



Press Release

PR 172617

18.11. 2017

PRESS RELEASE BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Maltese PAM delegation participates in the conference ‘Promoting better regional cooperation towards smart and humane migration across the Mediterranean’

The Maltese delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly for the Mediterranean (PAM) headed by Justyne Caruana, participated in the conference ‘Promoting better regional cooperation towards smart and humane migration across the Mediterranean’, organised in Valletta between 16 and 17 November 2017 by the Parliament of Malta, the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), and PAM. The Maltese delegation also comprised Glenn Bedingfield, Etienne Grech, and David Stellini.

Justyne Caruana took part in the debate during Session I highlighting that Malta has, on numerous occasions, called on European states, international bodies, and institutions to implement an inclusive and equal dialogue with neighbouring and southern states. She explained that Malta was instrumental to bring to the forefront the important role played by root causes and the need of sustained and continuous dialogue with key actors. In fact, the 2015 Valletta Summit on Migration, bringing together European and African heads of state and the Government recognised that migration is a shared responsibility of countries of origin, transit, and destination. As a follow-up to the 2015 Valletta Summit on Migration, on 8 and 9 February 2017 Malta organised a Senior Officials Meeting. The Senior Officials Meeting gathered delegations from across Europe and Africa in constructive dialogue to take stock of the progress made under the five pillars of the Joint Valletta Action Plan. Justyne Caruana reiterated that Malta will continue to give the Mediterranean dimension top priority to reaffirm the long-standing belief that there can be no security in Europe if there is no security in the Mediterranean.

On the second day of the conference, the topics for discussion included the need to bolster border protection and the fight against people smugglers, as well as the ‘push’ factor of migration and the importance of promoting sustainable development in countries of origin. Etienne Grech explained that Malta has been actively contributing to promote parliamentary cooperation in the discussion on border control and the fight against migrant smugglers. The Maltese Parliament, as part of its commitments falling under the Presidency of the Council of the European Union, on 29 and 30 May chaired the LVII Conference of Parliamentary Committees for Union Affairs of Parliaments of the European Union (COSAC). The session on migration addressed the need to combat human smuggling and trafficking and the importance to establish a humane and effective return and readmission policy. Etienne Grech highlighted that the outcome of the conference pointed towards the need to open and promote legal channels of migration, acting as a direct contribution to disrupt the smugglers network and ensure migration is managed in a humane and sustainable manner.

Glenn Bedingfield welcomed the opportunity to address the topic of migration but cautioned members present to not let statistical numbers overshadow the fact that migration is about human

beings and the desperate plea of men, women and children. Speaking on the situation in Libya, Glenn Bedingfield expressed disdain at the lack of media coverage and international action to reports of abuses and the 'thriving migrant slave trade'. To remain passive is not an option and this is where the role of parliamentary work is important. He highlighted that members of parliament must place greater pressure on their respective governments to ensure that measures are put in place to successfully fight migrant smugglers and promote greater political input into the discussions on migration. Furthermore, it is important to debate migration with a strong dose of compassion and understanding of the humanitarian tragedy surrounding irregular migration. Glenn Bedingfield reiterated that Malta will continue to be a leading voice for continuous, comprehensive, and compassionate discussions on migration. Concluding, he underlined that every country needs to feel part of the migration debate and the fight against migrant smugglers in the Mediterranean Sea and beyond.