

DRAFT MINUTES

of the Committee on Energy, Environment and Water meeting

6 March 2023, 09:00-13:00

**Aveiro
University of Aveiro**

On 6 March 2023, the Portuguese Chairmanship of the Committee on Energy, Environment and Water of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Union for the Mediterranean (PA-UfM) held its fourth meeting at the University of Aveiro, in Aveiro, led by the Committee Chair, Bruno COIMBRA MP (Portugal).

Mohammed Tahar BELLAL (Algeria), Chafik SI ALI (Algeria), Marko PAVIĆ (Croatia), Hosams ABU MERI (Latvia), Mohamed ZIDOUH (Morocco), Jorge BOTELHO (Portugal), Lúcia Araújo da SILVA (Portugal), Nathalie de OLIVEIRA (Portugal), Dušan STOJANOVIĆ (Slovenia) and Şamil AYRIM (Türkiye) attended the meeting.

The Rector of the University of Aveiro, Paulo Jorge FERREIRA, the University of Aveiro Professors Ana Isabel MIRANDA, David CARVALHO, Teresa FIDÉLIS and Myriam LOPES, and the Chairman of MIO-ECSDE, Michael SCOULLOS, attended as speakers.

The Chair of the Parliamentary Committee on the Environment and Energy, Tiago Brandão RODRIGUES MP, and the Ambassador and Deputy Secretary-General for Water, Environment and Blue Economy of the Union for the Mediterranean, Almotaz ABADI, also attended as guests.

Chair **Bruno COIMBRA** opened the meeting at 09:00, greeting everyone in attendance and thanking them for their participation.

Opening session

Chair Bruno COIMBRA began by announcing that, since the President of the *Assembleia da República*, Professor Augusto Santos Silva, had been unable to attend the meeting, he had recorded a video message that greatly honoured the work of the Committee, which was then played.

Augusto SANTOS SILVA expressed his gratitude for the invitation to attend the opening of the meeting and stated that he could not be present due to being on an official visit to another country.

He congratulated the Committee Chair on holding the meeting outside Lisbon, in the city and at the University of Aveiro, as it was important for decisive initiatives to raise awareness of the problems and the need to resolve them to be held outside the capitals, throughout the territory, and for parliamentarians to be able to benefit from the knowledge and ideas of scholars, experts and academics.

He stressed the topicality and urgency of the meeting's theme, "Addressing climate change in the Mediterranean region". He recalled his participation, as Minister of Foreign Affairs, in the presentation of the provisional conclusions of the study that the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) had commissioned on climate change in the region and how astounded he had been by those conclusions, which the final text unfortunately corroborated.

He pointed out that the Mediterranean region is one of the regions suffering the consequences of climate change, particularly with the rise in temperature, which, if nothing is done, will exceed two degrees, meaning that by mid-century, there could be desert or semi-desert regions, including in the south of the Iberian Peninsula. He reaffirmed that, in order to tackle climate change, energy policy must be strongly developed to move away from fossil fuels and prioritise renewable energy sources. To that end, it is very important that parliaments, which represent the will of the people and monitor and supervise government activity, are aware of what is being done in terms of promoting renewable energy, as well as of the corresponding results.

Giving the example of Portugal, he evoked the good results obtained through a decades-long investment in renewable energies, especially the fact that three-fifths of the country's electricity consumption comes from renewable sources, such as hydro power, wind power or solar power, and also the investment in new renewable sources, namely green hydrogen. Stressing the importance of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) in the cooperation on critical issues such as energy, he underlined that the position of Deputy Secretary-General had already been held in the past by Teresa Ribeiro and Jorge Borrego.

He then noted the need for cooperation, awareness and participation, and to encourage governments, municipalities and companies to continue promoting the green transition.

He noted that, in addition to the obvious link between environmental and energy issues, the link between environmental and water issues was even more obvious. He, therefore, defended the important role of parliamentarians in promoting public policies to enhance biodiversity, good governance of the oceans, significant carbon sinks, the development of renewable energy, the

strengthening of water distribution networks and rationality in water consumption.

He finished by welcoming the fact that the PA-UfM continued to prioritise these topics that had to do with people's lives and the future of young people and extended best wishes for everyone's work.

Chair Bruno COIMBRA thanked the President of the *Assembleia da República* for his words and gave the floor to the Rector of the University of Aveiro, Professor Paulo Jorge Ferreira.

