



REPUBLIQUE FRANÇAISE

SERVICE DE LA
COMMISSION
DES AFFAIRES
EUROPEENNES

Vienna, 24th February 2022

UNOFFICIAL TRANSLATION

EUR_2021_XXX

**REPORT BY MR PASCAL ALLIZARD,
OSCE PA VICE-PRESIDENT
SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE FOR MEDITERRANEAN AFFAIRS**

OSCE PA, Standing Committee, Winter Meeting, 24th February 2022

Madam President, dear Margareta,

Dear colleagues,

Mister Secretary General, dear Roberto,

Before briefly presenting the report of my activities as Special Representative, I must mention the news, disastrous, and the war waged in Ukraine by Russia, first of all by paying tribute to the hundreds of civilian victims, to the women, men, and children, who already felt or are directly affected. I am also thinking of course to the staff of the OSCE, but also of the other international institutions and NGOs, who are still on the ground in Ukraine. We are living a war, an unprecedented crisis since the end of the Second World War and therefore since the existence of the OSCE, founded on détente and peace, and which today must confront war.

Of course, I associate myself with the firm motion adopted by our Assembly, which we discussed in the Bureau, meeting urgently in the evening of Wednesday 23rd February, in our new premises in Vienna, and I strongly condemn this war

deliberately caused by Russia, from which both the Ukrainian people and the Russian people will suffer.

The OSCE, and our Assembly in particular, was born out of and for dialogue, détente, made impossible today because of war. However the flag of the OSCE is the white flag: it is the flag of peace. In these dark hours, when it is at half mast, we must nevertheless give ourselves every chance and encourage every opportunity to be able to hoist it again, to ensure the values of peace, security and humanity that are ours and which are universal. They are clearly defined in the Final Act of the Helsinki Conference and in the Charter of Paris, which must remain our compass.

This is why, in this tragic context, I persist in believing, more than ever, that the voice of the parliamentarians that we are can and must speak, but also be heard. For this, we must, in my opinion, beyond even the legitimate emotions that grip us in the face of such a situation, strive for a political, rational, geopolitical and global analysis. This is our responsibility.

In this regard, we must have a comprehensive understanding of security which must be indivisible, as proclaimed by the Helsinki Act. However, the security of the member countries is at stake, not only within this vast region itself, where it is seriously threatened by the current war, but also on its periphery, on its steps, whether in Asia or on the shores of the Mediterranean.

This is why the current context makes cooperation with the six Mediterranean partner countries, Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Jordan and Israel (represented by the Knesset but also by the National Council Palestinian?) even more crucial.

Therefore, I have planned to travel soon, as soon as possible, to Israel and the Palestinian territories, to reaffirm the strong historical, cultural, human ties that we have. But also call for the respect of international law and recall our commitment in favor of stability and peace in the region.

In carrying out my mission as Special Representative, I strive to bring to the fore the **common challenges** we face. This was the constructive guideline of the **Mediterranean Forum that I chaired on November 4th**.

To obtain results, such an approach must be, whenever possible, prepared and matured **in liaison, and in good understanding with the executive bodies of the OSCE, each one remaining in its role**. This is why I went to Vienna on October 13th and 14th to take part in the **Conference of the OSCE Mediterranean Partners Group**, organized by the Polish Chairmanship of the group on the theme **“The path to resilience: exit from the Covid-19 crisis and security within the OSCE and the Mediterranean region”**.

On the sidelines of this conference, **I have met each of the ambassadors, permanent representatives** of the Mediterranean partner countries.

These preliminary meetings, in addition to giving me the opportunity to visit the new offices of the secretariat and to get to know the Vienna team, in fact enabled us to come together during the Forum around common themes: **the exit from the Covid-19 crisis, the fight against transnational organized crime, sustainable development, and fight against climate change**. They also revealed to me the **extent of the expectations of our partners**, in research for example, of reinforced cooperation in the field of vaccines.

These countries which have suffered from the pandemic and its consequences have also experienced electoral **renewals** and their delegations are therefore being reconstituted.

I note a real desire on the part of all the partners to work together.

I now come to the other issues that I believe are important to underline, within the framework of the global and reasoned vision that I propose to adopt.

In terms of security, the **spread of terrorism** and arms trafficking, particularly from conflict zones such as Libya and Syria, is worrying. We note the “continentalization” of the terrorist phenomenon which now thrives in the **heart of sub-Saharan Africa towards the Gulf of Guinea**, from the Mediterranean coasts. Likewise, the Islamic State has not disappeared from the Middle East, as illustrated by the recent attack on a prison and the release of detained jihadists.

