

Intervenção Deputado Fernando Negrão
Bucareste – 10 de maio 2014

Mr. President Valeriu Stefan Zgonea

Chairman in Office of the South East European Cooperation Process Parliamentary Dimension

Honourable Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me to, on behalf of the President of the Assembly of the Republic of Portugal, on my personal behalf, and on behalf of the Portuguese Parliament, to start by thanking the Romanian Parliament for hosting the Inaugural Session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the South East European Cooperation Process, a day that will stay in the history books.

Portugal assumed the Presidency of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Union for the Mediterranean in February 2014, after an important and unique work done by the Jordanian Parliament. It is our conviction that we should trail in the same path as our predecessor.

As our President mentioned in her inaugural speech, the human and civic dimension of our relations will be at the heart of the programme of the Portuguese Presidency of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Union for the Mediterranean. We must undertake policies that will bring the citizens of both sides closer, by listening to a multiplicity of voices, including those that are less familiar to us. We have to assume that political society is not able, by itself, to build dialogue and understanding of an enormous diversity.

The Portuguese Presidency will do all it can to nurture dialogue, not only at State level but also, and more importantly, by supporting the action of the leaders of civil society, intellectuals, foundations, and individuals with a broad experience of intervention. Mindful of the driving forces of day to day life, we will be able to build a region of peace, democracy and development, a region of justice. And here, immigration is key to our strategy. Immigrants and their odysseys are now on the agenda of the Parliamentary

Assembly of the Union for the Mediterranean. And reality dictates that it will continue to be there, and increasingly so.

To that regard, this past April 1st, we hosted a first Bureau meeting under the Portuguese Presidency, a meeting with the presence, as guest speakers, of Ambassador William Lacy, General-Director of the International Organisation for Migration, and Mr. José Maria Vivas, Mayor of the City and Province of Ceuta.

At the end of the Bureau meeting, a final declaration was approved unanimously, and I take this opportunity to refer to some of its recommendations, namely:

- Calls for Migrations to be the core issue of PA-UfM's agenda for the next year and highlights the role of Parliamentarians to that regard;
- Recalls the latest incidents in Lampedusa, Ceuta, Melilla and in the Eastern Mediterranean and expresses regret for the tragic loss of the lives of migrants in the Mediterranean; remembers that each human being is unique and unrepeatable; expresses concern for the humanitarian situation and condition of detention and return of migrants in both sides of the frontiers;
- Underlines that Migrations call for the discourse of human rights and civilization, and stresses that life is the first value and must be protected everywhere, from the civil society to the institutions of the State;
- Considers that the humanitarian condition and the respect for human rights of migrants and refugees is a priority issue and that the international community should take priority action in this regard;

In this same Declaration, the Bureau of the PA-UfM decided to dispatch a fact finding mission to Ceuta and Melilla to witness the humanitarian situation and report back to the PA-UfM and proposed to listen to the voices of citizens of the two margins of the Mediterranean, by inviting competent international and regional organisations, NGO, foundations, academic and civil society to join the AP-UpM reflexion. Thus, we have decided that the II Meeting of Presidents of the Parliaments of the Union for the Mediterranean will take place on 27 and 28 October 2014, and that the 11th Plenary Session of the PA-UfM, in 2015, will dedicate part of their work to the migration and asylum policies in the Euro Mediterranean Region.

Thank you.