



Press Release

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Maltese Parliamentary delegation participates in the 12th Plenary Session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean

On 15 and 16 February 2018, a delegation of the Maltese House of Representatives participated in the 12th Plenary Session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean (PAM) in Bucharest, Romania. The Maltese delegation, headed by Etienne Grech, was composed of Frederick Azzopardi, Glenn Bedingfield, Emmanuel Mallia, and David Stellini.

This year's PAM Annual Session continued to bring to the fore inter-parliamentary discussions on issues of common concern, including ways how to counter the evolving terrorist threat, political and security developments in the MENA region, trade and investment challenges, climate change effects and opportunities, human rights, migration, and the protection of cultural heritage.

Addressing the 1st Standing Committee on counter-terrorism strategies, Emmanuel Mallia expressed concern that the Mediterranean continues to face unprecedented political, military, and development challenges. Addressing the topic of Foreign Terrorist Fighters, more specifically children born under ISIS rule, Emmanuel Mallia underlined that they present huge psychological and social challenges to their country of origin or host country. He reiterated that it is imperative to assert that these children are first and foremost victims of power politics. Speaking on the role of parliamentarians in counter-terrorism actions, Emmanuel Mallia recognised that inter-parliamentary cooperation is instrumental to promote the establishment of democratic, transparent and fully functioning institutions aimed to ensure a just, peaceful and prosperous society.

Also addressing the 1st Standing Committee, Frederick Azzopardi spoke on the importance of being proactive and to pursue a shared policy aimed at preventing terrorist activity. He emphasised the importance of having a common front and ensuring that training, specialisation and technical equipment is available to counter terrorist threats and offences. To this end, exchange of information between states is a valuable asset to address the evolving terrorist threat. Frederick Azzopardi reiterated Malta's commitment to act as the voice of reason, striving for unity in the Mediterranean region.

Addressing the 2nd Standing Committee on climate change issues, Etienne Grech highlighted that the Mediterranean has long been identified as a climate change hot spot. A rise in temperatures and increases in freshwater scarcity, forest fires, frequency of droughts, and growing rates of desertification are all present ingredients in the Mediterranean. Etienne Grech noted that climate change and its impacts on the environment, social, and economic well-being of the Mediterranean people could critically undermine efforts for sustainable development and peace. The already scarce

Attachments: none

Page: 1 of 2

resources and huge differences in terms of economic, social, and political realities could become more pronounced and contribute to destabilize even more an already fragile and vulnerable region. He called on fellow members of Parliament to ensure their national governments transpose and implement regionally and internationally agreed agreements on climate change and the protection of the environment.

On day two, Glenn Bedingfield addressed the participants on the topic of migration. Glenn Bedingfield explained that migration in the central Mediterranean continues to be one of the leading humanitarian emergencies of all times. He recognised that the EU-Turkish agreement and enhanced EU-Libya cooperation marked two important developments in the region, and managed to reduce the number of crossings between Turkey and the Greek islands and between Libya and Italy. Cooperation with Turkey and Libya was also instrumental to lead to the arrest and prosecution of migrant smugglers and criminals involved in the migrant smuggling ring. Glenn Bedingfield emphasised the importance of addressing the root causes of migration, including violent conflicts, poverty and persecution. Concluding, he said that while lengthy debates take place, people continue to perish and highlighted that members of Parliament hold the key to push forward humane and human rights standards when addressing migration.

Addressing the same topic, David Stellini highlighted that migrants are a vulnerable group that has to face the unscrupulous conducts of migrant smuggling groups. David Stellini recognised that migration is a shared responsibility and that no single country is capable of solving the problem on its own. He called on members of Parliament to move from words to action and emphasised that every person, irrespective of their legal status, should be treated with dignity.

Addressing the 3rd Standing Committee, Frederick Azzopardi spoke on the protection of cultural heritage during armed conflict. Frederick Azzopardi explained that states and international organisations need to take decisive action to prevent the destruction of historical and cultural artefacts. Whilst recognising that the destruction of cultural objects does not compare to the suffering of the people in conflict and war zones, Frederick Azzopardi highlighted that members of Parliament should not underestimate the value of this shared cultural heritage and its preservation in the future.