Many States are thus threatened with destabilization in areas where their authority was sometimes already fragile. There are also populations that are confronted with war and chaos. However, as you know, these situations have a direct influence on migratory flows. They throw migrants on dangerous, and often deadly routes, and turn them against their will into instruments of hybrid warfare.

As an accelerator of the globalization of trade, the sea is once again becoming a **space of conflict** where everyone asserts their political, economic or strategic interests. The seabed represents a space of power struggles, particularly with submarine cables. The Mediterranean is no exception to this global movement.

In recent months, geopolitical disorders around the Mediterranean have caused great unrest in the Mediterranean or the Black Sea, materialized in particular by large-scale naval maneuvers, high-intensity combat preparation, muscular interceptions of planes, etc.

The **risk of misunderstandings**, errors of assessment are real in this context of crystallization of tensions. The same is true in the eastern Mediterranean, in connection with sometimes brutal territorial claims and discoveries of underwater deposits of energy resources.

As I often point out, the militarization of spaces, the rise of threats, the multiplication of “grey zones” will destroy the prospects for economic development, disrupt maritime trade and affect tourism, on which many countries in the zone depend.

This situation is detrimental to all and **no one can claim to resolve it alone or to impose itself by a *fait accompli***.

In addition, I once again draw your attention to **the emergence of new players in the Mediterranean area such as China**. My purpose here is not to impugn intent or speculation. There are opportunities, particularly economic ones, with China that clearly need to be seized. Some Mediterranean countries and beyond, in the OSCE area, have taken the plunge.... with varying fortunes.

But I call for caution those who make short-sighted calculations in view of the **difficulties already observed in certain States in terms of sovereignty** - I am thinking in particular to ports and strategic installations - or the explosion of debt.

I also underline the dangers of bilateralism with China, which places the contracting parties in an **asymmetrical and dependent relationship**. The Mediterranean countries must not give up their sovereignty to finance a few motorways! Finally, if there is a Chinese project, they must make more room for local labor, especially in countries where unemployment rates are high. Otherwise, it will be a guaranteed social explosion.

I also call your attention to the **Chinese soft power** deployed in our regions, whether in health or cultural activities, which under apparent benevolence are never disinterested.

On these issues, it is through unity and cooperation that the Mediterranean countries can hope to **have more influence** in the face of a major player in international relations which is advancing its interests with great strides in our immediate environment and which, at the same time, control even more its own periphery.

On **climate issues**, we had very interesting exchanges during the last Mediterranean Forum, last November. Alas, this is not just a fashionable theme for forums and symposiums.

I would like to insist on the fact that these subjects are **fundamental** for us, as it is true that the particularities of the Mediterranean accentuate, aggravate, the undesirable effects of climate change.

All the countries around the Mediterranean have experienced **extreme weather events** in recent years, with disastrous material and human consequences. **And the recurrence and intensity of the phenomena are increasing.**

We must act more together to preserve people and property, and economic activities (tourism, fishing, transportation, agriculture).

Finally, I recall the **obvious correlation between climate degradation and security**:

- increase in population displacements and, consequently, of human trafficking and the rise of cross-border criminal groups;
- increase in conflicts over access to food and water resources;
- increasing of poverty which creates social disorder, crime and terrorism.

The Mediterranean countries share the sea and it is in particular towards what is known as the “**blue economy**” that we must resolutely turn.

Some experts foresee a tripling of its added value between 2010 and 2030. The opportunities are immense, particularly in the fields of marine energy (offshore wind power, tidal turbines), marine biotechnologies, aquaculture and fishing, transport and port activities or even tourism.

In terms of transport, so essential for the flow of people and goods, technological progress offers us interesting prospects: low-emission or hybrid thermal engines, hydrogen-powered ships / planes, sail-powered ships, etc.

The generous sunshine of the Mediterranean basin should allow the development of photovoltaic energy.

Thus this sea is a jewel that must be better protected as **our future is linked to its own**. And the blue economy will only be truly useful for growth if it develops in a **concerted and sustainable** manner, in the Mediterranean as in the other maritime areas of the globe.

I conclude, by sharing my deep conviction: in the face of the tensions and the current war, our assembly has a major contribution to make for peace, cooperation and security. It is in this spirit that I wish to continue working with you on the various subjects I have just mentioned.

Thank you.