

OUTLINE
MALTA RAPPORTEURS STATEMENT/SUMMARY

An overview

1. 164 participants, including parliamentarians from 26 national parliaments on 'all sides' of the Mediterranean –and beyond—took part in the first Mediterranean Parliamentary Conference on migration on 16-17 November, 2017, in Malta. Participants also included officials and experts from regional parliamentary bodies in Africa and Europe, governments, United Nations specialized agencies, intergovernmental organizations and civil society NGOs.

Titled [Promoting better regional cooperation towards smart and humane migration across the Mediterranean](#), the conference conducted a sweeping review of the complexity of migration and refugee exodus into, across and from countries around the Mediterranean region.

The conference was organized in truly local-regional-global tripartite cooperation by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean (PAM) and the Parliament of Malta, which hosted the event effectively and elegantly.

Parliamentarians presented dramatic stories of the situations and impact of migration in their countries. Many proffered passionate pleas for cooperation, solidarity and common solutions. Expert presentations provided reasoned analysis along with options for action. Topical sessions addressed labour migration dynamics, changing discourse around migration, refugee protection, border protection, and addressing push factors of migration.

The forum privileged parliamentary contributions in frank and often passionate discussion. Representatives highlighted push factors of war and absence of decent living conditions in home countries, concerns for refugee protection, safety, and welfare, the longstanding and ever unresolved Palestinian refugee plight, and pleas for solutions backed by parliamentary action and cooperation across the region and beyond.

Observations, conclusions and recommendations in ten points:

1. Rule of law, parliamentary responsibilities and standards-based governance:

Participants emphasized throughout the event recognition that parliaments are paramount actors in governance of migration. From the opening session, speakers highlighted the importance of parliamentary initiative to obtain ratification and implementation by their countries of the international Conventions concerning migration governance, protection of migrants and their families, and refugee protection and assistance. including the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers, relevant ILO Conventions and the 1951 Convention and 1967 Protocol on the Status of Refugees. In later sessions, parliaments referred also to ratification of the Protocols on trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants to the Convention on Transnational Organized Crime, as well as relevant regional instruments.

The debate suggested the importance of referring to migration governance rather than solely migration management, noting that the broader term governance clearly invokes responsibilities of parliamentary, lawmaking and indeed judiciary functions of government, complementary to management functions of the executive, but necessary to ensure that ultimately migration – and societies-- are governed with and under the rule of law.

II. Addressing causes:

Many parliamentary delegates emphasized that migration is a consequence of causal factors and it is these factors that must be addressed to ensure that migration is voluntary, safe, and rights protecting.

Delegates highlighted a range of 'push' factors compelling migration. Particular emphasis was made on armed conflict and outright warfare displacing literally millions of people, such as in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria. Concerns were raised about arms supply, military intervention and external support for internal combatants from many other countries including in other regions these situations of warfare, warfare that continues killing thousands of people and forcing displacement of hundreds of thousands more.

Participant assessments noted causal factors of poverty, absence of economic conditions for decent life, lack of development and consequences of climate change induced environmental destruction. Others spoke of search for opportunity, for better life, while several presentations and comments urged recognition of huge and growing demand factors for labour and skills in destination countries, not only in Europe but in virtually all countries around the Mediterranean basin.

Multiple recommendations for action were posed, among them urgent need for conflict resolution and seeking non-military solutions to conflicts that remain eternal warfare otherwise. Material and financial support, enhanced investment, functioning democratic States and regional economic integration were highlighted as long and short-term keys to resolving pressures pushing if not forcing people to leave. Unfortunately, reference to the importance of fully implementing the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda as the viable long term approach was only evoked in passing.

3. Recognizing demand and needs for migration :

Complementing the imperative concerns around push factors was an increasing if still reluctant recognition of the large and growing migration demand factors characterizing all of Europe. and increasingly, countries on Southern and Eastern sides of the region.

Assessments presented underlined that, given technological, structural and demographic changes, migration is the essential element in maintaining viable skills and labour forces necessary to sustain productive, indeed simply functional, economies. It was noted that current immigration to the EU member states as a whole is nearly 5 million persons a year –the vast majority in regular circumstances, and the vast majority filling jobs and providing skills and labour not usually available locally.

Recommendations echoed the evolving global assessments: in sum the need for ample and accessible safe, regular and rights-protecting channels for migration. Evoking that the majority of migration takes place within already established free movement regimes, mention was made of need to maintain and strengthen implementation of these.

