



PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY OF THE MEDITERRANEAN
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PAM Mission to the United Nations

New York, 3 - 7 December 2013

Executive Report

Background and Objectives

The Mission to the United Nations in New York represented the final synthesis of a series of initiatives undertaken by PAM in the last six months in connection with the Syrian crisis and the Middle East Peace Process.

The first phase of the Middle East Mission took place in Lebanon and Syria. It was aimed at assisting the promotion of confidence building measures, the highlighting of the extreme importance of the protection of civilians, and to draw on PAM's Parliamentary Diplomacy and Network to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance to the Syrian people.

Following the meeting in Damascus with the UN agencies working in Syria, PAM assumed the responsibility to function as a bridge between the UN Agencies and the Syrian regime, represented in the Syrian Parliament. On that occasion a High-Level regional parliamentary hearing on the humanitarian crisis in Syria and the neighbouring countries was also requested by the UN agencies. PAM had immediately coordinated the organisation of the event, but unfortunately, and after receiving the confirmation of more than 120 participants, the Jordanian Senate had to cancel the event following the dissolution of the Senate itself.

The second mission to the Middle East was held from 10 to 15 November 2013 and included Jordan, Palestine and Israel. That mission focused on discussing, with all partners and key actors, the ongoing negotiations between Israel and Palestine. The Syrian Crisis and other regional developments impacting on the security and stability of the Mediterranean region, and the definition of strategies for the support by parliamentary diplomacy to the Peace Process in the Middle East were also discussed with officials of the three countries.

At the conclusion of the two missions to the Middle East, the annual PAM mission to New York could not but be dedicated to issues raised and a round of high-level consultative meetings with UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, UN high officials and permanent representatives to the UN, gave PAM the opportunity to share and further coordinate initiatives and future actions in these areas.

During the last year PAM has been playing a complementary role to that of the UN and its agencies in the Middle East region with regards to the Syrian Crisis and the Palestinian – Israeli Peace talks. These meetings highlighted the importance for the exchange of views and coordination, in light of the preparations for the PAM 2014 action plan, which will be debated and adopted at the Plenary Session to be held in Marseille on 20-22 January 2014.

In preparation of the visit to New York, the PAM Permanent Observer in Geneva had attended, on 28 November, the briefing by UN-LAS Special Envoy for Syria, H.E. Lakhdar Brahimi, where PAM's role in supporting the Geneva II Conference on 22 January was also discussed.

PAM High-level Mission to the United Nations

New York, 3 - 7 December 2013

Programme

Tuesday 3 December

Arrival in New York

Wednesday 4 December

- Mr. Antoine Jerrard, Deputy Director of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)
- Amb. Tariq Al-Ansari, Chief of Cabinet of the UN High Representative of the Alliance of Civilizations, Mr Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, and Director Matthew Hodes
- H.E. Mr. Abdou Salam Diallo, Chairman of the UN Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, Chair of the Second Committee of the UN General Assembly on Economic and Financial issues, and Permanent Representative of Senegal to the UN in New-York
- H.E. Amb. Vitaly Churkin, Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the UN

Tuesday 5 December

- Mr. Stephane Vazelle, Team Leader for the Middle East at the UN Department of Political Affairs
- H.E. Ban Ki-moon, UN Secretary General
- Ms. Denise O'Brien, DPA's Team Leader for North Africa, on Western Sahara
- Dr. Sima Bahous, Assistant Secretary General and Regional Director for Arab States, UNDP

Saturday 7 December

- Mr. Ola Almgren, Director of the New York Office, UN - OPCW joint Mission to Syria

End of mission and departure

Summary of discussions

The discussions that took place in New York provided a valuable opportunity to review, with high level UN officials, the regional situation, the developments of the Peace talks, the impact of the Syrian conflict, including that on religious minorities, the ongoing developments in Arab countries which experienced the Arab Spring, as well as the Western Sahara issue.

