, deepening dialogue and consultation and having greater cohesion of position in regional and international fora.

The last plenary session focused on combating intolerance and discrimination that is based on religion or belief. The session was addressed by Mr Mohamed Belkebir, Director of the Study and Research Centre on Values, Mohammedia League of Moroccan Ulama, and Ambassador Mehmet Paçacı, Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office on Combating Intolerance and Discrimination against Muslims. The speakers mentioned cases of hate crime due to religion or belief that are still taking place and are on the increase. They stressed the need for dialogue between different religions and cultures, and said that if there is an absence of dialogue which leads to destructive behaviour, the current generation will be responsible for what future generations will have to deal with.

Addressing this session, Rosianne Cutajar referred to the high-level meeting that took place in the United States prior to the OSCE PA meeting and to the UN Secretary-General's statement that entire communities are still being targeted because of their faith. She mentioned Malta's commitment towards protecting human rights, and stressed the importance of investing in children to help them become a tolerant and non-discriminating generation. She stressed that children are not born racist or discriminatory and nurturing their natural sense of equality and inclusion will lead to a more tolerant generation.

The Autumn Meeting included a meeting of the Standing Committee of the OSCE PA, in which heads of delegations discussed the OSCE PA's activities between July and October 2019 and its future plans.