



EURO-MEDITERRANEAN PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY



COMMITTEE ON ENERGY, ENVIRONMENT AND WATER

DRAFT MINUTES

of the meeting held in Innsbruck, Austria
on 28 June 2010

1. Opening of the meeting by the Committee Chair Mr. Stefan SCHENNACH

The **Chair** opened the meeting by welcoming all committee members, in particular the Syrian delegation, who for the first time were participating in a meeting of the committee. Mr. Schennach presented a résumé of last year's work of the committee, where activities were focused on renewable energies, especially on solar energy. A 5 billion euro fund was established for the promotion of renewable energy sources in the Mediterranean region. In addition two consortiums were founded: Desertec and Transgreen, which promote solar energy production in Tunisia and Algeria respectively.

During the past year emphasis was also put on water management, and a special report on the situation in the Jordan Valley was drawn up. The report calls for the ratification of the 1997 UN-Convention on the Non-Navigational Uses of International Watercourses by additional countries in order to enter into force. Until now only 16 of 35 countries needed have ratified the Convention. Additionally, it proposes the initiation of UNESCO procedures for the declaration of the Jordan Valley as a world natural and cultural heritage site. As Mr. Schennach said with reference to the minutes of the committee's meeting in Amman, he plans to invite Jordan, Palestine and Israel to a conference in Vienna in autumn 2010 to follow up on this issue.

The committee's work programme for the next year will comprise the topics **biodiversity**, **protection of the marine environment** of the Mediterranean Sea, as well as **waste management**.

For the meeting hosts, Mr. Johannes **BODNER**, Vice President of the Parliament of Tyrol, welcomed the delegates.

2. Adoption of the minutes of the meeting in Amman on 12 March 2010

The minutes of the last meeting of the Ad Hoc Committee on Energy, Environment and Water in Jordan were adopted. At the last EMPA plenary the Ad Hoc Committee was upgraded to one of the five permanent committees.

3. Deepening of cooperation for the protection of the Mediterranean habitat

Mr. **Marco ONIDA**, the Secretary General of the Alpine Convention, outlined a model for international cooperation at the regional level regarding sustainable development of alpine regions. As he underlined, these geographical entities have common needs, face the same or similar situations and problems which call for shared policies and strategies, as well as for a common and coherent territorial management. He further mentioned the Carpathian Convention for which the Alpine Convention had stood as a model and stated that there was also cooperation with mountainous regions in Central Asia, the Andes, the Caucasus and others.

Mr. **Antonio D`ALI**, Chairman of the Committee on Environment of the Italian Senate, emphasized the critical situation in the Mediterranean Sea. A fast adoption of a "Codex of the Mediterranean" would also support the peace process in the region. As Mr. D`Ali explained, the Mediterranean Sea was especially vulnerable to pollution and degradation: it has only 0.7-0.8 per cent of the surface area of the global seas, a very long coastline, fragmented and densely populated shores with heavy tourism, a high number of oil tankers, many of which do not operate under a (better regulated) European flag. Only 20 per cent of the pollution by tar stemmed from incidents on tankers, whereas 80 per cent derived from routine activities (the release of ballast water, the cleaning of tanks etc.). Mr. D`Ali recommended the neighboring countries of the Mediterranean Sea to lobby in the European Union institutions and the UN to grant the Sea a special status which would imply tighter provisions concerning the treatment of sewage water, higher safety standards on ships etc. Furthermore the already existing conventions should be ratified. Mr. D`Ali further recommended the establishment of a common structure for the concerted action in case of accidents. Also the use of fishery resources should be coordinated – as some species in the Mediterranean are already on the brink of extinction.

Mr. **Marcel HUBER** of the company SynCraft gave a presentation on the potential for deriving electricity from biomass and its technical implementation.

During the discussion which was held after each presentation the following delegates asked questions or made comments:

Mr. Hamid **NARJISSE** (Morocco) said that his country was about to draw up a charter on sustainable development. Mr. **AFERIAT** (Morocco) wanted to know what was hampering the implementation of some of the provisions of the Alpine Convention.

Mr. **ONIDA** said that the Alpine Convention was ready to provide its experience to interested regions and mentioned the different levels (federal, state and regional levels) that were dealing with the matters of the Alpine Convention, as well as varying interests of member states as the main sources of delays in the implementation of the convention.

Mr. Mongi **CHERIF** (Vice-Chair, Tunisia) pointed to the major environmental dangers the Mediterranean Sea was facing, but said that there were efforts on both shores of the sea to raise awareness, including amongst pupils.

A number of delegates took the floor and advocated swift, determined and coordinated action to raise safety standards in the Mediterranean region (Mr. **CHERIF**/Tunisia, Mr. **BRINCAT**/Malta, Mr. **AFERIAT**/Morocco, Mr. **HADJINICOLAS**/Cyprus).

