



PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY OF THE UNION FOR THE MEDITERRANEAN



Committee on Political Affairs, Security and Human Rights

MEETING
Thursday 1 July 2010
10:00 - 13:00
Brussels

MINUTES

The Chair, Tokia Saïfi, opened the meeting at 10.07. She thanked members for having responded at very short notice to the invitation to meet, so that the Committee on Political Affairs could agree on a position on recent events in the Middle East.

1. Adoption of draft agenda

The agenda was adopted.

2. Chair's announcements

The Chair spoke of the recent assault by Israeli forces on a ship from the humanitarian fleet sailing towards Gaza. This 'disproportionate and unjustified' attack had led to a wave of reprobation throughout the world. The political committee of the UfM assembly therefore had to state its position. This was all the more necessary since the Assembly Bureau, meeting in Palermo on 18 June, had been unable to adopt a declaration on the situation in the Middle East.

The Chair had informed her colleagues in Palermo that she intended to convene the political committee as a matter of urgency, and had received support for this from the Chairs of the other committees.

In the Chair's view, it was unthinkable that the UfM Assembly should fail to take part in a debate that was so vital for peace in the Middle East. The political committee would thus prove how keen it was to maintain dialogue under all circumstances.

She therefore asked members to agree on a declaration, for which she would seek consensus. A draft paper, which had been given to everyone, would be used as a basis for the discussion.

3. Exchange of views on the situation in the Middle East and adoption of a declaration

(a) The Chair gave the floor to Ambassador Carlos Fernandez Arias, member of the Committee on Political Affairs, Security and Human Rights, and thanked him for having kindly testified to the European Union's commitment.

The ambassador, who had chaired the committee throughout the Spanish Presidency, summed up the latest measures taken and views expressed by the High Representative and the Quartet. He confirmed that there would be total mobilisation with a view to engaging in permanent dialogue with all stakeholders, in order not to break the tenuous thread of hopes for peace. He pointed out that constant efforts had been made to improve living conditions for the inhabitants of Gaza.

At the request of the Turkish delegation, the Chair held a minute's silence in memory of the victims of the Navi Marmara ship.

(b) The Chair asked members to express their views on the draft declaration they had received.

A number of members spoke. Several points were stressed and some proposals for additions or amendments were put forward:

- the international nature of the investigation and the total lifting of the blockade (Egypt, Palestine, Jordan, Turkey, EP);
- the opening of all passageways had to be considered together with Israel (Egypt);
- the attack on the humanitarian ship was an affront to international public opinion (Turkey). It should be pointed out that the attack was carried out by 'the Israeli forces';
- Ivo Vajgl and Antonio Panzeri (EP) suggested inviting all sides to join forces with a view to achieving a sustainable peace;
- security requirements for all people concerned had to be mentioned (Triantaphyllides - EP);
- Mr Chahib (Algeria) welcomed this approach, which enhanced the political committee's credibility;
- Robert Del Picchia (France) suggested that some time be set aside in a future meeting for a real debate;
- the members of the Palestinian delegation reminded those present of the living conditions in Gaza and the West Bank and the ongoing breach by Israel of its international legal obligations;
- Majali Whbee (Israël) rejected the interpretation which had been given to events and took the view that the Israeli forces had responded to a genuine provocation by one ship, while the other five had obeyed instructions. He mentioned the permanent threat to Israel's security posed by the continuing arms trafficking. He could not agree with or accept the terms used in the draft declaration.

The Chair thanked the speakers and submitted the draft declaration as amended during the exchange of views. She declared the declaration adopted, with the dissociation of the Israeli delegation.

The Chair thanked participants for their contributions to this declaration.
The final version would be announced as soon as possible.

Further to a request by the Turkish delegation, the Chair would send a letter to draw attention to the fate of four Jerusalem elected members of the Palestinian Legislative Council (members of Hamas), who were under threat of deportation.

She would also ask the other committee Chairs whether they wished to subscribe to that day's declaration.

4. Choice of topics for the future recommendation

The Chair said she had received a number of suggestions for future topics.
She proposed that the following topics be accepted:

- the role of civil societies on both sides of the Mediterranean
- the Arab peace initiative
- security in the region as a whole.

On the latter issue there appeared to be a difference in interpretation between 'military/political security' and 'security' in the sense of free movement.
The Assembly Bureau would have to approve these proposals.

5 Next meeting

The Chair invited members to meet in Brussels on 30 September 2010.
Hélène Flautre reiterated her wish to see a 'Human rights' item entered regularly on the agenda.

The Chair thanked all members once again and invited them to meet for lunch.

The meeting closed at 13.02.