Paulo Jorge FERREIRA welcomed the fact that the meeting was taking place at the University of Aveiro, not only because of the mutual advantage of bringing together knowledge and decision-making but also because the University, despite its short history of less than half a century, had been the first in Portugal to establish, in the 1970s, an Environmental Engineering Department, the first Environmental Engineering programme.

He noted that the University of Aveiro had already set carbon neutrality as one of its goals, fully aligned with the goals of Portugal, Europe and the world, and that, currently, it was an international community of about 20 000 people, had welcomed 126 nationalities over the years, congregating a collective look at the world and respecting new generations.

He ended by thanking everyone for their presence and extending best wishes for everyone's work.

Chair **Bruno COIMBRA** thanked the Rector of the University of Aveiro for his words.

He then announced that the delegation of the *Assembleia da República* to the PA-UfM was in attendance, namely Deputy Head of Delegation Jorge Botelho MP, Lúcia Araújo da Silva MP and Nathalie de Oliveira MP, as well as the Chair of the Portuguese Parliament's Committee on the Environment and Energy, Tiago Brandão Rodrigues MP.

He also welcomed the presence of Ambassador Almotaz Abadi, Deputy Secretary-General of the Union for the Mediterranean for Water, Environment and the Blue Economy, and expressed his gratitude for the presence of Members of Parliament from the PA-UfM Member States, namely Algeria, Croatia, Morocco, Latvia, Slovenia and Türkiye, and particularly greeted Senator Mohamed Tahar Bellal from Algeria who was serving as Vice-Chair of the Committee for the first time.

He underlined and expressed gratitude for the presence of Mohamed Zidouh MP, from Morocco, Chair of the Committee on Improving Quality of Life, Exchanges between civil societies and Culture of the PA-UfM, and Şamil Ayrim MP, from Türkiye, Chair of the Committee on Economic and Financial Affairs, Social Affairs and Education of the PA-UfM.

He took advantage of Şamil Ayrim's presence to express, on behalf of the Committee, his deep sorrow for the victims of the earthquakes in Türkiye and his solidarity with the Turkish authorities and people in the face of that tragedy. He also stated that Turkish MP Çetin ARIK, who had originally been registered to attend the meeting, had had to cancel because he was a doctor and had been called to help the earthquake victims. He highlighted the international

community's great support and cooperation, namely from Portugal, which had sent a Joint Task Force to Türkiye to help search and rescue earthquake victims. He also reported that the *Assembleia da República* had unanimously approved, on 10 February, a vote "of condolence for the victims of the earthquakes in Türkiye and Syria".

As the matter was of the utmost importance, he proposed that the Committee on Energy, Environment and Water of the PA-UfM, meeting on 6 March 2023 at the University of Aveiro in Portugal, annexed a statement of its deep sorrow for the victims and its total solidarity in the face of this tragedy addressed to the authorities and peoples of Türkiye and Syria to the meeting's conclusions.

Finally, he thanked the guest speakers, Professors Ana Isabel Miranda, David Carvalho, Teresa Fidélis, Myriam Lopes and Michael Scoullou, for their presence and began the order of business.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Approval of the minutes of the previous Committee meeting held on 16 January 2023

The document, which had been distributed to all delegations in the official languages, was put to the vote and approved.

"Addressing climate change in the Mediterranean region"

Chair Bruno COIMBRA began by announcing that, since 2020, when he took on the Chairmanship of the Committee on behalf of the Portuguese Parliament, he had expressed his wish to hold a thematic meeting at the University of Aveiro because of the remarkable way this University had made a mark in the study and training in the Environment and Sustainability areas in Portugal, making, in the areas of teaching and research, an extraordinary contribution to the Portuguese state and its European and Mediterranean partners.

Remarks by guest experts and academics

He then gave the floor to Ana Isabel Miranda, Full Professor and Director of the Department of Environment and Planning at the University of Aveiro, who coordinated the first part of the meeting.

Ana Isabel MIRANDA began by mentioning the University of Aveiro's contribution to the

issue of climate change in the Mediterranean region. Then, she highlighted the various aspects of the impact of climate change, such as the increase in the average sea level, global warming and precipitation, which are reflected in multiple areas of activity of society, such as health. She also pointed out atmospheric pollution, agriculture, forestry, namely forest fires, water, aquatic and aquifer resources, coastal areas and the issue of biodiversity and species. In this way, the University aimed to contribute to a sustainable society and, to achieve the goal of carbon neutrality, it was working on two interconnected areas: one had to do with risk assessment and adaptation to climate change and the other with resource efficiency and the transition to a carbon neutral economy. Thus, it intended to contribute to international, national, regional and local policies in a resilience and adaptation logic.

