



**PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY OF THE
UNION FOR THE MEDITERRANEAN**

RECOMMENDATIONS

of the Committee on Political Affairs, Security and Human Rights

**on support for the societies and parliaments of countries
undergoing democratic change**

by Tokia Saïfi, Chair

The Committee on Political Affairs, Security and Human Rights

1. Believes that democratically elected parliaments have a responsibility to meet citizens' aspirations to live in dignity, under the rule of law guaranteeing their freedom and their civil political, economic and social rights; all citizens should enjoy equal social dignity and be equal before the law, without distinction of sex, race, language, religion, political opinion or personal or social circumstances. It is the duty of these democratically elected parliaments to remove those economic or social obstacles which constrain the freedom and equality of citizens, thereby impeding the full development of the human person and the effective participation of all workers in the political, economic and social organisation of countries;
2. Takes the view that the democratic changes under way in the South and East of the Mediterranean offer an historic opportunity to bring public policies back into line with people's needs, by meeting the demands for social peace and competitiveness; to this end, parliaments are urged to develop a legislative framework that allows civil society to play its full role as a partner in governance; welcomes in this regard the concomitant organisation of the Anna Lindh Foundation's Mediterranean Forum and the Summit of Presidents of UfM Parliaments held in Marseille, the aim of which was to pursue this goal of partnership;
3. Believes that the ongoing democratic reforms must be carried out by strong and financially autonomous parliaments, appropriately endowed with human resources and infrastructure; calls therefore on the EU and its Member States to increase offers of exchanges of good practices, partnerships and technical support with a view to strengthening the capacities of parliaments on the southern shore in the light of the needs identified by joint agreement;
4. Recalls in this context that incentives are needed to ensure the full representation of women on the electoral lists and in parliamentary bodies; recommends also targeted actions to open the political parties up to young people and thereby harness the political commitment they have demonstrated since the Arab revolutions; encourages States to make it easier to organise and support political training; believes that only the lasting installation of democratic regimes around the Mediterranean will allow the UfM's full potential to be exploited in implementing projects for the benefit of citizens; takes the view, in the meantime, that UfM projects that have been validated should be implemented without delay, despite the constraints imposed by the financial crisis;

5. Insists on the importance of providing political and economic support for the countries undergoing democratic change; in this connection reminds governments of their commitments made at the UfM Summit of 2008 and within the framework of the Deauville Partnership in 2011; encourages them to identify sources of innovative financing that would allow the rapid implementation of these projects; recalls also the political value, beyond its economic significance, of the recovery of assets by the Arab Spring countries in transition for EU relations with partner countries of the south of the Mediterranean and encourages the European Union and its Member States to intensify their efforts to allow the recovery of assets misappropriated by former dictators and their associates in Egypt, Libya and Tunisia;

6. Is aware that the persistence of conflicts between some countries in the region is a major political obstacle to cooperation in the Mediterranean; believes nevertheless that UfM sectoral projects such as the Mediterranean Solar Plan, the de-pollution of the Mediterranean or the Mediterranean Initiative for Jobs (MED 4 Jobs) can and should be go ahead despite these conflicts; supports the use of a variable geometry approach to bring together partners in these projects, without prejudice to the UfM framework;

7. Is strongly convinced that peace in the Middle East is needed more urgently than ever to avoid radicalism, extremism and violence; calls therefore for a comprehensive, just and lasting peace between Arabs and Israelis; in order to achieve this goal, there must be an end to the Israeli occupation of Palestinian Territory, the building of new settlements, all hostile attacks by either side, including rocket attacks against Israel and air raids by Israel, Palestinian political prisoners must be released and a sovereign, viable and territorially contiguous State of Palestine must be established according to the relevant UN resolutions based on the 1967 borders with Jerusalem as the capital of two States living in peace and security;

8. Is concerned at the impact of the Syrian refugee crisis on neighbouring countries; reaffirms the need to support Jordan at all levels in order to enable it to play its humanitarian role effectively with regard to the Syrian refugees on its territory.

Committee Activities 2012-2013

The Committee held four meetings in Brussels, on 31 May and 3 October 2012 and on 24 January and 11 April 2013 with, as its priority theme, ‘support for the societies and parliaments of countries undergoing democratic change.’

First, it explored the situation of parliaments and political parties in the South of the Mediterranean in order better to understand their needs and possible strategies and prospects for cooperation. Then it identified possible synergies in supporting the societies and parliaments of countries undergoing change with institutional partners such as the Council of Europe, the UNDP and the Anna Lindh Foundation, focusing in particular on supporting women MPs.

This work resulted in three projects:

1. Targeted training for women parliamentarians from the Maghreb from 21-24 January 2013, organised by the European Parliament in Brussels;
2. A seminar for Arab women MPs in cooperation with the UNDP in June 2013 at the European Parliament in Brussels;
3. The launching by the European Parliament of a forum for young leaders from the Maghreb during 2013 to complement the seminar for young European, Israeli and Palestinian leaders held annually in the European Parliament since 2008.

Through these projects, the Committee wishes to stimulate similar initiatives in the parliaments of EU Member States.

Other highlights of the Committee’s work concerned:

- monitoring UfM projects in cooperation with the UfM Secretariat in Barcelona,
- monitoring the ongoing reforms in the countries undergoing democratic change and the constitutional process in Tunisia in particular,
- monitoring the evolution of the situation in Syria,
- monitoring the situation in the Middle East following the admission of Palestine as a non-member with observer status at the UN,
- exploring ways to promote regional integration in the Maghreb.