



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



**COMMITTEE ON  
ENERGY, ENVIRONMENT AND WATER**

**MINUTES**

**of the meeting held in Salzburg, Austria  
on 1 July 2011**

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**1. Opening of the meeting by the Committee Chairperson Mr. Stefan SCHENNACH and by Mr. Simon ILLMER, President of the *Länder* Parliament of Salzburg**

The **Chair** welcomed the participants and expressed his regret that two vice-chairmen and a number of members of the committee could not participate in the meeting. He voiced the dismay of the committee's members concerning the situation in Syria and Libya, and hoped that Egypt and Tunisia would soon again participate in the committee's work. Mr. Schennach emphasized that the Committee has closely cooperated with the Euro-Mediterranean University (EMUNI) from the beginning and thanked Ms. Rodi **KRATSA-TSAGAROPOULOU**, Vice-President of the European Parliament and Chair of the EMUNI-working group, for her efforts in establishing ties with other universities and research institutes.

In his welcome address, the President of the *Länder* Parliament of Salzburg, Mr. Simon **ILLMER**, said that we are currently facing different types of crisis, be it the financial crisis, the changes in the Arab world or – referring to the scope of this committee – the just distribution of freshwater or the debate about fossil fuels, thus the potential of the Arab world in the production of renewable energy was a very topical issue. He added that it was necessary to continue the dialogue in the highly sensitive and culturally rich Mediterranean and to intensify and contribute to a better mutual understanding.

**2. Adoption of the minutes of the meeting in Rome on 3 March 2011**

The minutes of the last meeting of the Committee on Energy, Environment and Water in Rome, Italy, were adopted.

**3. The potential of the Arab world in the production of renewable energy**

The first keynote speech of the meeting was delivered by Mr. Abderrahim **EL HAFIDI**, Director of the Ministry of Energy, Mines, Water and Environment of the Kingdom of

Morocco. He gave an overview of the development and perspectives of renewable energies in Morocco, including projects for structures and energy grids of sustainable energies in the Mediterranean region. He further presented the new national energy strategy, explaining also Morocco's trumps in the field of sustainable energy production, including wind energy. He pointed to the facts that Morocco had established an institute for research on renewable energies and had already reserved substantial financial means for an extensive investment plan, and that there was a high demand for skilled technicians in his country. Mr. El Hafidi advocated the compensation of the price gap between fossil based energy and that based on renewable energy, until the latter becomes as profitable.

In the discussion, delegates from Jordan, Luxembourg, Malta, Morocco, the Palestinian Authority and the European Parliament took part.

#### **4. Environment and Sustainability in the Mediterranean including the impacts of climate change**

The keynote speech was held by Ms. Helga **KROMP-KOLB**, Head of the Institute for Meteorology, University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences in Vienna, on the climate change in the region. She explained that the rise in temperature in the last 150 years had been caused by human activity, which not only includes the burning of fossil fuels, but the changes in agriculture as well. As she emphasized, a decline in the rate of temperature increase requires not only new techniques and technical developments, but also a change in lifestyle.

The Chair advocated a very close cooperation of Ms. Kromp-Kolb with EMUNI.

The next key note speaker was Mr. Iyad Usama George **ABU RUDAINEH** from Friends of the Earth Middle East, a tri-lateral Jordanian, Palestinian and Israeli environmental NGO. Mr. Abu Rudaineh presented the activities of the grassroots foundation "Good water neighbours" whose aim is the preservation and just utilization of the Jordan River and the Dead Sea Valley. He explained the environmental facts and the important role as well as the substantial challenges of this region, for instance the competition for water,. He went on to inform the committee about the scientific research and the development of a regional rehabilitation strategy in the area, presenting the key findings and the possible rehabilitation scenarios. One of the successes already achieved has been the construction of new sewage treatment plants in all three countries in the valley.

In the following discussion Mr. Ibrahim **ABU AYYASH** of the Palestinian Authority claimed the right of all neighbouring countries to water from the Jordan River. Ms. Orit **ZUARETZ** from Israel emphasized that Israel was working successfully together with the Palestinian authorities on a number of projects. She informed the members that Israel had adopted strict laws to minimize water consumption, as with the climate change the water scarcity in the region would even accelerate.

Furthermore delegates from Malta, Jordan, Morocco and the European Parliament took part in the debate.

The Chair said that if there was no will to preserve the Jordan Valley – unique in the world – we would have to watch the deterioration process until there were no longer a Jordan River. In following up the fact finding mission of the committee bureau in January 2010, the Chair stressed he would not accept another negative answer from Jordan, Israel or the Palestinian Authority to enter into further talks. These talks could take place in Malta, whose offer to host the talks was still valid. Declaring the Jordan Valley a UNESCO Natural and Cultural Heritage site was still on the agenda, he stressed.

## **5. Waste management – Municipal and industrial waste, solid waste, waste recovery (recycling)**

As the representative from the VA TECH WABAG GmbH was prevented from coming, on short term notice, the Chair gave an overview of successful municipal wastewater treatment projects by presenting the examples in Algiers and Tunis.

Mr. Wolf Dieter **KNOPPEK**, ecology centre manager of leather manufacturer Boxmark, gave a presentation on environmental protection and wastewater cleaning in tanneries.

Mr. Rainer **NÖLVAK**, one of the organizers of the "Let's do it"-campaign in Estonia in 2008, presented his experience in organizing nationwide cleanup days, which, after Estonia, were very successful also in India and Slovenia. For the year 2012 Mr. Nölvak has been preparing a worldwide clean up day. The fear that a single person cannot change anything was unfounded, he said: there were many people who wanted to engage themselves in something meaningful – it only needed good organisation. In Slovenia 35 % of the inhabitants participated in the cleanup day of their country. He pointed to a declaration adopted this year by the European Parliament on a "Let's do it"-day in Europe. Amongst others, Brazil wanted to organize cleanup days as well. As Mr. Nölvak pointed out, 300 Mio. people worldwide (approx. 5 % of the world population) would be enough for successfully cleaning up the world in one day.

The Chair advocated the introduction of environmental education in the Mediterranean countries to introduce responsible behaviour patterns regarding waste. He further advocated a shift of the economy into waste prevention and waste recycling. Apart from cleaning up their environment, people also felt good by creating an identity through collective action.

In the discussion, delegates from Latvia, Israel, Luxembourg, Morocco and the European Parliament took the floor. They informed the committee in particular about the situation in their countries and asked how to get a maximum participation in these cleaning actions. Mr. Nölvak advised spreading the message on different levels, including Facebook. To reach the people the proponents would have to be honest and convinced themselves.

## **7. Any other business**

The chairman informed participants about his plans regarding the committee reports for the next half year.

1. Potential for biomass in the Mediterranean countries
2. Reduction of barriers between North-South and South-South cooperation in the fields of green technology, with regard to mobility and to the energy, communications, and transport networks
3. Implementation of a joint 'Let's Do It Day', as part of the Union for the Mediterranean for 2012 to clean up the environment, to stimulate the waste industry and to raise environmental awareness as an initiative to create a common identity

After a decision by the committee bureau, the parliaments concerned would be asked for written agreement regarding the preparation of the reports.

The next meeting of the Committee on Energy, Environment and Water will presumably take place in December 2011 in Morocco or Vienna.

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