She then explained that the University was organised into departments and research units, such as CESAM, the Centre for Environmental and Marine Studies, and GOVCOPP, the Research Unit on Governance, Competitiveness and Public Policies. From the joint work came a contribution to the *First Mediterranean Assessment Report*, which assessed climate and environmental changes in the Mediterranean basin and had been prepared by the independent network of Mediterranean Experts on Climate and Environmental Change (MedECC), which had been awarded the 2020 North-South Prize from the Council of Europe.

She highlighted the importance of water availability, sea-based food production, water scarcity and demand, pollution and the effects of ozone for the Mediterranean area and, therefore, the expected increases in respiratory and cardiac diseases. She stated that all sub-regions of the Mediterranean basin, both on land and at sea, were being impacted by man-made changes in the environment, with climate and pollution, the unsustainable use of resources and invasive alien species as the main drivers. In most regions, both natural ecosystems and human livelihoods were being affected. She concluded by drawing attention to worsening impacts in the coming decades and the need to improve mitigation and adaptation efforts in the Mediterranean region.

Then, Professor David Carvalho, a Researcher at the Centre for Environmental and Marine Studies and the Department of Physics at the University of Aveiro, took the floor.

David CARVALHO devoted his remarks to aspects of climatology and meteorology. Making a brief summary, he listed the three most important variables that most impact human society and activity: temperature, which unfortunately was already above 1.5 degrees when compared with the average temperature of the pre-industrial period, and which would continue to rise, especially in the Mediterranean area; precipitation, where a substantial decrease was expected in most Mediterranean regions, but episodes of extreme rainfall were also expected in the northern Mediterranean; and more prevalent and frequent periods of drought, causing scenarios of aridity and desertification in the Mediterranean. He underlined that renewable energies, very important to try to combat or mitigate climate change, depended on climatic and meteorological factors, such as solar energy, solar radiation, wind energy and hydro energy.

He concluded by warning that, in the future, the Mediterranean was expected to be a warmer, drier and more arid place, with episodes of extreme weather, such as heat waves, extreme precipitation and drought. The phenomena would be more frequent, more intense and would

last longer. A warmer and drier climate would give rise to phenomena such as desertification, forest fires, and soil erosion, with major impacts on agriculture.

Then, the floor was given to Professor Teresa Fidélis, from the Department of Environment and Planning of the University of Aveiro, an expert on Environmental Planning and Governance.

Teresa FIDÉLIS, referring to the European research project “Horizon 2020”, which had included several countries and had focused on issues of water circular economy and reuse, recalled that water was a scarce resource, distributed differently throughout the territory and highly vulnerable to climate change, land use strategies and to the adopted public policies and regulations. Thus, she reaffirmed the importance of the circularity of water, and the reuse of water, which generated new water circuits, different risks and, therefore, challenged the decision-making and public policy processes related to the circular economy. On the other hand, the territory where water existed beyond the atmosphere was also considered an increasingly scarce resource, so land use and its planning could reduce barriers and encourage symbiotic strategies and circularity. Circular economy was not a new concept, but it had become prominent in the European Union, particularly in public policy-making on circular economy. That study concluded that the development of water circularity required more robust and more integrated public policies and a more consistent look at the water issue.

The last speaker from the University of Aveiro, Professor Myriam Lopes, a professor and researcher at the Department of Environment and Planning of the University of Aveiro in the areas of environment and sustainability, air quality and climate change, took the floor.

Myriam LOPES began by reaffirming the trend that climate change had been following, which had been faster in the Mediterranean basin than in other areas of the planet: the rise in temperature, the warming of the sea surface, the change in land use with increased urbanisation and tourism, and the intensification of agricultural practices, air, water, soil and ocean pollution.

In terms of energy, she warned of the behaviour of citizens leading to energy consumption and the need for political action also on the demand side of services. On the other hand, she noted that the energy sector was also vulnerable to climate change, giving examples such as the recent blackout in Brazil, the accident at the Fukushima nuclear power plant, extreme precipitation and the floods that could occur in the dams themselves, the absence of wind, since there was a significant investment in wind energy, forgetting, however, that winds are not constant, but intermittent. The rise in temperature also required greater needs for air conditioning and energy demand, especially in the Mediterranean. Regarding solar energy, it was impossible to ignore the rise in temperature and the drier and warmer weather, a greater deposition of dust and particles on the panels, significantly reducing their efficiency.

