



## **2nd Standing Committee on Economic, Social and Environmental Cooperation**

“The support of parliamentarians in dealing with Climate Change issues”

Rapporteur: Hon. Charalambos Theopembtou (Cyprus)

### **Report**

#### **I. INTRODUCTION**

1. PAM has been following climate change related issues since its establishment. Already in 2009, PAM, in cooperation with the UN ISDR, gathered MPs from around the world in Valletta, and the conference resulted in the so called “Malta Declaration”. The document, which was presented by PAM on the occasion of the COP15 in Copenhagen in December 2009, highlighted the role of MPs in the formulation of legislation and allocation of financial resources and in reflecting the aspirations of the people as well as their concern on the impact of climate change and their call for all available instruments to be used to ensure disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation measures integrated in national planning strategies.
2. PAM has since been addressing Climate Change through dedicated reports and resolutions that have been adopted on the occasion of the Plenary Sessions of the Assembly. The documents included recommendations on concrete measures that could be implemented by parliaments and governments in this regard. One of them was the carbon added tax proposal (CAT), a deterrent to the excessive use of fossil fuels and it may set a price of carbon.
3. The contribution of PAM to the international discussion on environment also resulted in a number of initiatives aimed at gathering and informing Mediterranean Parliamentarians on the consequences of Climate Change, adaptation and mitigation measures and on the role that MPs can play in contributing to the global efforts to contrast the effects of Climate Change. This included a series of MEDCOPs held in the region.
4. In parallel, PAM continued to monitor Climate Change negotiations within the COP, witnessing all the main steps that the process achieved, such as the agreement emerging from the COP21 in Paris in 2015, which came into force in 2016, a few weeks before the COP22 hosted by the kingdom of Morocco in Marrakech. PAM, represented by Hon. Alain Ficini (Monaco), also participated at the COP23 held in Bonn in November 2017.
5. In recent years, the discussion on Climate Change adopted a much more inclusive approach, and civil society and the private sector started to play a more active role on the process. Both

the role of parliaments and parliamentarians themselves followed the same path, in the general conviction that such a complex, multi-faceted issue needs the active engagement of all actors in order to be able to reach concrete results.

## **II. AFTER MARRAKECH: THE COP23 IN BONN AND A NEW SCENARIO ON CLIMATE CHANGE**

6. The COP22, held in Marrakech, covered many crucial areas of the negotiations: finance, adaptation fund, facilitative dialogue, orphan issues and loss and damage<sup>1</sup>. The road to the COP23, held in Bonn under the presidency of Fiji, and the COP23 itself, presented several interesting features, some of which are potential game-changer on climate change negotiations.
7. One of the most relevant elements that happened in 2017 was undoubtedly the decision by the President of the United States of America to withdraw from the Paris Agreement. This event produced significant consequences because, under the previous administration, the USA had played a leading role on climate change discussions.
8. During the second day of the COP23 in Bonn, Syria announced its intention to ratify the Paris agreement. This is a crucial event not only for the Mediterranean region but for the whole world, because following this announcement – and that of Nicaragua, which happened in October<sup>2</sup> – the US is the only country out of the Paris agreement<sup>3</sup>.
9. It must be noted that, however, the behaviour of the US delegation at the COP23 did not differ much from that of previous years, in fact not only most of the US negotiators were the same individuals of past COPs, but also their stand was not far from the one adopted in the past. The main differences were noted on firmer positions on loss and damage and finance. The position of the US negotiators was, however, very awkward, because the very same negotiators who had pushed for the Paris Agreement became the representatives of a national leadership that publicly opposed the deal.
10. In addition, over 100 US influential individuals were present at the COP23 as members of an alternative delegation called “We are still in” that, during the conference, held over 40 events with the participation of sub-national prominent figures, who reassured all participants that they would “maintain America’s support for the Paris Agreement and climate action”<sup>4</sup>.
11. Following the move of President Trump, China has assumed a more prominent role in an attempt to replace the USA in leading the climate change transition and setting the priorities of

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<sup>1</sup> Detailed information is included in the PAM 2017 Report on Environment, available at the link

<http://www.pam.int/welcome.asp?m=documents&a=cat&cid=346>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/us-politics/paris-agreement-trump-nicaragua-america-us-syria-countries-in-it-a7958341.html> (last access 1 December 2017)

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/11/07/climate/syria-joins-paris-agreement.html> (last access 6 December 2017)

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.wearstillin.com/COP23> (last access 5 December 2017)

the negotiations. The whole system shifted to a different setup, in which the leadership is shared and some 200 countries are collectively contributing to the global efforts. The role of China contributed to unite developed and developing countries, which in the past had shown strong divergences<sup>5</sup>.