Meetings started with the **UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)**. **During this meeting Mr. Antoine Jerrard, Deputy Director**, praised the role PAM is playing in Syria and that its close relation with the Syrian authorities (Government and Parliament) is considered to be one of the few contacts that they can count on to facilitate the flow of Humanitarian assistance into the Syrian territory.

The possibility of PAM mediating to organise a joint meeting between OCHA and the Syrian side was discussed. PAM will accordingly arrange for this meeting to take place in Marseille, on the margin of PAM 8th Plenary Session on 20 – 22 January 2014. At the request of OCHA, PAM will launch the initiative with PAM Members to adopt a common resolution on the Humanitarian situation in Syria and neighbouring countries, as well as to support a 7-point activities plan to facilitate the delivery of relief aid.

The efforts by OCHA to raise the necessary funds to sustain the flow of the aid required for Syria were highlighted by Mr. Jerrard who confirmed that, notwithstanding the support of many countries, from the Gulf States and worldwide, more funds were needed. He called on the PAM delegation to help in raising this point among its member states in view of the donors meeting on 15 January in Kuwait.

Agreement was shared on the increasing necessity to shift humanitarian assistance in Jordan and the Occupied territories, to the socio/economic dimension. This type of assistance includes building of schools for refugees, their engagement in the labour Market, the provision of suitable healthcare, and other related services.

The relations between PAM and the AoC were discussed during a meeting with **Mr. Tariq Al-Ansari, Chief of Cabinet of the UN High Representative of the Alliance of Civilizations, Mr Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, and Director Matthew Hodes**. Attention was addressed to the previous two meetings and the MoU signed between PAM and AoC, PAM's membership of the Group of Friends of the UNAOC, and the Assembly's contribution to the Ministerial Declaration adopted on the occasion of the Group of Friends Meeting at the Ministerial Level, held at the UN Headquarters in New York on 27 September 2013.

Mr. Al Ansari outlined that the policy of the AoC, under the new President Hon. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, is to widen its concept and expand its scope in order not to limit its work to the "East – West" pattern. He mentioned as an example the current situation in Syria, which is not an "East – West" problem or a clash of Civilizations. Yet, he added, the AoC has a great role to play in maintaining the ethnic stability in general and in the Middle East region in particular.

In this regard, Mr. Al Ansari expressed his hope that the Holy See could join the AoC Group of Friends, and he added that they are scheduling a meeting with H.H. Pope Francis, possibly in March 2014, during which the relations between the Vatican State and the AoC will be thoroughly discussed. It has been agreed that PAM, through its strong ties with the Holy See, which is also an observer to the Assembly, will work at facilitating this rapprochement.

The AoC will also aim at playing an active mediation role, and to count more on music, art and sport in promoting peace and integration between people as a mechanism of its soft diplomacy approach.

It has also been confirmed during the meeting, that **UN High Representative of the Alliance of Civilizations, Ambassador Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser** will participate at the PAM Plenary Session in Marseille, which will offer another opportunity to further discuss common interests and initiatives on which PAM and AoC can work on.

The situation in the Middle East and the status of the Palestinian people were thoroughly discussed with **H.E. Mr. Abdou Salam Diallo, Chairman of the UN Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, and Permanent Representative of Senegal to the UN in New York.**

Amb. Diallo praised PAM's efforts in addressing the humanitarian situation of the Palestinian people in Syria and for the effective use of its parliamentary network to facilitate the Peace Talks between the two sides. He also recalled PAM's International meeting in Support of Israeli-Palestinian peace, which was held in Malta in February 2010, and urged PAM to host the second round of this meeting aimed at gaining the international support needed to push forward the peace talks. He assured the full support of the UN committee to PAM in the preparation of this meeting. Hon. Justyne Caruana agreed to support the proposal to host such an event in Malta in 2014.

