



**PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY OF THE MEDITERRANEAN**  
**ASSEMBLEE PARLEMENTAIRE DE LA MEDITERRANEE**  
الجمعية البرلمانية للبحر الأبيض المتوسط

**2<sup>nd</sup> Standing Committee on Economic, Social and Environmental Cooperation**

**“Activities of the PAM Panel on Trade  
and Investments in the Mediterranean - 2013”**

**Rapporteur: Hon. Nevena Stojanovic (Serbia)**

**Report unanimously adopted during the 8<sup>th</sup> PAM Plenary Session in Marseille, 20 January 2014**

**I. BACKGROUND**

1. Since its inception (Lisbon, Portugal, 27-28 May 2010), the PAM Panel on Trade and Investments in the Mediterranean has been working in order to stimulate concerted legislative action at the national and regional level in support of economic growth. To reach this aim, the PAM Panel acts as a **high level think-tank**, providing concrete recommendations to all PAM member parliaments in the fields of, among others, job creation, support to SMEs, regulatory frameworks, trade facilitation, energy, water, food security and vocational training.

2. On the occasion of the 7<sup>th</sup> PAM Plenary Session, held in Malta on 12-13 October 2012, it was agreed to re-shape the structure of the PAM Panel, with the aim of increasing its effectiveness and involving more stakeholders. Following consultations between the co-chairs of the PAM Panel and PAM secretary General, Amb. Sergio Piazzi, the following structure for the PAM Panel was decided:

- a) The PAM Panel will be co-chaired by a parliamentarian and a representative of the economic-productive sector. The parliamentary co-chair of the Panel will be the PAM rapporteur on Economy, responsible for reporting to the Assembly about the activities of the Panel.
- b) Four Sectoral Groups will compose the PAM Panel, namely:
  - Sustainable Development (SD): Energy, Water, Environment
  - Trade Facilitation (TF): Rules, Logistics, Transport, Infrastructures
  - Production Initiatives and Job Creation (PJ): Industry, M/SMEs, Services, Food Production, Vocational Training

- Investments and Finance (IF): Facilitating legislative and regulatory frameworks, Promotion Agencies, Financial Institutions and operators
- c) Each Sectoral Group is to be co-chaired by a member of parliament and a representative of the productive sector. The two co-chairs will lead the activities of the Sectoral Groups, following the indications provided by the Steering Committee of the PAM Panel.
- d) The Steering Committee of the PAM Panel is composed of the President of the 2<sup>nd</sup> PAM Standing Committee, and co-chairs of the Panel and of each sectoral group. Representatives of partner institutions, experts and other individuals can be invited to participate and contribute to the meetings and the activities of the Steering Committee.
- e) In order to strengthen the functioning of the Steering Committee of the PAM Panel, the PAM Secretariat will encourage the members of the Steering Committee to meet at the margins of other PAM events.

## **II. RECENT ACTIVITIES ORGANIZED BY PAM**

3. Following the 7<sup>th</sup> PAM Plenary Session (Malta, 12-13 October 2012), the PAM Panel on Trade and Investments in the Mediterranean organized the 3<sup>rd</sup> Meeting of its Steering Committee and the Meeting of the Executive Members of its Energy Group. The two events took place on 3-4 May 2013 in Rabat, Morocco, at the kind invitation of the Parliament of the Kingdom of Morocco<sup>1</sup>.

### **3<sup>rd</sup> Meeting of the Steering Committee of the PAM Panel**

4. The Meeting of the Steering Committee aimed, among others, to identify priorities and strategies for the PAM Panel for the biennium 2013-2014 and to define the main objectives in view of the high level inter-governmental conference “Harnessing Trade for Growth in the Mediterranean”, held Geneva, Switzerland, on 30-31 May 2013, jointly organized by PAM and the United Nations.

5. The Steering Committee members discussed the strong need for job creation, to be boosted through the support of small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs), which were identified as the engine of economic growth, particularly in the Euro-Mediterranean region. In this regard, the issues of facilitating access to credit, harmonizing the set of rules to create an enterprise and tax facilitation mechanisms were also tackled.

---

<sup>1</sup> The Executive Report of the Rabat events is available for download on PAM website, at the following link: <http://www.pam.int/welcome.asp?m=documents&a=cat&cid=217>

6. During the event, several issues were discussed, including the importance of Free Trade Agreements and their extension at the regional level, in order to include all the countries of the basin; the need for political stability, which creates a conducive environment for business and investments; the key role of tourism, not only in terms of industrial development, but also as the main source of attracting foreign currency for the countries of the MENA region.

### **Meeting of the Executive Members of the Energy Group of the PAM Panel on Trade and Investments in the Mediterranean**

7. The Meeting of the Executive Members of the Energy Group of the PAM Panel followed the PAM Conference “Energy challenges in the Mediterranean”<sup>2</sup>, held in Ouarzazate on 15-16 September 2012, hosted by the Moroccan House of Councillors.

8. Participants stressed the importance of regional cooperation and integration, aimed at a harmonized system through a shared set of rules. For this reason, it was noted that regulatory activities are crucial to foster the objective of the integration of the energy systems in the Mediterranean. Education, training and know-how transfer in this sector were also mentioned as priorities for the sustainable development in the region.

9. In Rabat, it was also suggested for PAM to engage in a constructive dialogue with the European Parliament and the European Commission on Energy-related issues, in order to increase regional cooperation, also in light of the proliferation of uncoordinated activities in the energy sector. Many participants indicated PAM as the ideal institution to serve as a starting point and possibly federate all the initiatives.

### **High-level intergovernmental conference “Harnessing Trade for Growth in the Mediterranean”, Geneva, Switzerland, 30-31 May 2013**

10. The Joint Conference held by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean (PAM) and the United Nations (UN) Inter-Agency Cluster on Trade and Productive Capacity, took place on 30-31 May 2013, and brought together over 200 representatives of PAM and the UN System, international financial institutions, the productive and academic sectors in Geneva, Switzerland.

11. The main objective was to discuss and recommend immediate and long-term actions to be adopted in order to address the effects of the economic crisis in the Mediterranean region from the perspective of developing trade, fighting unemployment and, more generally, identifying mechanisms to further inter-regional cooperation.

12. The contributions of the speakers of the Conference, together with the animated debate which concluded each session, resulted in a set of recommendations on the following issues: the

---

<sup>2</sup> The Executive Report of the Ouarzazate conference is available for download on PAM website, at the following link: <http://www.pam.int/welcome.asp?m=documents&a=cat&cid=221>

economic crisis in the Euro-Mediterranean Region from a global perspective, productive capacity; revitalizing trade; developing transport infrastructure; increasing investment; strengthening energy systems; improving productive capacity; risk management in trade; food security.

### **III. REGIONAL COOPERATION – PAM RELATIONS WITH INTERNATIONAL AND REGIONAL INSTITUTIONS<sup>3</sup>**

13. Following the PAM 7<sup>th</sup> Plenary Session, the Assembly continued its work and contributed to several initiatives, promoted by partner institutions, in order to promote actions in support of the economic growth.

14. PAM further strengthened its ties with the **OSCE**, by participating and contributing to the OSCE 2012 Mediterranean Conference, which focused on the strong interconnections between economic co-operation and the transition to a democratic political regime. The conference, which took place in Rome on 30-31 October 2012, represented a good opportunity for Eng. Alessandro Ortis, co-Chair of the PAM Panel, to brief all the participants about the activities of the Assembly in support of regional economic integration.

15. PAM participated at the **1<sup>st</sup> Mediterranean Economic Forum**, organized by the Malta Institute of Management in St. Julians, Malta, on 14-15 November 2012. On that occasion, the unfolding events that have dramatically changed the structure and character of the region were analysed and debated. The Forum allowed PAM, represented by its Secretary General, to approach various financial institutions, especially from the Arab world, enlarging PAM's network of partner institutions to further promote economic cooperation in the Mediterranean area.

16. The excellent relations with **UNIDO**, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, resulted in a **parliamentary debate**, held by our Assembly on the occasion of the “International conference on productive work for youth in Tunisia and the MENA region”, organised by UNIDO in Tunis on 28-29 November 2012, and attended by over 2500 participants.

17. The Parliamentary Session, organized at the kind invitation of UNIDO Director General, Kandeh Yumkella, was dedicated to “**The Role of Parliaments in Support of the Economic Process**”. The PAM debate was chaired by PAM Vice President and President of the 2nd Standing Committee, Senator Lhou Lmarbouh (Morocco), and focused, *inter alia*, on “Measures adopted at the national and regional levels in support of Productive Work”, and “SMEs and Job Creation: obstacles, challenges and opportunities”.