In conclusion, she recalled that climate change could be a threat to current and future renewable sources: changes in seasonality could affect energy production and, consequently, all other sectors of activity, such as agriculture, health or even transport, not forgetting the issue of tourism, which was very important for Mediterranean countries. She reaffirmed the importance of adopting energy efficiency and sufficiency measures, not forgetting the energy poverty still existing in many Mediterranean countries and the need to focus on changing behaviour and

involving citizens in decision-making processes.

Finally, the floor was given to Professor Michael Scoullos, Chair of the Mediterranean Information Office for Environment, Culture and Sustainable Development (MIO-ECSDE) and the Global Water Partnership-Mediterranean.

Michael SCOULLOS began by stating that, although the analysis of these issues was pessimistic, it would be important to adopt measures optimistically, holding meetings and looking forward. Paraphrasing a famous Aveiro native, Homem Cristo, “from the moment you really believe in something, the universe conspires in your favour”.

Sharing all that had been said by the speakers before him – water scarcity, floods, rising sea levels, extreme weather events, heat waves, the intrusion of exotic species, the frequency of forest fires, soil erosion, marine biodiversity, biodiversity in general – he warned that, in addition to refugees for economic reasons, there were environmental refugees in the Mediterranean region. He pointed out that the flow of riverbeds, especially European ones, was decreasing, which would be a massive problem for the Mediterranean region in the coming years. Referring to the recent rise in sea level, which confirmed the models of some of those most pessimistic, he warned that the more than fifteen million people living on the Nile could become environmental refugees, which would be an apocalyptic scenario. He also noted the loss of marshes, wetlands in several countries, not only due to climate change but also to the construction of airports and the expansion of other land uses. He then gave examples from the western Mediterranean, Spain and Greece. Regarding climate equity, he welcomed the success of the agreement on the high seas, which would help preserve or conserve 30 % of the least protected seas, which was essential as fisheries in the Mediterranean were being impacted directly and indirectly by the intrusion of exotic species.

He then spoke of [MIO-ECSDE](#), which brings together 134 NGOs from 28 countries, the European Environment Agency and the Arab Network, the Circle of Mediterranean Parliamentarians for Sustainable Development ([COMPSUD](#)), which he also represented, the Circle of Mediterranean Journalists for Environment and Sustainable Development ([COMJESD](#)) and the Global Water Partnership – Mediterranean ([GWP_Med](#)), an intergovernmental organisation facilitating sustainable development education.

He then argued that urgent coordinated action was needed on mitigation and adaptation to address the climate challenges. Regarding mitigation, by addressing the root causes, such as reducing energy consumption through new technologies in construction (e.g., building insulation, use of recycled demolition waste), transport, manufacturing, agriculture, tourism and other services, and replacing energy produced by fossil fuels with renewable energy sources. Regarding adaptation, through a combination of technologies and behavioural changes, namely the reduction of water consumption in agricultural manufacturing and domestic uses, the replacement in many sectors of the use of natural water resources with “new water” from treated waste or “grey” water and other unconventional water resources and the importance of addressing complexities in an integrated manner, i.e. the WEF (Water-Energy-Food-Ecosystems) Nexus approach. Thus, pointing out that when it comes to resource allocation or attaching political importance, water always came after energy and food, he recalled that it

would be impossible to have food without water, water without energy, or food without energy and that everyone needed the ecosystem. Therefore, a system of tensions was necessary for there to be convergence. It was very important, particularly for politicians, to have the concept clearly defined because if one “pulled” too hard, the Nexus would be broken. He reported that a conference would be held in June in Morocco to discuss the Nexus issue.

Commenting on what had been stated regarding the complexity of the problems, he said that the significant regional challenges required wise solutions. As the Mediterranean was a tourist region, tourism was necessary. However, it was also necessary to know how to solve the problems caused by tourism, i.e., how this energy- and water-intensive sector would adapt to climate change, ensuring the necessary tourist mobility, air and boat transport, and the use of air conditioning. The region’s principal capital was its biodiversity, landscapes and cultural heritage. Therefore, in order to protect its rich biodiversity, it was necessary to designate large land and marine spaces as protected areas. At the same time, the region’s solar and wind potential should also be harnessed by installing wind farms and solar energy systems. On the other hand, if the Eastern Mediterranean were to have considerable gas resources, their exploitation could be a game changer for the international energy scene and provide substantial new revenue for specific countries and the European Union. However, these considerations went against the international and European objectives of energy decarbonisation, against the trend of reducing the use of fossil fuels. This political issue was very important and needed to be resolved, particularly with the current war.

Without having an answer for the way forward, he reported that MIO-ECSDE and COMPSUD had concluded that solutions could not be short- or medium-term but long-term solutions beyond four-year political terms. On the other hand, urgent and bold measures were needed, not forgetting the future of the next generations and without thinking in nationalistic terms. He stated that he would like to leave a better future for his children but would leave a less fortunate planet with fewer opportunities and many problems. For this reason, they were working in the area of public participation, environmental training, and justice under the Oslo Convention, and he announced that a campaign had been launched to convince non-EU countries to accept the Aarhus Convention.

Before concluding, he invited the University of Aveiro to participate in a sustainability charter for universities with a holistic approach. He concluded by saying that great crises were also great opportunities.

Chair Bruno COIMBRA expressed his gratitude for all the contributions and knowledge sharing. He stressed that the motivation for holding the thematic meeting had been the need that everyone felt, in their countries and in the cooperation process in the PA-UfM, to conduct politics based on data, facts, knowledge and studies. Mention was made of climate change, the worrying scenarios, the impacts, and many other related systems dependent on the approaches to be taken in water, land, circular economy, biodiversity and renewable energy production. Basically, responding to the challenge laid down by Professor Michael Scoullou, it would be important to involve citizens and to strengthen and integrate long-term policies and solutions.

Remarks by the members of the Committee on Energy, Environment and Water of the PA-UfM

Chair Bruno COIMBRA began by giving the floor to Ambassador Almotaz Abadi, Deputy Secretary-General of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) for Water, Environment and Blue Economy.

Almotaz ABADI (UfM) mentioned the UfM's activities: on 24 May in Barcelona, a meeting would take place to discuss the progress on water, environment and climate change in the Mediterranean in terms of political influence and also the roadmap for the following two years, and he invited everyone to participate; on 7 and 8 June in Rabat, Morocco, the Meeting of the Water Expert Group would be held; and, as had been mentioned by Professor Scoullos, a conference to discuss the Nexus in the Mediterranean in order to give it political impetus was also planned.

He noted that the situation was indeed becoming very alarming and that it was necessary to address climate change, either through attenuation or mitigation or through the different sectors influencing and also being influenced by climate change, including water, ecosystems, food, security and energy. He argued that an integrated Nexus approach was needed and that, as parliamentarians and rulers, it would be important to put into practice what had been said by the different experts and to implement it in regulations. Ministers responsible for water, environment and agriculture should not work separately but together. The mandate of the Union for the Mediterranean was regional, and many of these projects would not progress if they were to be only addressed locally.

He mentioned that, in the Mediterranean region, it would be important to advance in the management of transboundary water resources and, at the same time, to have a development strategy in each country to innovate and exchange experiences and make the various sectors, such as agriculture, attractive to investors. He stressed that, through different investment and financing initiatives in the Mediterranean, such as workshops, peer reviews, and regional events with private and public actors, an effort was being made to reach a balance in order to counteract climate change. He also mentioned that it would be necessary to involve the whole of society and not only governments, to encourage youth and civil society organisations to implement the plans at the level of the different countries.

He reported that to support investment, the Union for the Mediterranean, together with the European Investment Bank and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, was launching the Blue Mediterranean Partnership, led by the UfM's Secretary-General, in order to establish the link between ecosystem, environment, water and sea.

As an international organisation, the Union for the Mediterranean was aligning development cooperation investment in the region with the policy framework for action. Being able to produce sound policies and not putting them into practice only meant that one was producing documents, paper; hence the importance of being aligned with the agendas of development

cooperation in the Mediterranean region.

Then, Chair Bruno COIMBRA gave the floor to the Committee members.

Mohamed ZIDOUH (Morocco) began by expressing his solidarity with Türkiye.