4. Refugee safe haven, protection, assistance

The realities around the Mediterranean and beyond compelled particular attention to refugees, their protection, and to support for countries and peoples facing huge influxes of people seeking safe haven from warfare in neighboring countries. As well, concerns were reiterated for the imperative of maintaining protection for and assistance to refugees throughout Europe, in context of Europe's professed identity as a region of human rights, democracy and safe haven-- in contrast to discourse and actions of exclusion and rejection of refugees in particular, migrants in general.

Particular emphasis was raised to the situation of countries –and their peoples-- confronted by and responding generously to huge influxes of refugees –far beyond any capacity to face alone. Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, Greece, Italy, Malta, Serbia.

Recommendations called for upholding fully the implementation of the Refugee Convention and Protocol, for ensuring full and fair refugee determination procedures, for providing decent accommodation and ultimately integration in host countries.

Proposals echoed recommendations out there for all EU member countries to accommodate a share of refugees for resettlement, for suspending Dublin restrictions requiring arriving refugees to apply for asylum and remain in first country of arrival. While these were policy invocations, they were understood as recommendations for parliamentary action to achieve.

Particular recognition of the long standing, unresolved plight of Palestinian refugees was inevitably on the agenda, and a particular recommendation that an inter-Parliamentary conference would be an important and timely response to reaffirm resolution and engage parliamentary action.

5. Changing the discourse;

The predominance of hostile and rejectionist media attention and discourse by political –even governmental leaders and consequent public attitudes were a topic of intense concern at the conference.

Time permitted neither achieving a comprehensive analysis nor a program of action to change the narrative and move from hostility to solidarity, a number of suggestions were raised. These included assertive leadership with a positive – values and knowledge based-- discourse by parliamentarians, government officials and other leaders as well as other actors. Particular mention was made of stop funding hate campaigning and local efforts to facilitate contact and engagement between refugees, migrants and the peoples of host communities.

6. Inclusion, integration, equality, non-discrimination

Numerous comments referred to the imperative of inclusion, non-discrimination, equality of treatment and integration as fundamental precepts for accommodating migrants –and refugees for that matter-- in the communities, cities, societies and countries.

7. Education and training...

The discussion inevitably and necessarily raised primordial issues of education and training –crucial correlaries for the global context of economic and social drivers of migration –and of marginalization both in host societies and in origin countries.

Participants recognized that access to education, to training, to retraining are crucial elements to address the increasing global shortages of people with tertiary education and with vocational and technical skills –threatening economies and societies. And leading to brain drain from less developed to more developed countries.

Recommendations articulated included ratification of relevant UNESCO conventions, allocation of increased funding to schooling and training everywhere, and enhanced mechanisms for harmonization of education and training standards and of recognition of skills criteria and procedures.

8. Mobility versus control--

Major themes throughout the conference were the recognized need for accessible legal and regular migration channels contrasted with demands for effective migration control and restrictions in movement –at least of irregular migration.

An entire session addressed bolstering border protection and fighting trafficking in person and smuggling of migrants. Some questions were raised –without resolution-- about tensions between migration control and coercive measures and the ultimate benefits of free movement and more adequate regular migration channels.

Recommendations included both enhancing regular migration –as ultimately the resolution of the demand factor for recourse to smuggling, and strengthening efforts to combat organized smuggling and trafficking operations and the operators behind –but not the migrants.

9. International Cooperation and global solutions

International cooperation as well as adoption of global standards, policy frameworks and were underlying topical themes throughout the discussion.

In addition to Conventions mentioned earlier, particular attention was given to the Global Compact on migration – with a clear recommendation to call for parliamentary input and perspectives in its elaboration and negotiation.

Mention was also made of the Global Forum on Migration and Development – currently co-chaired by Germany and Morocco

10. Universal demands for parliamentary cooperation and solidarity

Proposals, indeed demands for parliamentary cooperation and solidarity were universally raised throughout the conference. These demands both on each thematic topic and in principle as an overarching imperative.

The initiative of this conference was universally lauded.

Proposals included :

- a future conference to continue building regional dialogue and cooperation
- a followup parliamentarians network on migration
- Calls for IPU and PAM action and organizing in followup of recommendations and action from this event –and future consultations.

Also, cooperation with relevant international organizations, including ILO, IOM, OHCHR, UNESCO, UNHCR

- regional organizations : AU, EU, RECs
- regional parliamentary bodies : EP, PACE, OSCE PA

Summary call to action and way forward...

- Elaboration of a parliamentary action agenda