



**ASSEMBLEA PARLAMENTARE
DELL'UNIONE PER IL
MEDITERRANEO**



**PRESIDENZA
ITALIANA**



**PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY OF
THE UNION FOR THE MEDITERRANEAN**

**Meeting of the Bureau and the Enlarged Bureau
(Palermo, 18 June 2010)**

Summary Record

The meetings of the Bureau and of the Bureau enlarged to include the Committee Chairs were co-chaired by the President of the Senate, Renato SCHIFANI, and the President of the Chamber of Deputies, Gianfranco FINI, in the presence of Vice Presidents Abdelwahad RADI, for Morocco, Abdulhadi A. MAJALI, for Jordan, and Gianni PITTELLA, for the European Parliament representing President Jerzy Buzek.

The Bureau adopted the agenda moved by Presidente Fini, and the minutes of the previous meetings held on 12 and 14 March 2010 in Amman.

On the matter of the financing of the PA-UfM and the institution of a Permanent Secretariat, President Fini recalled the approval at the Plenary Session in Amman of the political principle that the Assembly would provide the funding, and said that it was necessary to define the required legal framework. He suggested tasking the Rules of Procedure Working Group to do this. While awaiting the definition of the procedures for implementation, the functions of the Permanent Secretariat would be handled by the offices of the Italian Chamber of deputies and the Italian Senate.

Vice President Pittella stressed the need to give the Assembly Secretariat legal personality, as a prerequisite for being able to have a budget and provide funding. This task lay with the Secretariat host country, Belgium.

The Bureau tasked the Italian Presidency to write to the Presidents of the Parliaments concerned recalling the decision taken in Amman that each country would contribute its share to the PA-UfM budget.

The Bureau agreed that the change of name of the Assembly into *Parliamentary Assembly of the Union for the Mediterranean* did not need any further formalities to become effective.

On the priorities of the Italian Presidency, President Fini confirmed his intention to continue with the work started under the previous Presidency, and his commitment to strengthening institutional relations with the Union for the Mediterranean.



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In this connection, the Bureau of the PA-UfM expressed the hope that the Barcelona Summit of Heads of State and Government of the UfM would be promptly reconvened.

The first political priority of the Italian Presidency regarding the Middle East peace process was to make the most of every positive element, so that even the slightest likelihood of peace would be strengthened, and the worst risk of all be avoided, namely, a total deadlock in the negotiations.

As far as the Israeli military attack on the flotilla bound for Gaza was concerned, President Fini stressed its gravity and the need to find out exactly what had happened. He reiterated the fact that in the very difficult Middle East situation, every positive sign had to be seized upon, such as the demand coming from the whole of the international community to lift the embargo on Gaza, the partial readiness expressed in this direction by the Israeli government, and the continuation of the proximity talks.

The second political priority had to do with promoting the rule of law, democracy, respect for human rights and a greater mutual opening between societies, in a kind of positive contagion. The creation of economic infrastructure, such as the Euro-Mediterranean Bank, would, for example, encourage trade between different economies, as the first concrete step towards the more general integration of the Euro-Mediterranean area.

The third political priority was the question of integrating migrants, adopting measures in the fields of education and training, women's literacy and the labour market.

Vice President Pittella endorsed the approach of the Italian Presidency regarding relations with the UfM and the need to rebuild connections between the Union and the Assembly, and the importance of physical infrastructure and other kinds of assets (such as, for example, the introduction of a new Erasmus programme for the Mediterranean countries).

Senator Majali said that at the heart of every debate there was always the issue of Palestine. It was not question of merely discussing the Israeli attack or the lifting of the embargo against Gaza; the real problem was the Israeli occupation. Faced with increasingly more extremist Israeli positions, unless measures were adopted that could resolve the situation, there was a risk that even the moderate and balanced positions in the Arab world might be drawn closer to the extremists' positions. This was a highly topical risk and the European countries had to reconsider their policies in order to prevent this from happening. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Union for the Mediterranean had to take up a more robust and decisive stance and



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issue a declaration demanding an end to the Israeli occupation and not only the lifting of the embargo against Gaza.

President Fini recalled that extremism did not only come from certain quarters in Israel but also from parts of the Arab world, and emphasised that there was an extreme need for moderation at the present time.

On the Israeli attack against the flotilla, Vice President Pittella recalled the Resolution that had been carried by a huge majority in the European Parliament and said that he would return to address the question of a possible declaration to be issued by the Bureau.

President Fini then illustrated a draft declaration on the Union for the Mediterranean. At the request of Vice President Pittella, the declaration was amended to include an initial paragraph requiring the parliamentary Assembly to be kept informed of every project or strategy designed in the UfM, to enable it to express its opinion on them, and invited the various Assembly Committees to consult on a regular basis with the Secretary-General and the Deputy Secretaries-General of the UfM Secretariat.

The Declaration was carried.

After the presentation of the draft declaration on the Middle East peace process by President Fini, Senator Majali noted that the resolution adopted by the European Parliament was more incisive and robust than the text proposed by the Italian Presidency which made no reference to an international investigation into what had happened in international waters. Vice President Pittella listed the three points which, according to the European approach, needed to be incorporated into the Italian Presidency's declaration: lifting the embargo against Gaza and not only opening up humanitarian channels, defining the Israeli attack as being contrary to international law, and calling for an international investigation to be held, since the Israeli attack had taken place in international waters.

