



PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY OF THE MEDITERRANEAN  
ASSEMBLEE PARLEMENTAIRE DE LA MEDITERRANEE

الجمعية البرلمانية للبحر الأبيض المتوسط

## **PAM Mission to Moscow**

**9 - 10 April 2014**

***Executive Report***

## **Background and Objectives**

A PAM High-level mission to Moscow took place on 9 and 10 April 2014. It represents the last leg of a series of consultations in New York, Geneva and the Middle East region aimed at supporting, through the instrument of parliamentary diplomacy, the Israeli – Palestinian Peace Process, as well as the delivery of humanitarian assistance and the promotion of regional confidence-building through inter-parliamentary dialogue in the Syrian crisis.

The PAM Bureau had approved this mission following to a request by the UN to PAM President and an invitation by the Russian Parliament, in view of the specific role of Russia in both the Middle East Peace Process, as member of the Quartet, and the Syrian crisis. The details of the mission had been arranged following to PAM high-level meetings with the UN Secretary General, UN High-level Officials and the Russian Permanent Representative to the United Nations last December.

This mission also built on the results of the recent PAM mission to Egypt. Prior to the mission, PAM Secretariat had also duly consulted the President of the Lebanese Parliament, as well as the Jordanian and Israeli Vice Presidents of PAM, as well as the office of Mr. Brahimi, in order to obtain indications about their views on recent developments in the region, including the lack of follow up to the Geneva II Conference and the obstacles in the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations.

The main purpose of the mission was to hold bilateral consultations with senior members of the Russian Duma, the Federation Council, and two Deputy Ministers of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to discuss the latest events in the region and possible developments, as well as evaluate options for the role to be played by PAM in support of other international efforts. This report highlights the information shared by the Russian authorities with PAM MPs. All members of the PAM delegation engaged very actively in the various discussions with the Russian counterparts.

The PAM delegation, led by President Sen. Francesco Amoruso (Italy), included Vice-President, Hon. Tayseer Quba'a (Palestine), Vice-President, Hon. Lhou Lmarbouh (Morocco), Hon. Belal Qasem (Palestine), Hon. Nathalie Amoratti-Blanc (Monaco), Hon. Fadia Deeb (Syria), Hon. Ammar Al-Assad (Syria), PAM Secretary General, Amb. Sergio Piazzini and PAM Deputy Secretary General for Assembly Affairs, Mr. Mourad Youssry.

Consultations in Moscow included meetings with **H.E. Sergey ZHELEZNYAK**, Vice-Chairman of the State Duma; **H.E. Grigoriy KARASIN**, Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation for European Affairs; **H.E. Mikhail BOGDANOV**, Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation for Middle East and North Africa; and **H.E. Andrey KLIMOV**, Vice-Chairman of the Federation Council Committee for International Affairs, other senior members of the Federation Council, and **Amb. Cesare Maria Ragalini**, Italian Ambassador to the Russian Federation.

## **Summary of discussions relevant to the Middle East and Syria**

DUMA - The current political developments in Syria and the Middle East in general were discussed in detail during the first meeting of the PAM delegation with **H.E. Sergey ZHELEZNYAK, Vice-Chairman of the State Duma**. Sen. Amoroso gave a short briefing about PAM's recent activities and the political missions in the region, highlighting PAM's increasing concerns following the stagnation of the Peace Process and the deterioration of the humanitarian situation in Syria.

Hon. Zheleznyak stressed that the Russian Duma shares the same concerns as those of PAM with regard to the Middle East and Syria. He added that Russia has always supported the Middle East Peace Process and will continue to do so. The direct negotiation will remain the only way towards achieving a comprehensive political agreement. A total interruption of ongoing talks could cause renewed violence, as people would lose hope in a rapid and lasting solution to the conflict. He stressed the key role of PAM as a unique platform for dialogue between the parties, and called on PAM to be vigilant and to be ready to activate its network to sustain the regional dialogue at the parliamentary level.

Common views emerged between the Vice President of the Duma and the PAM delegates on the importance of combating extremists, from all sides, which are trying to undermine any form of progress and prevent reaching a final peace agreement. Hon. Quba gave an overview on the current status of the peace talks, including the latest obstacles hampering the negotiations.

Both, the Duma and PAM, expressed their full commitment to the Middle East Peace Process and that they will be exerting all possible efforts to push forward the direct negotiations aiming at reaching a final agreement based on the two States solution.

On Syria, Hon. Zheleznyak explained to the PAM delegation that the Russian Government has managed last year to prevent possible air strikes against Syria, which would have contributed to the instability of the region. He added that they have done so for the sake of the Syrian people who are already suffering and would suffer even more as a result of foreign military interventions.

In his reply to a comment by the Syrian delegation, Hon. Zheleznyak stressed that it is necessary to make a clear differentiation between "terrorists" and "political oppositions", adding that political opposition does not carry weapons and does not kill innocent civilians. Political dialogue is necessary to achieve peace in Syria.

At the end of the meeting, Hon. Zheleznyak confirmed to the PAM delegation the commitment of Russia to work with all key players in the region to reach a political solution to the Syrian crisis. He added that resorting to military solutions in regional conflicts tends to deepen the crisis and causes more casualties. A political solution is the only option, and all influential countries must be associated.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs - In the meeting with **H.E. Grigoriy KARASIN, Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation for European Affairs**, after addressing the

crisis in Ukraine, he reaffirmed the importance of cooperation between PAM and the Russian Duma in several domains of interest to the region.

He also mentioned the necessity to enhance further the role played by parliamentary diplomacy, which is proving, in many scenarios, to be more effective than traditional diplomacy. He valued PAM's role in this respect and called for more coordination with the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

**H.E. Mikhail BOGDANOV**, Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation for Middle East and North Africa, outlined in detail, from the Russian perspective, the current political situation in the Middle East and in the countries which had experienced the Arab Spring.

On the Middle East, he expressed his great concerns and scepticism that the ongoing peace talks between the Palestinians and Israelis will end up without any positive outcome. In his opinion, raising the topic of the "Jewish nature of the State" and asking the Palestinians to recognize it, would only be a new obstacle on the way towards a final settlement. Russia is ready to use all tools in its capacity to find a rapid solution in support of the plight of the Palestinian people.

With reference to Syria, he indicated that the US Administration and the international community had only given Geneva II three weeks to bear fruits, and they had already concluded that it was a failure with no measurable results. In his opinion, in Geneva there was not enough time to solve such a complicated crisis. The Geneva Communiqué must remain the bases for any political solution to the Syrian Crisis.

He shared the reservations expressed by the Syrian delegation on the nature and authority of the opposition delegation to the Geneva II conference. He raised his doubts that the representatives of the opposition had the capacity to represent the many organizations fighting on the ground and the required influence to halt all military actions in case of an agreement being reached.

He emphasized the importance of maintaining the secular and the cosmopolitan nature of Syria, while stating the Russian's full understanding of the need of radical political reforms in Syria that would result in democracy, freedom and a functional multi-party system.

He also added that the Russian Foreign Ministry is closely monitoring the situation in North Africa. The political transitions in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya are moving forward, although with different pace and different problems being faced by the countries concerned. He indicated Russia's commitment to provide economic and technical assistance to the Arab Spring Countries and stressed its willingness to work with PAM in achieving this.

COUNCIL OF THE FEDERATION - The final meeting was with **Sen. Andrey KLIMOV**, Vice-Chairman of the Federation Council Committee for International Affairs, and other senior members of the Russian Federation Council. The talks started on the relation between the countries of the PAM region and Russia. Sen. Klimov mentioned, as an example, that trade between Russia and PAM countries exceeds the sum of the trade balances between

Russia and the USA, China and India combined. Commercial exchanges with the USA do not reach 1% of the Russian trade balance.

The political and humanitarian situation in the Middle East and Syria were discussed between the members of the Federation Council and the PAM delegation. The role of Russia in contributing to peace and security in the Mediterranean region was highlighted, as well as that of PAM, which, in Russian views, has emerged as a very appreciated actor in the region.

Cooperation between Russia, Southern Mediterranean countries and PAM, in the field of education and heritage, were discussed, including the possible exchange of interns and the Russian contribution to the PAM Summer University project (PAM Fez Programme).

Sen. Klimov also extended the invitation to PAM to attend a major conference that Russia is planning to host in Malta towards the end of this year on the dialogue among civilizations in Europe. More information on this conference, and an official invitation shall be sent to the PAM Secretariat in the near future.

### **Concluding remarks and follow up actions**

Russia is very concerned by the possible escalation of violence that could affect the Middle East in case direct negotiations between the Palestinian Authority and Israel are interrupted. This was also highlighted to PAM during the consultations with its member parliaments prior to the fielding of the mission to Moscow. From these consultations and discussions with the Russian authorities, it emerged that it is necessary to use all possible influence by the international community to keep the negotiations going and, if necessary, be ready with alternative means to sustain the dialogue between the parties. Russian officials, on their part, stressed that PAM continues to represent a unique platform at the service of the international community at large. The PAM Bureau should already consider specific parliamentary initiatives to be activated at short notice. Similarly, with reference to the humanitarian disaster and civil strife in Syria, and in the aftermath of Geneva II, it is necessary to combine efforts to mobilize all required material resources and political means to ensure the protection of and delivery of relief assistance to the millions of civilians displaced in Syria and refugees in the neighboring countries. Parliamentary diplomacy must be used, as requested to PAM by the UN, to facilitate dialogue, remove obstacles and promote confidence building through a series of, sometimes low profile, dedicated initiatives.

### **Remarks by the Russian hosts on the situation in Ukraine**

In addition to the main topics referring to the Mediterranean region, of interest to PAM MPs, Russian officials briefed the delegation on recent events in Ukraine. Questions and observations by PAM delegates were made in their national capacity. In brief, on Ukraine, Russian officials presented the following points:

- The diplomatic solution is the only option available and Russia welcomes ongoing talks with all international players.
- The referendum in Crimea was the democratic way to resolve the escalating impasse. More than 93% of the registered voters participated, and 96% voted in favour of the

annexation to Russia. From the 23,000 men in the Ukrainian Army units present in Crimea before the events, only 2,000 chose to return to Kiev after the referendum.

- The Russian Government has no intention to neither intervene in nor invade Ukraine. It is calling on the international community to undertake and monitor the much-needed democratic and political reforms in Ukraine, especially in the relation between the central government in Kiev and the other cities and provinces, as this is the most efficient way to secure stability, prosperity and integrity of Ukraine.
- There are some 60,000-armed men in Ukraine, ranging from ultra-nationalists to pro-Russians and militias armed by Oligarchs that must be disarmed to ensure a peaceful political process, which requires constitutional guarantees for all ethnic groups.
- The Russian Government is ready to engage together with European partners in assisting Ukraine to address the economic crisis.

### **PAM Delegation**

1. Sen. Francesco Maria Amoruso, President of PAM, Italy
2. Hon. Tayseer Quba'a, Vice President of PAM, Palestine
3. Sen. Louh Lmarbouh, Vice President of PAM, Morocco.
4. Hon. Belal Qasem , Member of Palestinian National Council, Palestine
5. Hon. Nathalie Amoratti-Blanc, Monaco
6. Hon. Fadia Deeb, Chairwoman, Syria
7. Hon. Ammar Al Assad, Vice-Chairman of the Arab and Foreign Affairs Committee, Syria
8. Amb. Sergio Piazzì, PAM Secretary General, Italy
9. Mr. Mourad Youssry, PAM Deputy Secretary General, Egypt
10. Mr. Sandro Sobello, Secretary of the Italian Interparliamentary Group, Italy
11. Ms. Elodie Thomel, Head of Protocol, Monaco