Referring to Morocco, he announced that they were investing in renewable energies, wind energy, and photovoltaic energy, and, by then, they had an energy autonomy of 40 % and intended to reach 52 % by 2030. He pointed out that they were open to foreign investment for the transport of energy and the commercialisation of energy in Europe in order to reach a higher rate of autonomy than they had by that date. At the same time, he expressed concern about ensuring energy security. He highlighted the concern about carbon emissions responsible for climate instability. He highlighted the issue of waste and the respective control, namely in the production of laws, noting that the subject of the environment was not that of a country but of a nation and that culture and education should play a role in the learning and training of citizens. He noted that investment in renewable energy was profitable because it created jobs and economic profitability. He agreed that green hydrogen was the least polluting energy, allowing storage and transport, but it required a much higher investment.

He recalled the Culture Committee meeting, where he had had the opportunity to welcome colleagues from the Portuguese Parliament, where the minister responsible for these areas had been present, and where renewable energy and the carbon tax, in relation to which countries were not all on the same footing, had been discussed. By then, thanks to a government policy, Morocco was moving towards total autonomy and water security. Lastly, he advocated a joint Mediterranean policy for preserving and conserving water and the environment.

Marko PAVIĆ (Croatia) began by expressing his solidarity with the Turkish delegation.

Then, he observed that there were problems, as noted at COP26 or COP27. The European Union was responsible for 8 % or 9 % of greenhouse gas emissions, China and the United States for 50 %, yet Europe wanted climate neutrality, falling to 55 % by 2030. It would be important to lead in this area.

As a physicist oceanographer by profession, he mentioned he had taken part in a scientific cruise through Antarctica and had witnessed first-hand the effects of a two-degree rise in sea level and that global warming could not be seen only as a rise in temperature. It would be important to take into consideration extreme events, such as the number of days with temperatures above 30 or 40 degrees, or weaker or heavier rainfall, concentrated in very few days in such a way that our water resources could not cope. At COP26, there had been no agreement on coal but a commitment by all to achieve carbon neutrality. There were differences in the Mediterranean area. In Croatia, the Adriatic Sea was affected both by rising sea levels and the effects of aridity and days with rising temperatures, but North Africa would be far more affected. He stressed the need to work together with projects in the field of energy and climate change mitigation and adaptation.

He mentioned the situation in Croatia, namely investment in the green transition, abandoning coal from 2033 and protecting the 30 % of the Adriatic Sea under Croatian management. Surprisingly, studies also showed that the wind energy potential would decrease. The climate was changing in the Mediterranean faster than elsewhere, perhaps not as rapidly as in the polar areas, such as the Arctic and Antarctic, but the damaging effects of those huge temperature increases could already be seen. He concluded by saying that action and leadership were needed and that if the Union for the Mediterranean and the European Union worked together, they could reduce the effects of climate change.

Chafik SI ALI (Algeria) expressed his solidarity with the Turkish people.

Then, so that words would not remain only in a drawer and so that they would be translated into action, he left a list of proposals: investment to help developing countries to reduce emissions and strengthen their capacity to cope with climate change; the issue of the price charged for carbon emissions, so that all those responsible for these emissions changed the way they worked and more modern and cleaner policies would be made; the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions to strengthen efforts towards sustainability, including improving existing infrastructure; strengthening the place of renewable energies in our consumption, thinking of the millions of people in the world who did not have access to electricity and used coal and firewood; the need to improve agricultural practices, to modernise them, strengthening the knowledge of farmers, updating them, and also fighting so that forests, the lungs of humanity, would gain new importance and be better managed, because they absorbed all the carbon.

Finally, he thanked all those working hard to reinforce the capacities of their Governments jointly, helping populations.

Chair **Bruno COIMBRA** took the opportunity granted by the Algerian MP's remarks to state that he had taken good note of the concerns and suggestions presented and stressed that this was a particularly important year for relations between the two countries. As Vice-Chair of the Portugal-Algeria Parliamentary Friendship Group, he recalled that an important summit would be held that year between the two countries and Governments and that, in that regard, he would be able to go into some of the issues mentioned in greater detail, expressing his commitment to strengthening the relationship between the two countries.

Dušan STOJANOVIČ (Slovenia) began by expressing his condolences to his colleague from Türkiye due to the recent earthquake, stressing that it showed the population's vulnerability in the event of a rebellion of nature.

Referring to Slovenia, he reported that they considered sustainable climate policy as part of the sustainable development of the whole country, also taking into consideration social and environmental aspects, which was why they supported the sustainable development goals of the

UN 2030 Agenda. As mentioned before, the European Union was fully committed to implementing the 2030 Agenda, as described in the European Green Deal, and there were a number of policy initiatives to guide the European Union towards a green transition. As a communication expert, he considered that there were still some reservations in this area about how to communicate the need for the changes that were inevitable for future generations.

