



Report of Special Representative for Mediterranean Affairs

Pascal Allizard

OSCE PA Vienna Winter Meeting 2024, 22-23 February

Situation in the Middle East

The Mediterranean Forum met on 20 November 2023 in Yerevan, Armenia, under the theme of “Situation in the Middle East” chaired by Pascal Allizard, Special Representative on Mediterranean Affairs, and the Mediterranean Forum included remarks by OSCE PA President Pia Kauma, Chair of the OSCE Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation Group Vesa Häkkinen and addresses by the Heads of the Parliamentary Delegations from the OSCE Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation.

Pascal Allizard, Special Representative on Mediterranean Affairs

In his opening remarks, Special Representative Allizard expressed gratitude for the gathering in **Yerevan, marking the first in-person meeting of the Mediterranean Forum since 2019**. He particularly emphasized the forum’s importance in engaging Mediterranean Partners and incorporating their perspectives.

Allizard underlined the urgency of addressing the consequences of global warming and natural disasters in the Mediterranean region, leading to significant displacements and humanitarian challenges. The potential increase in forced migration due to climate change was mentioned, with a focus on the alarming number of natural disasters causing displacement. Allizard discussed the flaws in the international system in relation to human rights violations along migration routes, especially in the Mediterranean. Conflicts in border regions with Mediterranean countries are affecting political and economic stability, he noted.

He highlighted the ongoing conflict between Israel and Hamas, strongly condemned the unprecedented atrocious terrorist attack from October, 7th by Hamas, calling for the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages. He expressed his support to the right of Israel to security and to defend itself, while insisting on the respect of international and human rights law. The Special Representative stressed the need for broad dialogue, involving regional and international partners, to prevent regional escalation and find a lasting peaceful solution, based upon UN principles and resolutions.

Pia Kauma, OSCE PA President

In her remarks, President Kauma thanked Allizard for his work over six years as Special Representative on Mediterranean Affairs and welcomed the participation of the Moroccan Delegation in the Autumn Meeting, acknowledging their consistent commitment to the OSCE PA and their valuable contributions to debates. She encouraged Partners to engage with the OSCE PA at the highest level and urged all members to connect with parliamentarians from Partner countries.

Given the events in the Middle East, Kauma emphasized the importance of increased participation by parliaments from the southern shore of the Mediterranean. She stressed the need to hear diverse voices and perspectives in debates to find appropriate solutions to shared challenges. She anticipated that the addresses and debates in the meeting would mark the first step in this direction.

Vesa Häkkinen, Chair of the OSCE Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation Group and Permanent Representative of Finland to the OSCE

Ambassador Häkkinen pointed out that the central role of the Mediterranean Partnership is enhancing security. The Partnership for Co-operation is an excellent platform for developing joint responses to counter security threats, he said, highlighting the unique perspective that OSCE partnerships offer on the security situation in the OSCE region and its neighbourhood. He underlined the alarming situation in the region, particularly following the terrorist attack by Hamas against Israel on 7 October, and stressed the importance of empowering youth, especially young women, in the field of security. In this regard, he said, the OSCE can provide valuable tools such as field missions, projects, and platforms for dialogue. He concluded by noting the demonstrated commitment of OSCE Partners through practical co-operation and active participation.

Addresses by the Heads of the Parliamentary Delegations from the OSCE Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation

The Speaker of the Israeli Knesset, Amir Ohana, addressed the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly via video link. Speaker Ohana described the atrocities of 7 October, noting that victims suffered torture and extreme violence. After these horrors, he said, Israel determined that it must act to defend itself. "Israel has the obligation to ensure the safety and security of its citizens," he said.

Fatima El Hassani, a member of **Morocco's Delegation**, stressed that armed conflicts must provide full protection of civilians, a point that was reiterated in the general debate. El Hassani condemned attacks on civilians and called for international efforts aimed at peace, stability and prosperity for all peoples of the region.

Discussion

Parliamentarians raised issues related to security, the environment, economic development and migration in Middle East, stressing that armed conflicts must provide full protection of civilians and noting that conflict is an obstacle to development and reaching other international goals, such as addressing climate change. There were also calls for the immediate release of all hostages being held by Hamas.

In closing remarks, President Kauma expressed deep concern for the dire humanitarian situation in Gaza, particularly its impact on women and children, and called for humanitarian pauses to facilitate assistance

to those in need. She also highlighted the polarizing nature of the Israel-Palestine conflict, emphasizing its divisive impact on society, and urged vigilance against bigotry and violence in OSCE countries.

Monitoring and follow-up of the situation in the Middle East

Since the Mediterranean Forum in Yerevan, Special Representative Pascal Allizard has worked closely with OSCE PA President Pia Kauma to monitor developments of the conflict, with special respect for international humanitarian law and assistance to civilian populations. He has endeavoured to resume, develop and maintain contacts with the representatives of the partner countries, in order to gather their points of view, their suggestions and their expectations towards the OSCE PA.

The winter meeting in Vienna provides an opportunity to meet the parliamentary delegations present and the Permanent Representatives of the partner countries, with increased focus on the ongoing conflict and the possible initiatives that could lead to lasting peace and security in the region, seeking possible contributions from the OSCE's experience and principles.

With this in mind, enhanced exchanges of views with the parliaments of the partner countries and member states, as well as plans for field trips, are on the agenda this year, in close coordination with President Pia Kauma, the Vice-Presidents concerned and the ad hoc Committee on Migration.