

Statement of the Honorable Alcee L. Hastings
OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Mediterranean Forum
October 11, 2009

“The OSCE Mediterranean Dimension: Prospects and Challenges”

It is my distinct pleasure to welcome you all to the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Mediterranean Forum. I am honored by the invitation to chair this session and look forward to a fruitful discussion on how to address the challenges of the OSCE Mediterranean Dimension and ensure the continued success of our partnership.

This past July in Washington, I convened under the auspices of the U.S. Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, the “CSCE Seminar on OSCE Mediterranean Partner Engagement.” The thrust of this event originated from a tour of the Mediterranean Partners last December I undertook to serve my mandate as OSCE PA Special Representative for Mediterranean Affairs. Throughout the tour discussions demonstrated the need for renewal of the OSCE Mediterranean Dimension. The Washington seminar generated an opportunity to candidly discuss how to improve the cooperation mechanisms of the Mediterranean Dimension. A formal report has been prepared and will soon be available on the Helsinki Commission Website at WWW.CSCE.GOV. In the interim, a summary of recommendations from the seminar has been distributed.

The core of the seminar discussions centered on enhancing the engagement mechanisms of the OSCE Mediterranean Dimension and renewing the foundation upon which the partnership is based. I would offer that there were four key themes of this seminar; negotiating a regional role of the OSCE Mediterranean Dimension, fostering leadership from the Mediterranean Partners in OSCE related activities, optimizing the OSCE Partnership Fund; and involvement in the Middle East peace process.

First, one of the greatest challenges that we face is fatigue with the multiplicity of frameworks and dialogues related to the Mediterranean. In a period of economic hardship, it is difficult to justify engagement with so many international organizations with overlapping mandates and initiatives which do not effectively build synergy with one another. We must clearly negotiate a role for the OSCE Mediterranean Dimension in the context of other regional dialogues, namely efforts of NATO, the European Union, and other regional parliamentary assemblies.

Second, the future of the OSCE Mediterranean Dimension will require more ownership of our interactions by the Mediterranean Partner States. Our partners should develop the agenda of our interaction and meetings, possibly through specific taskforces led by a partner State on the various dimensions of OSCE or rotating leadership among the partners. Such measures will increase the deliverables of our engagement and facilitate consistency in our efforts. In this vein, it was recommended that we clearly define the expectations of our Mediterranean Partners and articulate what the OSCE participating

States gain from engagement. A clearer understanding among all involved about why the partnership is vital will ensure its continued success.

Third, the OSCE Partnership Fund has significant potential in the value it could add to the Mediterranean Dimension. We must prioritize the development of formalized exchanges for diplomats and members of civil service from the Mediterranean Partners to experience the functions of the institutions of the OSCE. These individuals have expertise to contribute and would benefit greatly from a more targeted understanding of the contributions that OSCE institutions make to the participating States.

The Fund also has tremendous potential in terms of expanding activities within the Environmental and Economic Dimension to involve the Mediterranean Partners. This could entail the translation of reports and supplementing the participation of NGOs from the region in OSCE initiatives.

Finally, political will exists within the OSCE participating States and Mediterranean Partners to put greater emphasis on the role the Mediterranean Dimension could play in the Middle East peace process. The Mediterranean Dimension is rare in the opportunity that it presents to build mutual understanding among the Partner States. We must galvanize this potential through the use of the Partnership Fund for collaborative initiatives that further mutual understanding.