



Press Release

PR 182146

05.10.2018

PRESS RELEASE BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Maltese parliamentary delegation participates in the 17th autumn meeting of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly

A delegation of the Maltese Parliament, led by MP Clayton Bartolo and comprising MP Alexander Muscat and MP Frederick Azzopardi, was one of 57 delegations to participate in the 17th autumn meeting of the Parliamentary Assembly within the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE PA), held in Bishkek, Kyrgyz Republic, between 3 and 6 October 2018. The autumn meeting also included two plenary sessions, a meeting of the Mediterranean Forum and a meeting of the Standing Committee.

The first plenary session, which focused on countering new challenges and threats in border areas through confidence-building and regional co-operation, was addressed by Erlan Abdyldaev, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kyrgyz Republic, Ambassador Gyorgyi Szabo, Head of the OSCE Programme Office in Astana, and Fabio Piana, Acting Head of the OSCE Programme Office in Dushanbe. Minister Abdyldaev described the challenges which the Kyrgyz Republic has faced in recent years, including tackling drug and human trafficking, improving security risk profiling, returning foreign fighters to countries of origin and increasing transport and trade links. Mr Szabo and Mr Piana described various examples of good practice from their projects in Astana and Dushanbe respectively. Addressing the forum during the debate, MP Azzopardi highlighted the need for working towards peace-building through socio-economic and cultural dimensions, preventive diplomacy and civilian initiatives. While noting that the OSCE continues to adopt common objectives and guidelines on poverty-reduction, trade capacity-building, water resource management and infrastructure development, MP Azzopardi called for further OSCE confidence-building initiatives regarding environmental regulation and search and rescue operations.

The second plenary session, discussing strengthening citizens' engagement in building secure societies, was addressed by Ambassador Pierre Von Arx, Head of the OSCE Programme Office in Bishkek, Almazbek Musabekov, Deputy Director of the National Institute for Strategic Studies of the Kyrgyz Republic, and Hans-Ullrich Ihm, OSCE Project Co-ordinator in Uzbekistan. The three speakers described best practice examples related to engaging civil society in democratic efforts, highlighting the importance of engaging women, young people and people from all minority groups in efforts in peace-building, strengthening democracy and consolidating the rule of law.

The topic 'Geopolitics of Central Asia and the Mediterranean: Addressing Migration, Trade and Environmental Challenges' was the focus of the Mediterranean Forum. Chairperson of the Mediterranean Forum, Pascal Allizard, explained that despite their geographical distance, Central Asia and the Mediterranean face similar geopolitical challenges. The Mediterranean Forum was

addressed by Ambassador Katarina Zakova, representative of the 2018 Chairmanship of the OSCE Contact Group with the Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation, who provided an overview of the work carried out by the said contact group, including various challenges faced by the Mediterranean Partners. Ambassador Zakova highlighted the challenges posed by the deterioration of security around the Mediterranean, resulting in migration which has a destabilising effect on both host countries and countries of origin, and emphasised the importance of education as a means for preventing radicalisation. Various heads of the parliamentary delegations from the OSCE Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation also addressed the forum.

Intervening in the general debate, all three members of the Maltese delegation spoke of the topic of migration. MP Clayton Bartolo cautioned against populist measures in migration, including certain governments' policy to close harbours to people crossing the Mediterranean in search of asylum in Europe, while underscoring the importance of respecting international regulations in the field of migration. MP Bartolo augured that the OSCE PA will continue to stress the vitality of respecting such international obligations.

MP Frederick Azzopardi called for a revision of Dublin II regulations, expressed concerns about the workability of disembarkation centres outside the EU, which the EU is discussing as a means to enable legal corridors of migration, and emphasised the need for more European solidarity and cooperation in migration, particularly burden-sharing.

Lamenting the loss of lives in the Mediterranean Sea, MP Alexander Muscat mentioned that despite having the highest proportion of immigrants applying for refugee status, Malta believed in abiding by international regulations and avoiding populist measures. MP Muscat encouraged parliamentarians to collaborate with a view to achieve international solutions for the global challenges of human smuggling and irregular migration, including destroying the business model of all those involved in such criminal operations.

The autumn meeting included a meeting of the standing committee of the OSCE PA, in which heads of delegations discussed the OSCE PA's activities between July and October 2018 and its future plans. Pressing political issues were also mentioned, notably the unresolved conflict in the Nagorno-Karabakh region and the rise of populism across Europe.