Mr. Schennach proposed dividing Mr. D`Ali's report into smaller reports with clear topics.

4. First debate on themes of committee reports: biodiversity and protection of the marine environment

Introducing the first afternoon presentation, the Chair recalled the sad fact that the aims of the Conference on Biodiversity in Rio de Janeiro 1992 and of the G 8-meeting in L'Aquila in 2009, connecting for the first time the issues of biodiversity and economic growth, have not yet been reached.

Prof. Ulrike **TAPPEINER**, Head of the Institute for Ecology of the University of Innsbruck started her presentation by pointing to the fact that today there is a mass extinction of species occurring at an unprecedented rate, whereas the growing demand for goods and services is the main underlying cause of biodiversity loss and ecosystem conversion or degradation. Unsustainable fishing alone will reduce potential fisheries output by an estimated \$US 50 billion per year. Interestingly a moderate use of agricultural resources is best for biodiversity. What is needed is better monitoring, raising public awareness, prices which reflect the true value of biodiversity as well as policy action and behavioural changes.

Ms. Antje **HELMS**, marine biologist from Greenpeace, spoke about "Defending Our Mediterranean". The main threats to the Mediterranean Sea are noise pollution, habitat destruction, alien species, climate change and illegal fisheries (overfishing, by-catch, wastefulness, destructive fishing). She then presented the definition and the benefits of marine reserves and proposals for their implementation in the Mediterranean Sea. In detail she outlined a possible protection scenario for the bluefin tuna, a species, which could be extinct within the next few years if no determined action is taken. Ms. Helms also emphasized the need to abandon the use of destructive fishing techniques like bottom trawling and illegal drift-netting, as those techniques result in habitat destruction and a high by-catch of endangered species. .

During the discussion, the following delegates asked questions or made comments:

Mr. Rosario Giorgio **COSTA** (Italy) underlined the need to use the fish resources of the Mediterranean Sea in a sustainable way and proposed raising awareness in schools. Additionally, lobby groups should not be allowed to veto protection measures for the Sea. An integrated and coordinated monitoring of all concerned countries is needed. A coastguard would have to be equipped with the newest technology and with highly qualified staff in sufficient numbers. He said it was the task of parliamentarians to proceed with this project in all concerned fora.

Ms. Farkhonda **HASSAN** (Egypt) wanted to know how the southern neighboring countries of the Mediterranean Sea could be involved in the work of the NGOs. The Chair said that there already existed a cooperation with the "Friends of the Earth of the Middle East" and he announced a conference of NGOs to be held in Nice or Alexandria.

Mr. **NARJISSE** (Morocco) agreed that a monitoring system was needed but underlined that exploitation of marine resources in the Mediterranean was caused primarily by the northern neighbors. He emphasized that the committee has to present results to justify its meetings and proposed the following points: evaluating the current situation, raising awareness, and taking action against the destructive exploitation of genetic resources by multinational companies. Finally, Mr. Narjisse said he was shocked by the figures Mr. D'Ali had presented, and that precautionary measures for possible oil accidents had to be taken.

Mr. **BENTOUMI** (Vice-Chair, Algeria) said that what delegates had heard in the afternoon was an urgent call for action. Many people – also among delegates – did not know what biodiversity was about. Environmental crime had to be prosecuted decisively, not only the needs of the economy had to be considered, but also the needs of the people and wildlife.

Also, Mr. BENTOUMI said, environmental education had to be given a much stronger role in schools and universities. In addition the transfer of new technologies had to be encouraged

Mr. **CHERIF** (Vice-Chair, Tunisia) called for amendments and tightening of laws. He said that Tunisia had introduced regulations for closing seasons to fishing, but neighboring countries were not observing these.

Ms. **TAPPEINER** said that action should not be delayed until all species were registered. Protecting the ecosystem also means protecting the diversity of species. This is about protection areas and not about the "classical" environmental protection. Monitoring biodiversity would cover both aspects. She emphasized the danger of genetically modified organisms, as these make farmers and agriculture dependent on a certain brand or breed which eliminates other species. Genetically modified material is surely a very severe threat to biodiversity.

5. Miscellaneous

Selection of co-rapporteurs:

Mr. **COSTA** (Italy) and Mr. **CHERIF** (Vice Chair, Tunisia) agreed to prepare a report on the "Creation of underwater national parks to safeguard biodiversity of fish populations".

Mr. **NARJISSE** (Morocco), Ms. **AYALA SENDER** (European Parliament) and Mr. **SCHENNACH** (Austria) will act as co-rapporteurs for the report "Protection of the marine environment".

The next meeting of the committee is envisaged to be held in Syria or Vienna in autumn 2010.