The Two States solution, the condemnation of all kinds of violence from both sides, the protection of civilians, and the immediate stop to the construction of new settlements, were the main points discussed during the meeting. Furthermore, the importance of supporting the role played by UNRWA in the region, both politically by using PAM's Parliamentary network with the Knesset and the Palestinian legislative bodies, and also by helping in raising funds for the UNRWA activities by the member States of the Assembly, was stressed. PAM delegates briefed Amb. Diallo on the outcome of the discussions in the Middle East, particularly on what are considered the main obstacles, such as Israeli settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, as well as the request by the Israeli Government to keep a military presence at the Jordan border for a period of 40 years.

In the meeting with **H.E. Amb. Vitaly Churkin, Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the UN**, the Syrian file was openly discussed. The significance of the Geneva II conference as the main political platform for a solution to the Syrian Crisis has been agreed on between the Russian Ambassador and the members of the PAM delegation. In this regard, PAM previous meetings and the continuous support to the efforts of the UN-LAS Joint Special Representative for Syria. Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi has been underlined.

Amb. Churkin pointed out the three key elements necessary to assure the success of the Geneva II Conference, namely that the Syrian opposition (made of more than 160 different armed groups) could be all gathered under the umbrella of the National Coalition, that the delegations representing both sides, Government and opposition, are at a high level and able to take tough decisions, and that the two sides, and mainly the opposition, sit at the negotiating table with “reasonable” demands.

On the humanitarian dimension of the Syrian Crisis, Amb Churkin praised the role PAM is playing in this matter, as he was well briefed about PAM’s mission to Damascus and the meetings held there with Syrian Ministers, UN officials and members of the diplomatic corps (including the Russian Ambassador to Damascus). He expressed his full support to the PAM endeavour to depoliticize the humanitarian assistance granted to the Syrian people in Syria or who fled to neighbouring countries. He also pointed out that some positive progress has been achieved on the humanitarian dimension in Syria with more than 3 million people being vaccinated and more flexibility shown by the Syrian Government in allowing the relief aid to enter the country. Nevertheless, he urged all countries to give more attention to the Syrian humanitarian situation as they are giving to the Political dimension of the crisis.

The second day of the PAM mission to New York started with a meeting with **Mr. Stephane Vazelle, Team Leader for the Middle East at the UN Department of Political Affairs**. Mr. Vazelle reviewed with the PAM delegation the recent developments in the region. On the Syrian matter, he also raised the concern of the UN DPA whether the Syrian opposition would be able to unify under one umbrella before the Geneva II meeting, and also whether Iran will be around the table or not. He confirmed that the positive developments that recently took place on the nuclear file between Iran and the West can have positive implications on the Geneva II meeting and on the Syrian crisis in general.

On the Middle East, the UN DPA expressed a positive assessment with regards to the peace talks which has been going on for the last four months. The main concerns that they shared with the PAM delegation were that the process is now entering a very critical phase of hard decisions, the lack of confidence between the two sides, the new settlements built by the Israeli Government and the noticeable escalating tension on the ground.

One of the other main concerns was the rising skepticism among the people that it’s just another round of talks that will end up with no substantial gains. In this regard, PAM has a key role in rising confidence building measures on the popular level, being a unique platform for the Israeli and Palestinian MPs to meet and discuss the best possible ways of advocating peace talks.

In an extensive meeting with **H.E. Ban Ki-moon, UN Secretary General**, the current political situation in the Mediterranean region was thoroughly discussed. The situation in Syria, the Israeli-Palestinian Peace talks, the ongoing political developments in Egypt and other “Arab Spring” countries and the issue of the Western Sahara were all addressed during the meeting with the PAM delegation.

The UN Secretary General noted with great admiration the efforts PAM has been doing recently in the region and the outcome of the two missions to Syria and to the Middle East. He underlined the complementary role of PAM in supporting the UN action plan in the

Middle East and the Mediterranean in general. He also expressed his satisfaction for the appointment of the PAM Permanent Representative to the UN in New York, considering this as another step in the coordination and integration of efforts between the UN and PAM.

