



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

**PAM 3<sup>rd</sup> Standing Committee on Dialogue among Civilizations and Human Rights**

**“Freedom of expression and freedom of religion: the religious pluralism in the Mediterranean region”**

Based on the outcome of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Meeting on Human Rights for PAM MPs, held in conjunction with the European Court of Human Rights, at the Court headquarter, in Strasbourg on 8-9 November 2016, and that of the PAM Meeting on “Dialogue in the encounter between cultures and religions: the role of politics and education”, held in Rome, on 15 December 2016, at the Italian Senate

Rapporteur: Hon. Badreddine Abdelkafi (Tunisia)

**Resolution unanimously adopted on 23 February 2017 during the 11<sup>th</sup> PAM Plenary Session in Porto**

The Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean,

- a) *Having identified* common values, such as the fundamental rights of democracy, the rule of law and the recognition of human dignity, as the basis for a peaceful and coexistence of people of different cultures and religions on both shores of the Mediterranean;
- b) *Recalling* that States have the primary responsibility to promote and protect human rights;
- c) *Recalling* that freedom of thought, conscience and religion is an established, universal and inviolable human right, enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in international treaties at global and regional levels, and in national constitutions;
- d) *Emphasizing* that freedom of religion or belief, and freedom of expression, are interdependent, interrelated and mutually reinforcing, and stressing further the role that these rights can play in the fight against all forms of intolerance and discrimination based on religion or belief;
- e) *Condemning* any instances of negative stereotyping of persons based on religion, as well as the advocacy of religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence, and reaffirming that hate speech against any religious group is not compatible with the fundamental rights and freedoms recognized under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and international covenants of the United Nations;

- f) *Underlining* the need to implement intercultural and interreligious activities in the fields of education, youth, media, migration, peacebuilding and conflict resolution, including grassroots initiatives with leaders at international, regional and local levels;
- g) *Recognizing* that religions have contributed to the spiritual and moral values, ideals and principles which form the common heritage of the Mediterranean region and observing that the three monotheistic religions have common origins and share many values;
- h) *Considering* that the principle of secularity does not require the elimination of religion from social space; quite the contrary, this principle, properly interpreted and implemented, protects the possibility for the different beliefs, religious and non-religious, to coexist peacefully while all parties respect shared principles and values;
- i) *Recognizing* that religious organizations are an integral part of civil society and must, with secular organizations, take part in the life of society;
- j) *Emphasizing* the conception of a secularism that incorporates values of different faiths by recognizing their cultural and educational values;
- k) *Highlighting* the key role of education and training of both religious leaders and youth, as a fundamental instrument to curb the scourge of violent extremism;
- l) *Insisting* on the need to combat all forms of religious fundamentalism and of manipulation of religious beliefs for terrorist purposes and warning against any confusion between religion as a faith and fundamentalism as an ideology;
- m) *Deeply concerned* about the increasing occurrence of violent attacks against religious communities and individuals throughout the world on the basis of their religion or beliefs;
- n) *Condemning* violence and acts of terrorism targeting individuals, including persons belonging to religious minorities across the world, based on or in the name of religion or belief;
- o) *Underlining* the importance of education in the promotion of tolerance, which involves the acceptance by the public of and its respect for diversity;
- p) *Pointing out* the importance of developing youth programs in intercultural and interreligious institutions supporting the interaction and exchange between young people from different cultures in order to disseminate the message of pluralism and diversity;
- q) *Stressing* the necessity to enhance interinstitutional cooperation in the promotion of intercultural and interreligious mutual respect and understanding and reiterating the need of modernizing the reflection and theological discourse;

- r) *Recommending* theological schools and religious education systems to include into their curricula interreligious and multicultural education, interreligious dialogue and values of peace, pluralism, and civic engagement;
- s) *Welcoming* the Resolutions adopted by the UN Human Rights Council 22/20. “Freedom of religion or belief” and 16/18 Combating intolerance, negative stereotyping and stigmatization of, and discrimination, incitement to violence and violence against persons based on religion or belief;
- t) *Welcoming* Resolution 1928 (2013)<sup>1</sup> of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on “Safeguarding human rights in relation to religion and belief, and protecting religious communities from violence”, Resolution 1510 (2006) on “Freedom of expression and respect for religious beliefs” and Resolution 2076 (2015) on “Freedom of religion and living together in a democratic society”;

The Assembly therefore calls on its members to:

1. **Reaffirm** that freedom of religion, conscience and belief is an essential part of the human rights system and comply with their commitments and obligations to guarantee the full enjoyment of this fundamental right to all individuals, including persons belonging to religious minorities, in accordance with appropriate national legislation and in conformity with international human rights law;
2. **Ensure** that religious communities and their members are able to exercise their right to freedom of religion without impediment and without discrimination and implement sound strategies including adequate legislative and judicial measures to combat religious discrimination and intolerance;
3. **Adopt and Implement** laws and policies based on the understanding that the rights to freedom of religion or belief and to freedom of opinion and expression are complementary, interdependent, interrelated and mutually reinforcing;
4. **Hold** debates on freedom of expression and respect for religious beliefs and encourage religious communities to discuss freedom of expression and respect for religious beliefs within their own community and with other religious communities in order to develop a common understanding and a code of conduct for religious tolerance;
5. **Encourage**, through the educational system and other means, intercultural and interreligious dialogue based on universal human rights with a view to promoting tolerance, trust and mutual understanding, and objective education about religions and non-religious beliefs, including those of persons belonging to religious minorities;

6. **Take** all necessary and appropriate action, in conformity with international human rights obligations, to combat hatred, discrimination, intolerance and acts of violence, intimidation and coercion motivated by intolerance based on religion or belief, as well as any advocacy of religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility and violence;
7. **Support** information and education about religion so as to develop better awareness of religions as well as a critical mind in its citizens;
8. **Work** in favor of intercultural and interreligious dialogue, as a priority, and allocate appropriate resources for it so as to ensure that they are adequately performed and publicized;
9. **Increase** co-operation in the field of intercultural and inter-religious dialogue with the UN and its specialized agencies, the Council of Europe, the European Union, the Organisation of the Islamic Conference, and other inter-parliamentary bodies;
10. **Ensure** the social inclusion of children and young people at risk of radicalization through education and training, as well as targeted prevention, de-radicalization and rehabilitation programs;
11. **Address** the root causes which create a fertile ground for extremism, such as poverty, discrimination and social exclusion.