



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

PAM activities on Human Rights-related issues

At the national and regional level, national and international Parliaments play a crucial role in the promotion and protection of Human Rights, as legislators and as overseers. They lay the foundation for the rule of law and the respect for and protection of Human Rights at the national and international level, as acknowledged by the Human Rights Council in its resolution A/HRC/RES/35/29, adopted on 23 June 2017. Parliaments are also uniquely positioned to contribute to closing the implementation gap, to prevent violations of Human Rights and to ensure better protection, especially of vulnerable groups, by ensuring transparency and accountability for States' Human Rights obligations and following up the implementation of recommendations by regional and international Human Rights mechanisms.

The Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean (PAM) has constantly been committed to respond adequately to this task, through its 3rd Standing Committee on "Dialogue among Civilizations and Human Rights". In particular, PAM has always been engaged in the promotion and adoption of laws and policies concerning the protection of human rights related to migration, access of people with disabilities to the labour market, gender equality, intercultural and interreligious dialogue, and freedom of expression and of religion.

PAM's strong commitment to promote human rights has resulted also in a series of conferences and seminars, organised in cooperation with the UN specialized agencies, the Council of Europe, the European Union, IOM and other inter-parliamentary bodies, as valuable opportunities to share expertise and common practices among member countries and respond adequately to the current challenges and human related issues.

As a result of its strong cooperation with the UN system, the Assembly organised, on 18-19 June 2015, the 1st Introduction Seminar on "Human Rights and Rapid Deployment Capacity for PAM MPs", in partnership with UN-OCHA, UN Human Rights Council and the Geneva Centre for Human Rights, at OHCHR HQs in Geneva. The seminar aimed at preparing parliamentarians, who would travel to the field for specific missions, in humanitarian assistance delivery and promotion of human rights, to contribute to and complement the work of the UN, especially when PAM MPs can enjoy access to areas where UN officials may have difficulties to do so.

A 2nd Introduction Seminar on Human Rights for PAM MPs was held in Strasbourg, on 8-9 November 2016, jointly organized with the European Court of Human Rights. The purpose of the seminar was to further familiarize with the European Human Rights Protection System and the role of the Court in promoting human rights in the European area. PAM delegations involved focused on the necessity to balance rights and guarantees in dealing with migrants and refugees, the essential role of the press in democratic societies in promoting a favourable environment for public debate, the necessary balance between individual rights to privacy and the public interest in preventing terrorism and the importance of respecting human rights of suspected terrorists and their right to fair trial.

The 3rd Seminar on Human Rights for PAM MPs, in cooperation with OHCHR, was held on 21-22 June 2018 and gathered over 40 delegates, representing PAM national Parliaments, the European Parliament, observer NGOs and international experts. On that occasion, a roadmap for a detailed structured cooperation and partnership between PAM and OHCHR was defined, aimed at addressing the growing number of challenges to the correct and unimpeded application of Human Rights instruments under threat. The measures agreed as pillars of this exceptional partnership build on dedicated study tours for newly elected PAM MPs, specific hearings in connection with the various cycles of national UPR, including follow-up on the recommendations addressed by

the High Commissioner to the individual countries, advocacy campaigns in relation to thematic and/or country reports, as well as strengthened interaction among PAM, civil society and OHCHR.

Furthermore, the Assembly assisted OHCHR in developing a special report on how to promote and enhance further synergies between national and international Parliaments and the work of the Human Rights Council and its Universal Periodic Review. Thanks to its excellent relations with all countries in the Euro-Mediterranean area and its effective network of regional partners, PAM can help OHCHR to give UN rapporteurs access to certain critical areas. Indeed, PAM, with its tool of parliamentary diplomacy, can overcome the problems that traditional diplomacy cannot solve, because of the limitations of governments.

PAM also contributed to the 2nd Session of the UN Forum on Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law, which took place in Geneva on 22-23 November. The session was dedicated to the theme “Parliaments as promoters of Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of law”. On that occasion, the PAM delegation highlighted the key role of MPs as guardian of human rights, through their legislative and oversight functions.

Moreover, PAM Members in their individual, national and regional capacity have committed themselves to fully support the advocacy efforts of the High Commissioner in order to implement the fundamental human rights’ instruments and mechanisms throughout the Mediterranean region under the mandate of PAM. They have also wholly committed to the Principles on Parliaments and Human Rights, recommended in the annex to the report A/HRC/38/25, by unanimously adopting the Resolution "PAM MPs for Human Rights", on the occasion of the 13th PAM Plenary Session held on 21-22 February 2019 in Belgrade, Serbia.

On 10-11 October 2019, PAM and the Council of Europe held a joint meeting on ‘Counter-terrorism and new technologies’, in Strasbourg, and discussed the importance of safeguards in collecting electronic evidence in terrorism investigations, so to provide the necessary balance between security concerns and human rights.

On 25-26 November 2019, PAM contributed to the PACE Workshop on ‘Parliamentary Contribution towards achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals’, held in Lisbon. On that occasion, the PAM delegate highlighted the Assembly’s work to assist and promote legislative action, in cooperation with international partners, such as UNCTAD, WTO, OHCHR, and OECD, to eliminate political, social and economic obstacles that prevent a person from living a life with dignity.

At the 14th PAM Plenary session held in Athens, the Assembly adopted the resolution “PAM MPs for Human Rights”, in which it reiterated its commitment to address the situation of children born from ISIS terrorist fighters in detention in North-Syria, where they are living in extreme conditions and at risk of radicalization.

PAM delegates are also invited to monitor the speedy development of Artificial Intelligence (AI), by ensuring the new technologies developed to be compliant with national and international human rights framework. In this regard, the Assembly will establish a special task-force on Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights, under the aegis of the 3rd PAM Standing Committee, in order to analyze its increased use and its potential to reinforce or threaten the protection of Human Rights, especially for women and children.

Moreover, as a future activity, PAM will also organize a dedicated meeting focusing on the role of parliamentarians on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence in the Euro-Mediterranean region.

PAM also seeks to create an enabling environment for effective cooperation among parliaments, academia, the private sector, civil society and other partners active in human rights, by supporting their initiatives in this field. On 20 February 2018, PAM signed an important cooperation agreement with FIDU – the Italian Federation for Human Rights.