H.E. Ban Ki-Moon urged PAM to continue its support for all the Southern Mediterranean countries going through the political transition period. He supported the necessity of conducting a high level mission by PAM member Parliaments to visit both Cairo and Tripoli to discuss with the Egyptian and Libyan authorities the best possible ways of assisting the transition in both countries.

The UN SG shared the importance of conducting a similar briefing mission to Washington to meet the US Administration, Congressmen and officials of the World Bank, to Brussels to consult with Baroness Ashton, President Barroso and President Schulz, and also to Moscow to review with the Russian Duma the developments on Syria.

The meeting of the PAM delegation with **Ms. Denise O'Brien, UN DPA's Team Leader for North Africa**, was a great opportunity to exchange views with the UN DPA on PAM activities on helping the North African members of the Assembly going through transitional political phases, namely Tunisia, Egypt and Libya. A special note was dedicated also to the political top – down reforms made by Morocco. Ms. O'Brien has also expressed her satisfaction Mauritania's membership to the PAM, and the positive consequences of this step on the integral cooperation in the North African Region.

Sen. Louh Lmarbough (Morocco), PAM Vice President and President of PAM 2nd Standing Committee gave a full overview to the UN DPA on the Western Sahara issue from the Moroccan perspective, So did Mr. Mohamed Abu El-Einen (Egypt), PAM Honorary President, on the latest developments in Egypt and the upcoming referendum on the drafted constitution.

The PAM delegation also had a long meeting with **Dr. Sima Bahous, Assistant Secretary General and Regional Director for Arab States, UNDP**, to discuss the existing collaboration and explore new dimensions of reinforced partnership. It was underlined that PAM worked regularly with the UN economic commissions for the Mediterranean region, UNIDO and ILO, and that PAM has been always supporting the AGORA Project, on whose Board the PAM Secretary General is a member.

More specific and action oriented fields of cooperation were discussed during this meeting and in particular the need to help the Syrian People with more Socio-Economic aid and initiatives, good governance in the Arab States and the rebuilding of the institutional capabilities in Libya.

Among the fields discussed during the meeting there were PAM's role in facilitating Parliamentary Training to Arab Spring countries and Youth Employment in the MENA region, as well as other projects of a socio-political nature. It was agreed that PAM and UNDP should work as a *clearing house* on international activities in support of the Libyan Parliament.

During the meeting it has been agreed on nominating focal points from both sides to coordinate the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding. This will point out the priority areas within a specific time frame aimed at ensuring the highest level of commitment and productivity. It has also been agreed to conduct a field mission to Libya and meet the UNDP representative in that country to explore, on the ground, the issues that need urgent support.

During the meeting with **Mr. Ola Almgren, Director of the New York Office, United Nations - Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) joint Mission to Syria**, PAM Secretary General was provided with a very detailed overview on the structure and scope of the OPCW mission, including the difficulties encountered in collecting and shipping out of Syria the Chemical Weapons and materials to be destroyed abroad, as the Syrian Government does not possess the necessary equipment and facilities to do so.

At present, the main obstacles are represented by the difficulty to identify a foreign port where Chemical Weapons and materials arriving from Syria could be transhipped on a US ship equipped with the required facilities.



PAM Delegation meeting the UN Secretary General, H.E. Mr. Ban Ki Moon

Conclusions and follow up actions

The PAM High-level mission to New York was instrumental to brief and exchange views with the UN Secretary General, UN high officials and Permanent Representatives to the UN (Russia and Senegal) on the recent developments in the Mediterranean region, following, in particular, the two missions to Syria and the Middle East.

The meeting with the UN SG, which was originally scheduled to take 20 minutes, lasted for more than 45 minutes. The UN SG shared with the PAM delegation his endeavors and perceptions on all relevant international and regional topics, and also listened carefully to all members of the delegation, who expressed their views on specific national matters.