President Fini said that it was difficult for the Italian Presidency to accept the third point proposed by Vice President Pittella, recalling that Italy, at the United Nations, had opposed the resolution regarding the attack on the Gaza flotilla, requesting an international investigation to be held, based on the presumption that Israel was not able to carry out an impartial investigation of its own.

On the Middle East peace process the Bureau did not, therefore, adopt any declaration.

The Enlarged Bureau was held in the presence of the Chairs of the Political Affairs, Security and Human Rights Committee, Tokia Saifi, the Economic and Financial Affairs, Social Affairs and Education Committee, Mohammad Abul-Enein,



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Committee on Improving Quality of Life, Exchanges between Civil Societies and Culture, Eduardo Cabrita, the Committee on Women's Rights in Euro-Med Countries, Afifa Salah, the Energy, Environment and Water Committee, Stefan Schennach, the Working Group of the Financing of the Assembly and the Revision of the Rules of Procedure, Gianni Pittella, the Co-chairs of the Working Group for Transferring the Facility for Euro- Mediterranean Investment and Partnership (FEMIP) into a Euro-Mediterranean Development Bank, Menaouar Khemila, Sergio D'Antoni and Abderrahmane Bouhrizi, and Senator Antonio d'Alì.

After the adoption of the agenda and the minutes of the meetings in Amman on 12 and 14 March, President Schifani presented the conclusions of the Bureau and pointed out that it had not been possible to agree on a common declaration on the Middle East Peace Process and the situation in Gaza. He then briefly illustrated the topics to be assigned to the Committees and Working Groups, noting the linkage between these and the priorities of the Italian Presidency, urging everyone present to appraise them and offer suggestions or supplementary points.

Work proceeded with the report by Senator d'Alì on the Mediterranean Sea, the various aspects of the present emergency situation and the need for concrete regulatory and governance initiatives to safeguard its integrity and specificity. At the end of this report, the Chair of the Energy, Environment, and Water Committee, Stefan Schennach, asked Senator d'Alì to present this report to the Committee, in view of the topical relevance and extreme interest of the subject.

Mr D'Antoni, member of the Economic Committee and Co-chair of the FEMIP Working Group gave a report on the need to establish the Euro-Mediterranean Investment Bank, which was an indispensable instrument to sustain development. It was only the growth of all the Euro-Mediterranean countries that could guarantee that Europe would attain the level of development needed to enable it to compete with the other economies. Mr D'Antoni stressed the need for a quality improvement over the experience of FEMIP, which had been a massive disappointment having only approved 125 projects, and said that he was confident that it would be possible to convince all those in the Assembly who were still diffident about this opportunity. With regard to Italy, he said that the Italian Parliament was utterly convinced of the positive character of a Euro-Mediterranean Bank, and had unanimously voted through a resolution to institute it. The Assembly commented positively on the report by Mr D'Antoni. Mr Abul-Enein said that the future of the North lay in the South and that it was necessary to expand the market to take in the countries of the South, while Mr Bhourizi emphasised that economic



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development made a direct contribution to peace, and that urgent parliamentary initiatives were necessary to ensure that the bank was put in place.

In his speech, Mr Schennach put two requests to the Bureau: the first was to formally urge UNESCO to declare the Jordan Valley world heritage; the second was to sensitise all the members of the PA-UfM to take action to ensure that their own countries ratified the United Nations 1997 resolution on the Non-navigational Uses of International Watercourses. At the present time only 16 out of 35 States had ratified this resolution, and yet an international law in this area was a matter of great importance.

As for the Middle East Peace Process and the Israeli attack on the flotilla all the Chairs of the Committees contributed to the debate. Mr Abul-Enein emphasised the fact that the Arab States were expecting the Bureau to issue an adequate declaration on the subject, and said that this should not merely condemn Israel's action but that it had to forcefully demand the institution of an international Commission of enquiry.

President Schifani said that the only real sticking point on the peace process declaration was qualifying the Commission of enquiry "international", because there were no differences of opinion on the question of condemning Israel's aggression, and the commitment to guarantee the Palestinian people their own State and decent living conditions.

Ms Saïfi expressed concern and displeasure at the fact that the Bureau had not managed to find an agreement on such an obvious and grave matter, which required everyone to accept their responsibilities. This was also the opinion expressed by Mr Cabrita, Mr Schennach, Mr Kemila and Ms Salah, all of whom were in favour of an international Commission of enquiry.

Vice President Pittella suggested making the most of the 90% agreement between all the members of the enlarged Bureau in order not to belittle the work of the Assembly and its image outside. The Italian Presidency expresses readiness at this point to introduce a novelty into the practice and Rules of Procedure by indicating in the final declaration that Italy dissented with regard to the definition of the Commission of enquiry as being "international". Senator Majali and Mr Abul-Enein suggested the adoption of a declaration setting out the majority positions, and the reservations of the minority, on each individual point. Mr Radi said that the text proposed by the Italian Presidency has not been comprehensively discussed and that in reality there were also other paragraphs on which there was not total agreement.

President Fini made it clear that the final declaration had to be based only on three concepts: condemning the Israeli attack, reference to the guarantee of decent living conditions to the Palestinian people, and the institution of a Commission of enquiry, ignoring the various other points in the draft declaration that had been presented initially. After a short break, President Schifani summed up the debate by



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saying that the positions remained distant on various points and that there was no agreement on a possible final joint declaration regarding the Middle East issue and that the various differing opinions would at all events be recorded in the minutes of the meeting. He then closed the meeting, after announcing the date of the next meeting of the Bureau in Rome at the Chamber of deputies.