

Migratory pressure and immigration are priorities of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Union for the Mediterranean

Created: 01-04-2014 20:49:30

Place: Lisbon PRT

Source (in Portuguese): LUSA

Key words: MEETING, PARLIAMENT, IMMIGRATION, Africa, MIDDLE EAST, Portugal, Organisations, ASSUNÇÃO ESTEVES, European Union (EU)

Topics: International organisations - immigration

Lisbon, 1 April (Lusa) - Migratory pressure and immigration will top the agenda of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Union for the Mediterranean (PA-UfM) in 2014, a meeting of the governing council, chaired by Portugal, decided today.

"Our concern was to create in 2014 a mobilising idea for all the action of PA-UfM and an idea that can spread to the international organisations of civil society with whom we interact", the President of the Assembly of the Republic, Assunção Esteves, told a press conference.

Portugal assumed the presidency of PA-UfM in February and today hosted a meeting of the presidency of the assembly of the organisation, which includes the European Parliament (EP) and the parliaments of Morocco and Jordan.

The director-general of the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), William Lacy Swing, the Speaker of the Jordanian parliament, Atef Tarawneh, the Vice-President of the EP, Isabelle Durant, and the Vice-President of the Moroccan Parliament, Mohammed Yatim, also attended the meeting.

The Mayor of Tangiers and the Mayor-President of Ceuta were also at this enlarged meeting.

The purpose of the meeting was to "mobilise everyone and every method for the issue of migration, particularly the problem of migratory pressure on southern Europe and the problem of immigration", Assunção Esteves explained.

The "methodological idea of having a common thread to an issue for the whole year" will thus mark the Portuguese presidency of the PA-UfM.

"We intend to make an effort with the governing body of the International Organization for Migration, and whenever possible with the United Nations, and radiate out to the decision-making centres (...) with a set of pragmatic proposals", the head of the Portuguese parliament continued.

The priority of the migration issue is underscored in the final document of the meeting, which also expresses concern with the humanitarian situation and the conditions in which migrants are detained and returned "on both sides

of the border", and deplores the recent incidents in Lampedusa, Ceuta, Melilla and the Eastern Mediterranean.

In stressing the need for a "multidisciplinary approach" and political solution to the problems of migrants and refugees, the text notes that the migration issue calls for "discussion of human rights and civilization", and considers that the international community must develop a "priority action" on the humanitarian condition of refugees and immigrants. It calls on the European Union, League of Arab States, African countries and the United Nations to "coordinate efforts and strategies" towards a comprehensive migration policy.

An appeal to the European Council to define "strategic guidelines" in legislative and operational terms, the need for "special attention" to these migratory flows in the Euro-Mediterranean region, more partnerships with Mediterranean states and a coherent, balanced approach to migration and asylum policies are other recommendations from the meeting.

The disproportionate pressure of migration on countries of the Mediterranean coast and a fairer distribution of the "burden of migration" in accordance with the "principle of solidarity", are further recommendations contained in the document, which concludes by stating concerns "with the continued armed conflict in Syria".

The dilemmas surrounding this topic ended up being defined by Isabelle Durant in a short speech, recalling that PA-UfM "is not the executive", despite the pressure that it may be able to exert on decision-making centres, and recalled what the Director-General of IOM had said at the meeting: "On the issue of migration we are working with completely outdated tools and the situation is totally different from the one recorded 20 years ago, the world changed, and it will continue to change, and this will force us to review the instruments and tools for grasping the politics of migration."

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