The European Union aimed to transform itself into a modern, competitive and resource-efficient economy, creating energy independence and autonomy and, thus, also political independence and security for the vast majority of Europeans. He announced that the recently formed Slovenian Government was fully committed and had created two independent ministries, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Spatial Planning and the Ministry of the Environment, Climate and Energy, to have a dedicated ministry for environmental issues and the use of renewable energies.

Cities were essentially the victims of what happened in the environment, so both national and local leaders needed to be well aware of the importance of environmental and energy transformation. As already seen in some parts of the world, flows of economic and ecological migrants were emerging, further increasing pressure on local and national Governments to reinvent a way to manage migrants and provide a sustainable solution for citizens. As Vice-Chair of the Committee on Foreign Policy of the Slovenian Parliament, he believed that these two functions were interlinked and that this operability also had to manifest itself through work in various committees and in all bodies of the Parliament, as environmental sustainability cut across all areas.

Hosams ABU MERI (Latvia) extended his condolences to the people of Türkiye and stressed that nature was a great force that could not be controlled, which was why the climate and the environment were being debated that day.

He referred to Latvia and the existing challenges and recalled that as they were close to a neighbour not cooperating on climate and global warming, Russia, hundreds of people were dying because of the aggression against Ukraine. The weather in the Baltic was very cold, unlike in Portugal, and the primary source of energy consumption was heating and, for many years, they had depended on natural gas from Russia. Due to the restrictions, they had terminated all connections with Russia for receiving gas, so they were trying to implement a new route. He also mentioned that they had cooperated well with another neighbour, Estonia, to build two large wind farms in the near future that could help achieve that goal.

Originally coming from Lebanon, he followed the Mediterranean problems daily, such as the discovery of gas in the Mediterranean Sea, a very important resource for Türkiye, Greece, Cyprus, Lebanon and Israel. However, convincing countries not to use these resources in a region facing many conflicts and many years of war was a big challenge.

He announced that the recently formed Latvian Government, elected in October of the previous year, had created the Ministry for Climate and Energy. That Ministry aimed to work hard to

reach the 2030 goal of carbon neutrality and tried to be an example for the region. He concluded by saying that each country had its own task at the national level, but then it had to look at its neighbours and work together and cooperate, then it was necessary to look together at the region and the world.

Şamil AYRIM (Türkiye) began by thanking Chair Bruno Coimbra for the letter of condolence sent soon after the earthquakes, as well as the *Assembleia da República* for the vote of condolence adopted on 10 February. He also thanked everyone for their condolences. He referred to the tragedy, describing that more than forty-five thousand people had died, many had had to abandon their homes, and more than 380 thousand apartments had been destroyed or severely damaged. In that sense, he expressed gratitude to all friendly countries that had collected help, supporting the search and rescue efforts with their teams.

He considered climate change and environmental problems as problems common to humanity, so solutions should also be the product of global solidarity. No one could remain indifferent to these problems when witnessing the destructive impacts of climate change every day. He mentioned that Türkiye contributed with global initiatives to combat environmental challenges, especially climate change, biodiversity loss and waste management. He recalled they had ratified the Paris Agreement and declared zero emissions for 2053. On the other hand, Türkiye's zero waste project initiated by the First Lady, Emine Erdoğan, had managed to acquire a global scale, and the resolution on zero waste had been adopted at the 77th United Nations General Assembly with the support of 105 countries. It would be important to note that developed countries should support developing countries with appropriate technical and financial means for their climate action efforts.

Finally, he stressed that Türkiye was determined to support regional and global efforts to combat climate change and common environmental challenges.

Chair Bruno COIMBRA gave the floor to Jorge Botelho MP, Deputy Head of the Delegation of the *Assembleia da República* to the PA-UfM.

Jorge BOTELHO (Portugal) welcomed all speakers and thanked them for their valuable contribution to the meeting at the University of Aveiro regarding climate policy development.

As the President of the *Assembleia da República* had mentioned, he stressed the importance of decentralising these meetings, especially when there was a centre of excellence in Portugal dedicating its research to the issues of energy, water, sustainability and climate change. It would be important to continue reflecting and to translate each delegation's concerns into joint action, a set of operational initiatives and concrete European policies related to the Mediterranean, which could be translated into funding, for example.