12. During the COP23, under the initiative of Canada and the UK, the Powering Past Coal Alliance was launched. In their declaration, members underline the necessity of phasing-out from coal by 2030 in the OECD and EU28, and no later than by 2050 in the rest of the world. The alliance, as of 16 November, had 25 signatories. Among PAM countries, France, Italy and Portugal are members of this group<sup>6</sup>. Being it an open forum, it aims at reaching 50 parties by the COP24 that will be held in Poland in December 2018.
13. The following objectives are among the main aims of the alliance: Government partners commit to phasing out existing traditional coal power in their states, as well as to a moratorium on any new traditional coal power; Business and other non-government partners commit to powering their operations without coal; all partners commit to supporting clean power through their policies (whether public or corporate, as appropriate) and investments<sup>7</sup>.
14. One of the most controversial point was the so-called pre-2020 action. Developing countries expressed the concern that rich countries had not done enough to meet their commitments by 2020. It must be noted that pre-2020 implementation and ambition are important because they cover the period that is not covered by the Paris agreement. For this reason, it was a major point for developing countries, which insisted for the pre-2020 action to be included in the agenda of the COP23, in order to be extensively discussed. This led to a stalemate during the conference<sup>8</sup>.
15. Developed countries at the end approved the request and pre-2020 actions were included also in the COP23 final agreed text.<sup>9</sup> This point was crucial because developing countries wanted to make a point over the fact they still had to peak their emissions level by 2020, while developed countries were supposed to be already in an advanced stage of the de-carbonization process.
16. One of the outcome of Bonn was the “Talanoa” dialogue. This is a new name for the one-off event in that the signatories of the Paris Agreement agreed upon, in order to “take stock” of the progress of the climate action. The “Talanoa Dialogue” name was chosen as a tribute to the Fijian presidency and to an inclusive and transparent discussion process used in Fiji.
17. The guidelines of the Talanoa Dialogue are included in annex to the COP23 outcome decision, which “welcomes with appreciation” this facilitative dialogue.

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<sup>5</sup> [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2017-11/19/content\\_34715892.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2017-11/19/content_34715892.htm) (last access 1 December 2017)

<sup>6</sup> [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/660041/powering-past-coal-alliance.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/660041/powering-past-coal-alliance.pdf) (last access 4 December 2017)

<sup>7</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>8</sup> <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/environment/developmental-issues/stalemate-over-inclusion-of-pre-2020-issues-in-cop23-agenda-continues/articleshow/61618756.cms> and <https://twnetwork.org/climate-change/no-consensus-way-forward-pre-2020-issues-cop23-agenda> (last access 5 December 2017)

<sup>9</sup> <http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2017/cop23/eng/l13.pdf> (last access 6 December 2017)

### **III. UNSOLVED POINTS AND KEY STEPS BEFORE THE COP24**

18. The main issues on which agreement was not reached were, once again, related to finance and loss and damage.
19. On finance, two main issues emerged:
  - a) Disagreement over how rich countries will report their plans to finance climate action. This is related to article 9.5 of the Paris agreement, which aims at improving the predictability of financial flows to developing countries, in order for them to be able to structure their climate plans<sup>10</sup>.
  - b) The role of the Adaptation Fund. Only at the end of the negotiation, agreement was reached and parties agreed that it “shall” serve the Paris agreement (while in the conclusions of Marrakech the word “should” was used, instead)<sup>11</sup>. This is actually a significant step ahead, which also underlines the improvements that are made through negotiations year by year.
20. Loss and damage is considered, by many parties (particularly developing countries), as the third pillar for climate action, together with adaptation and mitigation. However, there is no financing mechanism to support it. The Paris agreement reads that parties should enhance “understanding, action and support” on this topic, but no provisions on financing are listed.
21. On the road to the COP24, a major event is expected in September 2018, with the publication of the of the “1.5C special report” of the International Panel on Climate Change. This will be a crucial moment for climate change negotiations. On this, it must be noted that the US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement might have severely undermined the operation of the IPCC, because the US were the major financing country for the IPCC. However, French President Emmanuel Macron affirmed that France would cover the financial gap left by the USA<sup>12</sup>. The UK adopted a similar position.

### **IV. THE CONTRIBUTION OF PAM AND PARLIAMENTARIANS**

22. Climate Change is a reality in the Mediterranean and its effects visible on daily basis. The year 2017 has been reported as the driest in 200 years, and extreme meteorological events affects our people with growing frequency. In the new scenario, in which it is a common understanding that all actors should and must do their utmost to contribute to contrasting Climate Change, national and regional parliaments have a key role to play.

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<sup>10</sup> <http://www.climatechangenews.com/2017/11/17/fight-finance-threatens-end-climate-talks/> (last access 7 December 2017)

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.adaptation-fund.org/adaptation-fund-shall-serve-paris-agreement-cmp-13-parties-formally-recognize-concrete-actions-vulnerable/> (last access 7 December 2017)

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/politics/emmanuel-macron-donald-trump-climate-change-funding-france-us-paris-agreement-president-a8058436.html> (last access 1 December 2017)

23. With the aim of increasing international cooperation, PAM should contribute through the organization of parliamentary conferences, seminars and events focused on the Mediterranean region and on the aspects that impact our region most severely. PAM should associate to these events regional parliaments that share the same concerns vis-à-vis climate change, as well as international organization with a specific mandate and expertise on environment. A major role has to be assumed by the civil society, as also a different behaviour by consumer will assist in mitigating and adapting to climate change.
24. PAM should also consider the possibility to focus on specific aspects of climate change, in order to provide its member parliaments with detailed information and recommendations on the actions that can be taken at a legislative level in support of the global efforts. This, together with renewable energy, could be the focus of the PAM Parliamentary MEDCOP conference scheduled to take place in Ourzazate, Morocco, in 2018.
25. Considering the relevance and the impact of the decisions taken by the COP on the Mediterranean region, PAM should continue to monitor its work, paying particular attention to the findings of the IPCC 1.5C Special Report, on which the COP24 negotiations will be based.