On the Middle East, PAM is determined to continue its efforts through its well established Parliamentary network in Israel, Palestine and neighboring countries, to facilitate all confidence building measures needed to support the Peace Talks.

PAM will work closely with the UN Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, in order to organize, as requested by H.E. Amb. Abdou Salam Diallo, Chairman of the Committee, the second joint UN PAM International Meeting in Support of Israeli-Palestinian Peace, following the one which was held in Malta in February 2010.

As agreed with Officials from UN DPA, PAM will work with both the Israeli Knesset and the Palestinian PNC and PLC on confidence building measures at the people's level. This will help in exercising positive pressure on the two governments especially in the midst of the Peace talks which are currently taking place.

On Syria, PAM is determined to build on the strong ties established throughout the last year with the Syrian Parliament to facilitate furthermore the deliverance of humanitarian assistance inside Syria. The issue of fund raising to the UNRWA mission and also the support for OCHA in helping the Syrian neighboring countries with millions of refugees shall remain a top priority on PAM's Action Plan for the year 2014.

PAM is committed to continue supporting the role of the UN in Syria through the UN-LAS Special Envoy for Syria, H.E. Lakhdar Brahimi, and based on the political solution hoped to be achieved by the Geneva II meeting.

As suggested to PAM by the UN Secretary General, preparations shall start for the upcoming missions to Cairo and Libya to follow up the political developments and to offer PAM's Parliamentary diplomacy as an efficient tool to facilitate obstacles arising from the transition stage both countries are going through. Following these two missions, PAM shall conduct consultative missions to Washington, Moscow and Brussels.

In the Socio-economic sphere, PAM and the UNDP will work on structuring the existing cooperation by signing an MoU determining the priority areas according to the requirements of the countries of the MENA region. Main topics that have been agreed on are good governance, youth employment and capacity building projects.

PAM and the UN Alliance of Civilisation has also agreed on pushing forward the existing bilateral cooperation, based on the MoU signed between PAM and AoC earlier in 2013. The importance of maintaining the ethnic stability in the Middle East region is one of the fields that PAM and AoC will work closely on in the year 2014, taking into consideration the escalation in tension against the Christian minority in Syria and other countries of the region.

It has also been agreed that PAM will work on facilitating the approach between the AoC and the Holy See, in order for the latter to become a member of the AoC Group of Friends. PAM has also been requested by the AoC to use its parliamentary network with the Knesset to facilitate the desired visit of the AoC to Jerusalem in 2014.

The confirmation of having OCHA and UN High Representative of the Alliance of Civilizations, Mr.Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser as a keynote speaker at the PAM Plenary Session in Marseille, will create an opportunity to further push forward the collaboration between PAM and AoC.

PAM Delegation

1. **Sen. Francesco Maria Amoruso**, PAM President and Secretary of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Italian Senate;
2. **Sen. Lhou Lmarbouh**, PAM Vice President and Member of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Moroccan Senate;
3. **Hon. Ognjen Tadic**, Member of the House of Peoples' of the Parliamentary Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina;
4. **Hon. Justyne Caruana**, PAM Rapporteur on the Middle-East and Member of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Maltese Parliament;
5. **Hon. Pedro Roque Oliveira**, PAM Vice Presidency and Member of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Portuguese Parliament;
6. **Hon. Majallie Whbee**, PAM Honorary Member, former Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Israel and former Deputy Speaker of the Knesset;
8. **Hon. Mohammed Abu El Enein**, PAM Honorary President and former member of the Egyptian Parliament;
10. **Amb. Sergio Piazzi**, PAM Secretary General;
11. **Mr. Mourad Youssry**, Deputy to PAM Secretary General for Assembly Affairs;
12. **Ms. TALEVI Paola**, Interpreter at the Italian Senate
13. **Ms. MANDILOVIC Tea**, Administrator at the House of Peoples of the Parliamentary Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina
14. **Ms. ISTUK-PAVLOVIC Dubravka**, Administrator at the House of Peoples of the Parliamentary Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina.