



REPUBLIK ÖSTERREICH
Parlament



**EMPA – Meeting of the Ad Hoc Committee on Energy and Environment
Vienna, 18 May 2009**

Minutes (Draft)

The Ad Hoc Committee on Energy and Environment of the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly met on **18 May 2009 at the Austrian Parliament in Vienna**. The meeting was chaired by Stefan Schennach, member of the Austrian Federal Council, who had succeeded the Greek Parliament as committee chair in March 2009. The three vice-chairs, Abderrahmane **Bouhrizi**, (Tunisia), Abdellah **Bentoumi** (Algeria) and David **Hammerstein** (European Parliament) were also present. Altogether, **20 members of parliament from 17 delegations** attended the meeting.

The **agenda** of the meeting was adopted.

Stefan Schennach welcomed the delegates as committee chair. The president of the Austrian Federal Council, Harald **Reisenberger**, then delivered his inaugural address, emphasising that commitment to environmental conservation and sustainable development should not lessen in the face of the current economic and financial crisis. He stated that the further development of technologies which help increase the share of renewable energies was also an opportunity to create jobs in a sector that still holds great potential and to stimulate the economy. In this context, Harald Reisenberger underlined the pioneering role of the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly and thanked all members and partners of the Ad Hoc Committee for having come to Vienna.

In his presentation **HRH Prince Hassan bin Talal of Jordan** then stressed the need to reduce the negative impact on the global environment to a level that will allow the planet to feed ten billion people in forty years from now and ensure a sufficient supply of food, water and energy. Prince Hassan bin Talal pointed to the important role of oceans as means of transport for world trade, mentioning potential trouble spots in this context. He expressed his hope that possible solutions for effective crisis management can be found which overcome the limitations of nation-state ideologies. As positive example, he mentioned the West Asia-North Africa Forum (WANA).

In his presentation, HRH Prince Hassan bin Talal raised other important points such as the creation of a supranational, non-partisan water and energy community that provides an institutional framework for the development of a new management designed to protect common resources, the DESERTEC initiative, and the need to establish a Social Cohesion Fund.

A regional security organisation should reflect a new concept of security that overcomes the traditional, state-centred notions of security which are limited to a “rigid concept“ of security as far as security needs of the citizens in the region are concerned and becomes an element of comprehensive security prevention, Hassan bin Talal of Jordan concluded.

The presentation was followed by a debate and an exchange of ideas among the delegates.

Günter **Liebel**, director general at the Austrian Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, the Environment and Water Management, and H el ene **Pelosse**, deputy head of cabinet of the French Minister of the Environment, then gave presentations on the general theme of **“Implementation of a Mediterranean Solar Plan“**.

G unter Liebel sketched in particular the future European and global development potential of renewable energies and outlined in detail the current situation and future perspectives from the Austrian view. In her presentation, H el ene Pelosse presented the Mediterranean Solar Plan in detail, referring to the French-Egyptian co-presidency (2009-2011) of the Union for the Mediterranean, to the master plan 2011-2020, and to joint projects.

The afternoon part of the session began with presentations on the DESERTEC Concept "**Clean Power from Deserts**". In his presentation Gerhard Knies (DESERTEC) focused on: a presentation of the DESERTEC project; the findings of studies conducted by the German Aerospace Center; solar thermal power plants and und HVDC transmission; advantages for the MENA region and Europe, as well as measures to implement the DESERTEC concept.

In view of rising energy demand, global population growth and impending climate change, the generation of clean energy is an all-important issue. The DESERTEC project is to use global deserts for generating solar energy. The questions raised in the ensuing debate centred mainly on its practical implementation, with close attention being paid to the fundability of the project. Delegates also discussed whether the project could be implemented commercially or with the economic involvement of the countries concerned. Moreover, the question was addressed how developing countries can be given access to the required technology.

After the **adoption of the minutes of the last committee meeting of 16 March 2009** under the Greek presidency, a first deliberation of the reports which the committee will prepare during the Austrian presidency was held.

Committee chair Schennach proposed the **preparation of two reports**:

Report 1:

Potentials, requirements and opportunities for the **implementation of the Mediterranean Solar Plan** in the context of European Neighbourhood programmes and European Union projects for the Mediterranean, as well as **further development of the potentials of renewable energies** for self-sufficiency, as well as for the energy market against the backdrop of the climate protection objectives

Co-rapporteur: European Parliament or France or Italy

Egypt

Report 2:

Water management as a future challenge in the light of growing demand for drinking water supply and agriculture. Opportunities of hydro-solar desalination programmes with energy recovery, potentials of waste-water use with energy recovery, and protection of the ecosystem and coastal bodies of water

Co-rapporteur: European Parliament or Slovenia

Algeria

The final decision on the selection of the rapporteurs will be made after the elections for the European Parliament from 4-7 June 2009. The general structure and contents of both reports will be discussed at the next meeting in Austria in late 2009 and finalised at the committee meeting to be held within the framework of the next plenary session of the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly in Amman, Jordan, in March 2010 for submission to the plenary. The Jordanian assembly chair will be informed about the two selected themes.

Venue and date for the next meeting – autumn 2009 in Austria – to be communicated separately.

No objections were raised against the proposals made by the chairman.

Following the formal meeting, the committee members attended a **lecture given by HRH Prince Hassan bin Talal of Jordan** with a subsequent debate at the **Bruno Kreisky Forum for International Dialogue** in Vienna on “West Asia – North Africa and the Euro-Atlantic: Finding Common Solutions to Shared Challenges“.

On 19 May 2009 the committee members visited the **European Centre for Renewable Energies in Güssing**, Burgenland, featuring a presentation of the technology centre and an on-site visit of the biomass power plant, the biosyngas methanation plant and research facilities.

Vienna, 15 June 2009