

Senhor Primeiro Ministro de Portugal, Your Excellency,

Dear Colleagues,

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Dear Friends,

We are now reaching the end of our 11th Plenary Session.

Thank you very much, for your contribution and especially for this token of confidence by electing me - and the Parliament of Portugal – as president of our Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean.

First, I want to pay tribute to the incredible work of the former President, our Moroccan colleague Lhou Lmarbouh. His term as been exercised sometimes in difficult circumstances, nevertheless, he performed a terrific job making PAM even more strong than before.

Second, I want to salute my MP colleagues from the Portuguese delegation. Despite our differences and the fact that we came from two different political parties it has been possible to build a common

platform of trust to present a candidature. In that sense, it is not just a personal candidature, it's mainly a candidature of our country: Portugal. So, our commitment to PAM is both personal and collective: PAM can surely trust us as much as we can trust PAM.

Third and finally, I want also to salute the people who organized this event both from the Portuguese Parliament as well from PAM Secretariat for their impeccable work.

Dear Friends,

We hope that you feel comfortable and welcome in Portugal. We have a long tradition of warm hospitality, especially in this town, Oporto.

As you know, Portugal is a European country where the Mediterranean meets the Atlantic and where our old common culture was projected towards the entire world by the sea.

Without the Mediterranean heritage, remarkable by its expertise in geography, cartography, astronomy and specially its navigation techniques, the Discoveries of the 15th and 16th centuries wouldn't have been possible and, somehow, the world would have been shaped in a different way.

We use to say that *Portugal it's Mediterranean by nature and Atlantic by position.*

So, the Mediterranean represents the union among us – our *Mare Nostrum*. We are, at the same time, all different but all equal. Different concerning languages or religions, but equal as regards to our common cultural heritage or human condition, among other things. We can sustain, beyond any doubt, that we have a Mediterranean diet or a Mediterranean climate, but sustain as well that we are all sons and daughters of the same God, yet under different names and under three different approaches of the monotheistic faith.

Dear Friends,

Nowadays, the Mediterranean faces many challenges and multiple problems that neither start nor end in the border line of each nation but, instead, implies many countries.

The ongoing war in **Syria**, for instance, represents not only the suffering of its people, but also the destabilization of an entire region and even beyond: The Iraq; the high pressure of refugees in Jordan and Lebanon (where they represent a huge percentage of their population); and Turkey or, inside EU, Greece, as well as the rest of

the European member states, with the inner flow of people, the greatest since WWII.

We need a political solution for the Syrian conflict because there is no place for a military solution.

We all feel that this threat is feeding terrorism. Nevertheless, we know that refugees are not responsible for terrorism, instead, terrorism is the real responsible for the large flow of refugees.

On the other hand, **Africa's Sahel region**, even if it is a bit far from the Mediterranean, also represents a major threat. This region faces many complex and interconnected challenges: hopeless poverty, fast

population growth, climate change, recurrent nutrition crises and armed conflicts.

They all converge to undermine the lives of millions of people. Migration seems to be, for many people living in the area, the only solution to escape from those problems. But the hazards they faced represent a too high price to pay. Shipwrecks off the coast of Libya brought the death toll among migrants crossing the Mediterranean and seeking European shores, to unbearable levels.

Sadly, the Mediterranean is still the world's deadliest migration route.

But, regarding the **West**, all those migration events (either refugees or economic migrants) somehow pave the way to a progressively

dangerous, xenophobe, populist and nationalist rhetoric with reflection in the electoral outcomes and uncertainty regarding the future of the planet.

Dear Friends,

Concerning the **Israel – Palestine** dispute we support the UNSC resolutions and the vision of a region where two democratic states, Israel and Palestine, live side by side, in peace, within secure and recognized borders.

We also believe that both parties should act based on international law and their previous agreements and obligations, must observe calm and

refrain from provocative actions in order to rebuild trust and confidence and show a genuine commitment with the *Two-State solution*.

PAM supports the intensification of international diplomatic efforts to achieve, as soon as possible, a lasting peace in the region based on the relevant UNSC resolutions.

But, let us make no mistake, to achieve that goal, on both sides, moderate and good will people must lead the process.

Concerning the **Cyprus reunification process**, PAM welcomes the commitments made in the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot leaders' Joint Statement of 14th September 2016, as well as the progress in

negotiations of the *Conference for Cyprus* under UN auspices in January 2017, and the participants joint pledge to support the process. PAM encourages both parties to intensify the substantive negotiations to achieve a political and peaceful outcome for the dispute.

Dear Friends,

The Mediterranean region needs systemic answers to the complex problems that it faces.

In that sense, PAM - the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean, our organisation, represents the forum where the Parliaments of the region meet, discuss and act to reach those common

goals towards the creation of the best political, social, economic and cultural conditions for the development and to foster security, stability and peace in the Mediterranean.

For a common future, brighter and happier.

Thank you,

“Shukran Gesilan”, شكرا جزيلًا

Merci Beaucoup,

MUITO OBRIGADO