---

<sup>3</sup> The activities mentioned in this chapter were described in detail by PAM press releases. For further information, please consult the “News” section on PAM institutional website.

18. PAM Vice President Sen. Lmarbough represented PAM on the occasion of the conference **“Power Industry North Africa”**, which tackled the strategic issues of electricity liberalisation, legal regulatory frameworks, energy market integration and of tailored policies in view of a long-term sustainable development. The event, held in Casablanca, Morocco, on 27-28 February 2013, represented one more occasion to discuss with PAM partners energy-related issues, and to establish co-operation with several operators.

19. Cooperation on Energy was further increased also with European Institutions. On 11 April 2013, PAM participated and contributed to the **Euro-Mediterranean rendez-vous on Energy**, held at the European Parliament, in Brussels. The event focused on Energy opportunities in light of the new political context of the MENA region, and on how to further support regional energy projects.

20. Our Assembly, represented by Hon. Justyne Caruana, Head of the Maltese Delegation to PAM, participated to the **Barcelona EuroMed Forum**, organized by the European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMed), the EBRD and the Stockholm School of Economics, which tackled the crucial issue of social inclusion in the aftermath of the Arab Spring.

21. PAM further consolidated its relations with Energy Charter, a major partner on Energy-related issues, on the occasion of the **High level meeting on sustainable energy in the MENA region: renewable, efficiency and regional cooperation**, organized in Amman, Jordan, on 3 July 2013.

22. Sen. Lhou Lmarbough represented PAM on the occasion of the **3rd MEDREG-IMME Seminar**, which dealt with the **reform and opening of Maghreb electricity markets**. During the seminar, held in Tunis on 11-12 September, participants reiterated, among others, the urgent need for harmonized regulatory framework and for mitigating the dominant position of energy incumbents.

23. Represented by Hon. Mounia Rhoulam (Morocco), PAM participated at the **Expert Group Meeting of the “Framework paper for a regional policy for the development of renewable energy in North Africa”**, organized by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) and held in Rabat, Morocco, on 24-25 September. Hon. Rhoulam reiterated the commitment of PAM on Energy-related issues, and underlined the importance of UNECA for PAM activities in the framework of the PAM Panel on Trade and Investments in the Mediterranean.

24. PAM further consolidated its relations with the EBRD in Rome on 27 September, by participating at the **“Presentation of the Energy Strategy of the EBRD”**. Eng. Alessandro Ortis participated at the event, organized by the EBRD together with the Italian Ministry of Economic Development.

25. Dr. Cesare Sacerdoti, founding member of the Steering Committee of the PAM Panel, represented PAM on the occasion of the **Meeting on Innovation, Development and Democracy in the Mediterranean Area**, organized by the Innovation Knowledge Foundation THINK! in collaboration with the Institute for International Political Studies (ISPI) and the Research Centre MEDAlics , and held in Milan, Italy on 10 October 2013. Dr. Sacerdoti underlined how parliamentarians are committed to participate in these processes and are open to suggestions and ideas which they can promote within their national assemblies, in order to assist the operators in achieving their objectives.

26. Hon. Justyne Caruana, Head of the Maltese Delegation to PAM, represented the Assembly at the **2<sup>nd</sup> Mediterranean Economic Forum**, held in St. Julians, Malta, on 14-15 November 2013. PAM contributed providing an update on the political scenario in the Mediterranean region, with particular focus on the North Africa region.

27. PAM, represented by Dr. Rym Ayadi, Member of the Steering Committee of the PAM Panel, participated and contributed to the **conference “Financial instruments: a key to the future of SMEs”**, organized by the Mediterranean Bank Network in Brussels on 15 November 2013.

28. PAM activities on the international arena further strengthened and consolidated the role of our Assembly and that of the PAM Panel on Trade and Investments in the Mediterranean in support of the regional sustainable development and growth, and particularly on crucial and strategic themes, energy, unemployment and job creation, investments, support to the SMEs.

#### **IV. JOB CREATION IN THE MEDITERRANEAN REGION – YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT**

29. Job Creation is one of the most urgent items on the agenda of governments, parliaments and other major institutions. For this reason, PAM decided, during its 7<sup>th</sup> Plenary Session in Malta, to dedicate a part of this report to this crucial topic.

