

EMPA_PV(2021)2701

DRAFT MINUTES

of the meeting of 27 January 2021, 17.00-18.30

Brussels
(Remote meeting)

The meeting opened at 17.00 on Wednesday 27 January 2021, with President David Maria Sassoli presiding for the first part of the meeting and Vice-President Pedro Silva PEREIRA for the second part.

1. Adoption of the draft agenda

The draft agenda was adopted.

2. Chair's announcements

Together with Ms BATET and Mr EL MALKI, President SASSOLI welcomed Mr Costas MAVRIDES, MEP, Chair of the Political Affairs, Security and Human Rights Committee, Mr Bruno COIMBRA, Deputy of the Assembly of the Portuguese Republic, Chair of the Energy, Environment and Water Committee, Mr Samil AYRIM, Member of the Turkish Grand National Assembly, Chair of the Economic and Financial Affairs, Social Affairs and Education Committee, Mr Mostafa BRAHIMI, Member of the Moroccan House of Representatives, Chair of the Improving Quality of Life, Exchanges between Civil Society and Culture Committee, Mr Stelios KYMPOUROPOULOS, MEP, Chair of the Working Group on Financing of the Assembly and Revision of the Rules of Procedure.

President SASSOLI also informed the participants of the absence of the Chair of the Women's Rights in the Euro-Mediterranean Countries Committee.

3. Communication of the Bureau's decisions

President SASSOLI informed the participants of the decisions taken during the last two Bureau meetings on the renewal of the Bureau members and the distribution of Committee Chairs and Vice-Chairs, and the final adoption of a new Financial Regulation, approved in written procedure by all Parliamentary Assembly of the Union for the Mediterranean (PA-UfM) partners. He also informed the participants of the decision to proceed with a three-member Bureau and the adoption at Bureau level of a draft budget for the period 2020-2021. This draft will be submitted to the Working Group on Rules and Financing and to the PA-UfM partners for final adoption. Finally, the Bureau had decided to mandate the Working Group on Rules and Financing to reflect on a possible revision of the PA-UfM Rules of Procedure, in coordination with the Permanent Secretariat in Rome, following the adoption of a new Financial Regulation.

4. Exchange of views on the current situation in the Mediterranean, future prospects for multilateral cooperation and presentation of the priorities of the PA-UfM Presidency

President SASSOLI underlined the importance of regional cooperation in the common endeavour to fight instability, lack of social cohesion, migration crises and the impact of COVID-19 on a national and regional scale. He presented the priority topic of the PA-UfM Presidency: the fight against climate change in the Mediterranean. Recalling the critical and cross-cutting consequences of climate and environmental change in the region, the European Parliament's President welcomed the decision of the new US administration to rejoin the Paris Agreement. He called on all Chairs to develop a programme of activities and concrete actions on this topic, in the framework of their respective committees and with the support of the Rome Secretariat.

Mr EL MALKI identified four main challenges in the region: 1) climate change: the COP22 organised in Marrakesh in 2016 is an example of Morocco's commitment to climate change cooperation. The country is focusing on renewable energies in particular; 2) instability: Morocco is working to find a political and lasting solution to the Libyan crisis, in collaboration with the Special Envoy for Libya. Foreign interference has prolonged the conflict, but it is essential to find a solution and restore stability in the region; 3) migration crisis: it is time for Europe to show solidarity towards African countries. Mr EL MALKI also raised the issue of vaccination solidarity. The only solution to overcome a global crisis such as the current pandemic is through effective global cooperation, in particular for the distribution of vaccines; 4) terrorism: Morocco is cooperating with its neighbouring countries in the North and in the South to contribute to regional stability and security. They are asking their European counterparts to play a greater role in this field.

Ms BATET reiterated the importance of agreeing on a strong common response to the COVID-19 crisis, strengthening the Euro-Mediterranean partnership and the North-South dialogue. She expressed her commitment to the priority topic of climate change. She also stressed the role of public authorities in providing answers to their citizens. The recovery can only be achieved if public authorities are able to foster social cohesion and put in place certain minimum conditions: stability, security, an efficient justice system and education. It is important to discuss redistribution, inclusive growth and social consensus, as the only path to achieving shared prosperity.

President SASSOLI thanked his colleagues and handed the floor to Vice-President PEREIRA who chaired the rest of the meeting.

Mr PEREIRA invited the Committee Chairs to take the floor for further comments.

Mr MAVRIDES affirmed that all Mediterranean countries share two fundamental values: respect for international law and respect for countries' sovereignty. Referring to the Eastern Mediterranean, he drew attention to the link between energy cooperation and regional stability. He also expressed his intention to hold an exchange of views on regional challenges within his committee, including the Israeli-Palestinian issue, which should be discussed within the Working Group on Palestine set up within the 'CoPo'.

Mr COIMBRA stressed the need for cooperation and solidarity in the field of vaccine distribution. He also underlined the need to provide sufficient resources to the PA-UfM, such as a Permanent Secretariat and a budget.

Mr AYRIM described the Turkish response to COVID-19. The country had recently started its vaccination campaign, using the Chinese vaccine. On the issue of regional tensions, he stressed that his country was open to dialogue.

Mr KYMPOUROPOULOS expressed his commitment to relaunching the political dialogue within the Assembly. In his Working Group, he intended to review the current rules and reflect on future working methods in the event of a new crisis such as COVID-19. He mentioned the disputes in the Aegean Sea, which he ascribed to a lack of dialogue and concrete cooperation. He affirmed that the PA-UfM could be the right forum to discuss political solutions to regional tensions.

Mr PEREIRA informed the Committee Chairs of the proposal from Mr EL MALKI to set up a working group on post-COVID, which had been endorsed by the Bureau.

5. Exchange of views on the calendar of activities of the PA-UfM Committees

Mr PEREIRA invited the Chairs to convene a meeting of their respective committees in order to discuss a draft resolution, possibly linked to the climate change priority. He also invited the Chairs to draw up a draft calendar of activities and to communicate it to the Permanent Secretariat.

Mr COIMBRA expressed his intention to organise two meetings of his committee. He also expressed his hope of being able to hold at least one meeting with the physical presence of the participants in Portugal.

Mr MAVRIDES expressed his intention to organise a first meeting of the Political Committee before July 2021, and a meeting of the Working Group on Palestine before the next plenary. He reiterated the need for sufficient financial resources to carry out his activities.

Mr KYMPOUROPOULOS underlined his intention to review the current rules in order to ensure the smooth functioning of the Assembly.

Mr AYRIM recalled the importance of establishing the Permanent Secretariat in Rome as soon as possible. He expressed his intention to organise two meetings of his committee, focusing on the economic recovery from the pandemic, with the hope that they would be able to take place in Turkey.

Mr PEREIRA informed the Committee Chairs that the Bureau had just approved a draft budget and expressed his hope that the PA-UfM partners would give it their final approval.

6. Date and place of the next meeting

To be announced by the Permanent Secretariat.

The meeting closed at 18.30.