He welcomed the fact that many investments were underway but also mentioned the difficulties and that awareness on this matter urged deepening cooperation, knowledge, the adoption of the most relevant techniques, science and knowledge, and a relationship between politicians, academics and scientists. The perfect symbiosis between politicians, political action, political

legislation, and political measures based on science, knowledge and know-how would translate into research with young people and teachers, encouraging them to continue researching for the future. As stated by Professor Scoullos, to leave a better territory for our children, it would be necessary, considering the differences, to bring together what unites us, which would be much more than what, eventually, may divide us.

Finally, Chair Bruno COIMBRA gave the floor to Tiago Brandão Rodrigues MP, Chair of the Committee on the Environment and Energy.

Tiago Brandão RODRIGUES (Portugal) shared that he was in the Senate Room of the University of Aveiro for the third time and in a third capacity: he had been there as an academic arguing doctoral theses; he had been in a Council of Ministers in 2017 when the 21st Constitutional Government had its anniversary at the University of Aveiro; and he was now as a parliamentarian talking about the importance of the Union for the Mediterranean and its Parliamentary Assembly. This threefold component of energy, environment and water was interrelated and of paramount importance for the survival of all and not only in the Mediterranean basin. By then, when one talked about the environmental issue, one spoke about the economy, global health, and people's survival.

He thanked the academics and, in particular, Professor Michael Scoullos for all the work done with civil society, which led to the understanding that the environmental urgency was an economic and global health urgency, namely, forced migrations, as they were increasingly a reality in the Mediterranean, the loss of diversity was already happening and the medical problems of populations, whether oncological, allergy-related or respiratory, were not a thing of the past, but of the present, and for every 0.1 degree Celsius that went up in the unstoppable escalation, the present and the future of the current and future generations would be at stake.

Having had the opportunity to be in charge of education, he spoke of the importance of education for the environment, of raising awareness and understanding, not only regarding the new generations but also the adult generations, and confessed that he had had the opportunity to meet in several Mediterranean forums, where many young people had mentioned that the adult generations were not leaving a better Mediterranean and that an effective and efficient North-South dialogue was not allowed for those issues to be solved. In that sense, he noted that the civilisational dialogue around the Mediterranean had to be carried out also on these issues of energy, energy transition, and climate transition by governments, parliaments, academia and civil society so that it would be understood that this was not an issue of raising awareness or understanding for the next generations, but something that had to be done right away. He stated that if there were no turning point, the next generations would necessarily engage in a dialogue that would necessarily be more bellicose and belligerent because of the issues of resources, food or water. It was time to act right away. Regardless of party strength, that structured dialogue had been carried out in the Parliament's Committee on the Environment and Energy and with the representations in the various Parliamentary Assemblies where the Portuguese Parliament was represented so that there were practical consequences and the populations represented could genuinely feel the action.

Chair Bruno COIMBRA thanked everyone for their statements and the open manner in which they had exposed their different positions and perspectives.

He noted that the subject of the meeting brought together much more than it separated, but there were often different perspectives. He was pleased to consider that the meeting might have contributed to the larger scope of this Committee, enriching the draft recommendations, which were in development and would be approved soon and presented to the respective parliaments and governments, to build a successful road to combat climate change.

Any other business

There were no other matters up for discussion.

Date and place of the next meeting

Chair Bruno COIMBRA announced that, following the meeting held on 16 January in the *Assembleia da República*, during which the Committee's draft recommendations had been presented, an email would follow from the services requesting contributions until the end of April.

He announced that the following meeting would take place in Rabat, Morocco, during the Plenary Session in May and would be scheduled by the Moroccan Presidency of the PA-UfM. The Committee's final draft recommendations would be approved at that meeting.

Ambassador Almotaz ABADI (UfM) asked for the floor.

Almotaz ABADI (UfM) suggested holding a Committee meeting in September or October in Barcelona. He expressed that he would be delighted to host such an important meeting. He noted that if the Committee considered the proposal feasible, a date would be arranged at the earliest opportunity.

Chair **Bruno COIMBRA** expressed his gratitude for the proposal and confirmed that, after this meeting at the University of Aveiro and the previous one at the *Assembleia da República*, the Committee was open to meeting in other locations and that Barcelona was seen as an excellent possibility.

Finally, he thanked everyone for their participation in the meeting, for their valuable contributions and for how the subject had been handled, given that it was not an easy subject and knowing the differences in cultural and national contexts, it had been approached with great generosity and openness, closing the proceedings at 13:00.