##### **General context**

30. In December 2010, a young unemployed Tunisian set himself on fire after police stopped him from running his small business because he lacked the necessary permits. His death was critical in inspiring the so-called “**Arab Spring**” revolutions that progressively arose across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region and resulted in the deposing of authoritarian rulers in Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen and Libya. The causes that triggered these revolutions are multiple, but one of the factors that seemed to be common to most countries in the region was the fact that young people were angry and frustrated by their very limited chances to get a satisfying, stable job. Indeed, the future prospects of most of the youth in MENA countries

appears grim in terms of employment, despite them being better educated than their parents' generation.

31. In **Spain**, on the Northern shore of the Mediterranean, one of the main issues having originated the *indignados* protests in May 2011 was also a very high unemployment rate among the young. The economies and societies of other European countries bordering the Mediterranean, where protests have also taken place, are being deeply affected by the so-called NEET (“not in education, employment or training”) phenomenon.

32. **High unemployment rates** – that is, high percentages of jobless individuals available for employment and actively looking for it –, are indeed characteristic of the Mediterranean region, especially among the youth – those between 15 and 24 years of age. Although in different ways and with varying intensities, **all PAM member countries are affected by them**. According to the most recent World Development Indicators, European countries with coastlines on the Mediterranean have an average youth unemployment rate of 28%<sup>4</sup>. Major economic and political events have recently exacerbated this trend, and data would be even more worrying if one considers as “young” the group from 15 to 30 year old.

33. A range of issues, directly or indirectly linked to the problem of unemployment, currently present **challenges for the future of the Mediterranean region**. These are, notably, the economic crisis and the austerity measures that have, as a consequence, been adopted by governments in EU Mediterranean states; ongoing political reform in the Balkans; the Arab Spring revolutions in the Southern shore and instability in the Middle East; the population growth rate (particularly for the Southern countries).

34. In this context of uncertainty for the peoples of the Mediterranean, it is essential that parliamentarians take action and cooperate in bringing sustainable growth and development back to the region through the provision of long-term sustainable jobs, especially for the youth.

### **Youth unemployment**

35. In the **MENA region**, in 2011, the **Middle East countries** had an average of almost 28% of youth unemployment rate, while for the **North Africa countries** the same indicator was around 23%. Projections for the future (until 2018) indicate an increase of the youth unemployment rate for the ME countries, while for the NA countries the rate is supposed to be stable, despite the high population growth of the region<sup>5</sup>.

---

<sup>4</sup> The World Bank, 2013 World Development Indicators (data for the period 2008-2011). Web link <http://wdi.worldbank.org/table/2.5>

<sup>5</sup> ILO, Global Employment – Trends for youth 2013, p.9 - [http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/documents/publication/wcms\\_212423.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/documents/publication/wcms_212423.pdf)

36. The situation in **European Mediterranean countries** worsened dramatically in the last 5 years. From 2008 to 2012 (second quarter), Youth (under 30 years old) unemployment rates rose in Greece (from 20% to 55%), in Spain (from 22% to over 50%), in Portugal (from 15% to 38%), and in all the other European coastal states of the region<sup>6</sup>.

### **Young women**

37. Women in the **MENA region** are particularly poorly integrated in the labor market, as very few of them are actually employed or looking for employment. The working condition of women, in the Mediterranean countries of the MENA region, should be considered as a priority by the respective parliaments, in order to reach the women's full inclusion in the societies and economies of their countries. Indeed, aside from equality issues, social and economic differences among men and women result in a considerable loss of economic potential for the region.

38. The MENA region is the world region with the highest gender gaps in unemployment rate: in 2012, the gender gap was 11% for the **North Africa** sub-region, while for the **Middle East** countries was 10%<sup>7</sup>. Young women, aged 15 to 24, are particularly affected, their percentage of joblessness having reached 41% in North Africa. The same results from the gender gaps in unemployment rate: 52% gap for the Middle East and 48% for the North Africa countries.

39. The percentages of **young employed women** in the MENA region are the lowest of the world: 13.2% for the Middle East and 19.7% for the North Africa<sup>8</sup>.

40. It is important and interesting to consider that declines in youth labour force participation can have a positive outcome if this is used for **education and training**. However, whether higher education leads to greater gender equity in the labour market remains questionable.

41. It must also be noted that, due to the world economic/financial crisis, in low- and middle-income countries, unemployment of the male breadwinner is expected to consistently reduce the household's income, and lead, as a consequence, to an increase in labour force participation of women. This phenomenon is not likely to happen in high-income countries, due to the existence of social insurance systems which protect those who lose their job.

