

EURO-MEDITERRANEAN PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY

*Inaugural Session
Vouliagmeni (Athens)
22-23 March 2004*

Final Declaration

1. The inaugural session of the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly (EMPA) was held in Vouliagmeni near Athens on 22 and 23 March 2004 at the invitation of the Hellenic Parliament, as a result of the decisions taken on 2 December 2003 in Naples by the Fifth Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Forum and on 3 December 2003 by the Euro-Mediterranean Conference, held at the Ministers of Foreign Affairs level.
2. Official representatives of the European Union's (EU) fifteen Member State Parliaments, the twelve Mediterranean countries and territories associated with the EU and the European Parliament took part in the deliberations. Members of parliaments from EU accession countries and the Balkans, as well as representatives of the Libyan and the Mauritanian Parliaments, took part as special guests of the Presidency. Representatives of international organisations and assemblies were also present, as well as a member of the Hellenic Government.
3. The opening sitting was co-chaired by Mr Pat Cox, President of the European Parliament, and Mr Abdelwahad Radi, President of the Moroccan Chamber of Representatives. The deliberations were opened by Mrs Anna Benaki-Psarouda, President of the Hellenic Parliament.
4. The EMPA appointed the four members of its Bureau. Among these members it elected Mr Ahmed Fathi Sorour, President of the People's Assembly of Egypt, as President of the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly for the period March 2004 - March 2005. As a result, the President of the European Parliament, the President of the Tunisian Chamber of Deputies and the President of the Hellenic Parliament will be the three vice-presidents for the same period.
5. The participants examined the working methods and the priorities of the three standing parliamentary committees. It was hoped that these committees could be set up as soon as possible. In this context the participants:
 - (a) are convinced that the creation of the EMPA constitutes a decisive step forward towards the institutionalisation and strengthening of the parliamentary dimension of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership;
 - (b) see the creation of the EMPA as the tangible expression of their common interest in strengthening security and stability in the region, promoting and carrying out political, social and economic reforms and preventing terrorism, extremism and organised crime from hampering progress in this direction, in view of the fact that the Assembly is

based on common values and objectives, in particular sustainable and just peace in accordance with International Law;

(c) likewise see the creation of the EMPA as an instrument allowing an intensification of dialogue and cooperation with a view to better mutual understanding.

6. During the second half of the inaugural session the participants raised topical issues in connection with the Euro-Mediterranean partnership, its new parliamentary dimension and the link which the EMPA is to establish with the other institutions as well as with the bodies of the Barcelona Process, in particular the Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference, in accordance with the recommendation issued by the Fifth Forum.

7. The general debate allowed the participants to:

(a) signal their joint determination to combat the barbarism of all forms of terrorism and particularly those manifested recently in Casablanca, Istanbul and most recently in Madrid. These attacks constitute the negation of universal values and are to be considered as crimes against humanity;

(b) express their solidarity with the victims of terrorism and their families, as well as with the nations affected;

(c) call for the highest level of cooperation against terrorism and the adoption of measures which may lead to the capture and condemnation of all those responsible for these terrorist crimes;

(d) emphasise the strengthening of the institutional structure of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership and its inherent essential principles, namely equality, shared responsibility and solidarity among all its representatives towards the accomplishment of these objectives;

(e) bear in mind that the imminent enlargement of the EU, whilst increasing the Mediterranean dimension of the EU, should also result in a deepening of political, economic, environmental, cultural and social relations with our Mediterranean neighbours;

(f) stress, in this new geographical context, the importance of the neighbourhood policy pursued by the EU, as a means of strengthening the Barcelona Process;

(g) welcome the recent signing in Rabat of the agreement between Egypt, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia, an instrument open to other Mediterranean countries and aimed at setting up a South/South free-trade area;

(h) insist on the urgent need to reach a peaceful, just and lasting solution to the Middle-East conflict, along the lines proposed in the Quartet's Roadmap and address a call to all conflicting parties to adopt a political strategy that may lead to the coexistence and cooperation of two peoples and two states, namely Israel and a sovereign and

sustainable Palestinian state, respecting the rule of international law by rejecting every kind of extremist behaviour and violence against either of the two peoples;

- (i) stress the desirability of following up the European Council's launch of the 'EU Strategic Partnership with the Mediterranean and the Middle East';
 - (j) recognise that the Mediterranean is a region with great potential, where a large number of cultures, languages, religions and traditions co-exist and could build better cooperation and deeper integration;
 - (k) recognise the importance of integration processes as well as multilateralism in the resolution of the economic, social and political conflicts influenced by the world situation;
 - (l) note that the Euro-Mediterranean process is an ideal and unique framework for developing dialogue between cultures, economic, socio-cultural and, above all, political cooperation between the countries in the region. Stronger efforts must be made and greater determination should be shown in decisively promoting the application of the Association Agreements, whilst devoting particular attention to democracy and human rights and the participation and integration of women in the process of establishing peace and sustainable development;
 - (m) consider that the issue of managing the migration flow should be addressed within the framework of solidarity and respecting human rights and bear in mind the prevailing current terms of the resolution on migration as adopted in Bari by the Fourth Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Forum in June 2002.
8. The Assembly welcomes the negotiations just resumed under UN auspices for a solution to the Cyprus problem and hopes that they will produce a positive result, which would allow for a reunited Cyprus to accede to the European Union to the benefit of both communities on the island.
9. The Assembly, convened in Greece for its inaugural session, recalled the spirit of the Olympic Truce, with a view to the forthcoming Athens Games, and expressed the hope that it might inspire its members to solve the problems of the Mediterranean Area.
10. The participants thanked the Hellenic Parliament for its hospitality and the excellent organisation of the inaugural session of the EMPA. They noted with pleasure the invitation from the People's Assembly of Egypt to host the next session of the EMPA in Cairo.
11. The Assembly instructed its elected President to forward this Declaration, together with the annexes thereto, to the presidents of the parliaments and the governments of the present 27 members of the Barcelona Process, to those of Libya and Mauritania, to those of the other eight countries which will shortly accede to the EU, to the EU institutions, as well as, for information, to the parliaments and governments of the Balkan countries.

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