### **Vulnerable employment, discouraged youth and segregation**

42. High unemployment rates are not the only major challenge facing North African labor

---

<sup>6</sup> *Ibidem*, p.11

<sup>7</sup> ILO, Global Employment Trends for Women, 2013, p.9 - [http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/--dcomm/documents/publication/wcms\\_195447.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/--dcomm/documents/publication/wcms_195447.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> *Ibidem*, p.19

markets. Indeed, the unemployed are not alone in their struggle to make a living in the region. Among those employed, particularly the youth and women in rural and poorer areas, many are in a situation of vulnerable employment, which means they have to deal with **unstable, unsafe work** and resign themselves to low incomes. Domestic and self-employed workers – often working in the informal economy – are especially affected by this phenomenon, and, among them, women are much more numerous than men.

43. Even those working in the services sector, the largest in the region, are not spared of the risk of unstable employment. **Many jobs in the tourism industry are of very poor quality** and poorly paid. The same applies to workers employed in the education or healthcare sectors – mostly women – whose wages are extremely poor compared to international standards.

44. On a global scale, the **gender gap in vulnerable employment** is not worrying: since 50.4% of women and 48% of men work in vulnerable conditions, the gap is of just 2%. However, this gender gap peaks at 23.6% in North Africa and 15% in the Middle East. It should be underlined that women often contribute more than men as family workers, and for this reason women are more vulnerable than men.

45. There is yet another phenomenon resulting from the labor market's dysfunction in the MENA region that deeply affects the youth, especially young women. This phenomenon consists in unemployed people who have given up looking for work and are out of the labor market all together. This so-called **"discouraged youth"** is not taken into account in unemployment rates, but they can be significantly numerous in many countries in the region.

46. Young women are affected also by the so-called **segregation** (both sectoral and occupational), confined to certain types of industries or occupations in terms of employment opportunities. The explanation of this phenomenon is still controversial, yet the main elements which determine segregation are generally differences in education and training experience, gender stereotypes, preferences and needs (job stability and working hours). Gender stereotypes explain, in particular, why women are over-represented in certain types of jobs, such as nursing, teaching, social and child care. Preference and needs explain the over-representation of women in public sector jobs and/or part time work<sup>9</sup>.

### **Policies to address and reduce youth unemployment**

47. Youth unemployment being a multifaceted issue, needs to be tackled from several different angles, in order to achieve a balanced approach. **The International Labour Conference (ILC)**, held in Geneva, Switzerland, in June 2012, resulted in a resolution that identified several policy areas to address youth unemployment.

48. **Macroeconomic policies can be targeted to stimulate job creation.** Fostering strong

---

<sup>9</sup> *Ibidem*, p.27

aggregate demand, improving access to finance (especially for micro, small and medium-sized enterprises), investing in labour intensive infrastructure works and public employment policies represent opportunities to boost the aggregate demand and, in doing so, promoting youth employment. High investments are related to youth unemployment rate. However, several factors influence investments, such as access to, and cost of, credit.

49. **Focusing on education and training could enhance employability and ease the transition from school to the labour market.** This applies especially – but not only – in several low-income countries, where the education level of young people is not high. It should be noted that, in the Mediterranean, the countries of the North Africa and Middle East experience the so-called “educated unemployed” phenomenon. This is the result of a mismatch between education and labour market needs and requirements, accompanied by a weak aggregate demand.

50. **Introducing targeted labour market policies to stimulate the integration of young people in the labour market.** These measures are particularly useful to reduce skills mismatch and to promote the transition to formal employment, and include job search assistance and incentives (for instance wage subsidies, social security exemptions for a limited period) for those who hire disadvantaged people. Such policies, called ALMPs (Active Labour Market policies) are proved to be more effective when adopted as comprehensive packages than single measures<sup>10</sup>.

51. **The promotion of entrepreneurship and self-employment** is a tool that has been used very often, in various contexts, and it has high potential to stimulate job creation. Lately, these programmes are being even more targeted, focusing to support particular groups, such as women, who sometimes experience more difficulties than men in the labour market. Small programmes (promoted by private actors, for example) resulted to be more effective than larger public programmes.

52. **Young people should be granted rights at work.** Many young workers do not enjoy the same treatment as other employees, in terms of possibilities to move to full-time employment from part-time, seasonal or occasional employment. Collective agreements on youth employment represent a useful tool to protect the large group of young workers aiming at entering and then maintaining a full-time job.

---

<sup>10</sup> For more information on ALMPs, see ILO, *Global Employment Trends for Youth 2013*, p. 69 and [www.ilo.org](http://www.ilo.org)

Type of programme	Advantages	Disadvantages
Labour market training	Works better with broader vocational and employability skills that are in demand and when it includes work experience and employment services.	May produce temporary, rather than sustainable solutions and, if not well targeted, may benefit those who are already "better off"; training alone may not be sufficient to increase youth employment prospects.
Employment services (job search, career guidance and labour market information)	Can help youth make realistic choices and match their aspirations with employment and training opportunities; improve information on job prospects and on the efficiency, effectiveness and relevance of initiatives.	May create unrealistic expectations if not linked to labour market needs, and they often only cover urban areas and the formal economy.
Employment-intensive public works and community services	Help young people gain labour market attachment and, at the same time, improve physical and social infrastructure and the environment, especially when combined with development and sectoral strategies, and can enhance employability if combined with training.	Low capacity for labour market integration; young workers may become trapped in a carousel of public works programmes; often gender biased; displacement of private sector companies.
Employment subsidies	Can create employment if targeted at specific needs (e.g. to compensate for initial lower productivity and training) and at groups of disadvantaged young people.	High deadweight losses and substitution effects (if not targeted); employment may last only as long as the subsidy.
Entrepreneurship promotion	Can have high employment potential and may meet young people's aspirations (e.g. for flexibility, independence); more effective when combined with financial and other services, including mentoring.	May create displacement effects and have a high failure rate, which limits its capacity to create sustainable employment; is often difficult for disadvantaged youth due to their lack of networks, experience, know-how and collateral.

Table 1. Advantage and disadvantages of youth employment programmes and measures (ILO 2009)

53. **Parliamentarians play a major role in the process of stimulating job creation in general and, more particularly, supporting youth employment.** The legislative power can and must create a conducive environment, aimed at increasing job opportunities for the young workers.

54. **Youth unemployment is a multi-faced issue that affect all PAM member countries, and it needs to be addressed through a multi-sectoral approach.** This includes investments (and allocation of resources for investments); simplification of the legislation in several countries; harmonization of national legislations; targeted policies in the sectors of education, taxation and regional cooperation.

## V. CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE ACTIVITIES

55. The PAM Panel on Trade and Investments in the Mediterranean is a useful high level instrument to **increase awareness between member parliaments**, which, in close cooperation with the other stakeholders, aims to identify concrete actions and measures to be taken in support of the productive sector in order to help the parliamentarians in further stimulating growth, employment and the entire economic process in the region, through their legislative action within national parliaments.

56. The initiatives carried out by the PAM Panel resulted in **detailed recommendations for all member parliaments** to tackle the crisis that hit the Mediterranean economies. For this reason, the executive reports – and the recommendations included – of the PAM Panel events should be circulated to all PAM member parliaments, and distributed to the relevant parliamentary committees, as well as to other international *fora*, with the aim to promote and implement their recommendations as soon as possible for the re-launch and further integration of the economies of the countries of the region.

57. The PAM Panel should continue to promote its initiatives, especially at the sectoral group level, in order to tackle specific issues and result in detailed recommendations. The following topics are to be considered priorities for the Mediterranean region:

- a) For the **SD Group**, the issues of **waste** (collection, recycling, re-usage); **water** (consumption, distribution, recycling); **vulnerable consumers**;
- b) In the activities of the **IF Group**, the central theme of **SMEs and financial solutions** should be analyzed into detail. This topic, for its strong correlation with Job Creation, could be the subject of an inter-sectoral dedicated meeting, together with the **PJ Group**;
- c) It would be interesting, for the **PJ Group**, to treat the issue of **Vocational Training**, which is gaining momentum particularly due to the high increase of the population in some countries of our region;
- d) In connection with the **TF Group**, **Maritime transport and infrastructures** represent an interesting and challenging topic to be discussed.

58. The above mentioned topics emerged as priorities following discussions and bilateral meetings held by the co-chairs of the PAM Panel, the members of the Steering Committee and experts of each sector. These issues deserve to be tackled through dedicated events, with the format of the Ouarzazate or Rabat Energy events. In order to reduce the expenses for PAM staff and members, experts and host institutions, one-day events might be organised back to back with other PAM initiatives.