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الجمعية البرلمانية للبحر الأبيض المتوسط

Dialogue in the encounter between cultures and religions: the role of politics and education

Rome, 15 December 2016, Italian Senate

Summary

The PAM meeting on "Dialogue in the encounter between cultures and religions: the role of politics and education" took place on 15 December 2016 in Rome, generously hosted by the Italian Senate, within the framework of the activities of the PAM 3rd Standing Committee of on the Dialogue of Civilizations and Human Rights, chaired by Sen. Emma Fattorini.

The meeting brought together national parliamentary delegations to PAM, representatives of international parliaments, regional organizations and other eminent personalities, including religious leaders and representatives of the PAM Academic platform.

Participants engaged with passion in the general discussions on the main challenges of interreligious and intercultural dialogue in the Euro-Mediterranean region. They offered substantive contributions and shared best practises and national experiences about intercultural and inter-religious dialogue.

There was consensus on the growing importance of intercultural and interreligious dialogue as powerful tools for achieving stability and peace, fighting against intolerance and extremism, while upholding the values of peaceful coexistence and mutual understanding. Moreover, participants acknowledged the need to place intercultural and interreligious dialogues as a central objective in a renewed multilateral political approach required in the Mediterranean.

Common values, such as the fundamental rights of democracy, the rule of law and the recognition of human dignity have been identified as the basis for a peaceful and coexistence of people of different cultures and religions on both shores of the Mediterranean.

Participants also identified the need to implement intercultural and interreligious activities in the fields of education, youth, media, migration, peacebuilding and conflict resolution, by specifying that the programmes in these areas should include grassroots initiatives to be implemented with leaders at international, regional and local levels. Moreover, they pointed

out the necessity to enhance interinstitutional cooperation in the promotion of intercultural and interreligious mutual respect and understanding.

The key role of education and training of both religious leaders and youth, as a fundamental instrument to curb the scourge of violent extremism, was highlighted. In this respect, the modernization of reflection and theological discourse, as well as of school curricula, had been strongly reiterated.

Participants pointed out the importance of the development of youth programmes in intercultural and inter-religious institutions supporting the interaction and exchange between young people from different cultures in order to disseminate the message of pluralism and diversity. Moreover, interreligious and multicultural education was recommended for theological schools and religious education systems for them to include into their curricula interreligious dialogue and values of peace, pluralism, and civic engagement.

Moreover, the key role of religious leaders in disseminating the values of tolerance, peace and brother-hood was stressed, and the conception of a secularism that incorporates values of different faiths by recognizing their cultural and educational values, was emphasized.

Report

PAM President, Senator Lhou Lmarbouh, opened the meeting by asking participants to observe minute's silence in honour of the victims of the latest terrorist attacks in Egypt and Turkey. He then referred to the challenges the Mediterranean region is facing and the multiplication of acts of xenophobia, calling for urgent and collective responses, while protecting and promoting human rights and the fundamental freedoms. In addition, he stressed the need to increase vigilance by strengthening prevention and education activities targeting the most vulnerable groups to extremism, such as youth. He also reminded parliamentarians of their duty to assume their own responsibilities on behalf of their fellow citizens, and to openly and clearly oppose all forms of intolerance, racism and hatred. Finally, he referred to the Moroccan experience in the harmonious management of cultural diversity, based on empathy and openness, which are considered the fundamental criteria to achieve peace, stability and prosperity in the Euro-Mediterranean space.

Sen. Emma Fattorini, Italy, PAM Vice-President and President of the PAM 3rd Standing Committee, welcomed the participants, apologizing for the delicate moment in Italy due to the sudden crisis resulting from the resignation of the Head of the Government. She then referred to cultural and religious differences in our region, not as a barrier that cause terrorism and violence, but as an important part of the solution to the problems that the Mediterranean region is facing. She spelled out the persecution of minorities, stressing the need to revitalize and protect them through dialogue at all levels and in collaboration with

other parliamentary bodies, such as PACE and NATO-PA. She also referred to the PAM collaboration with the UN system, specifying that this meeting is encouraged by the UNSC/CTED, with which the PAM has launched a very fruitful collaboration. She concluded by stressing the importance of the educating and forming young people to fight terrorism and recalling PAM Academic Platform activities in the field of Academic cooperation.

After these interventions, a series of speakers took the floor, the first of which was **Dr Salah Ramadan El-Sayed Abu El-Nour, Imam of the Islamic and Cultural Centre of Italy "The Great Mosque of Rome"**. He evoked the common cultural heritage and historical ties shared by all the peoples of the Mediterranean, and called on the Islamic world to make its voice heard against terrorism, violence and extremism, in the name of the theological roots of Islam. In this context, he specified that the Great Mosque of Rome, which welcomes almost 3,000 people every Friday, has always condemned violence and terrorism acts as crimes against humanity, and that Islam condemns these crimes clearly and openly, as they go against its spirit. He continued by stating that, as mentioned in the Quran, diversity is willed by God as a tool of peaceful coexistence, not for confrontation, and that the reality on a daily basis shows that cohabitation is possible even in an environment dominated by the Islamic culture. He concluded by inviting all citizens and believers of all faiths to assume their own responsibilities to counter extremism, as people and government, and called on religious leaders to disseminate the values of tolerance, peace and brotherhood.

Senator Adele Gambaro, Vice-President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), highlighted three issues related to the subject of the meeting: the challenge of violent extremism to democratic societies; the resumption of dialogue in today's society, characterized by fractures feeding violence and the rejection of others; and the presence of religion within a secular society and its impact on relations with others in the public space. She invited all participants to promote the PACE campaign "No Hate, No Fear", and referred to the PACE Recommendation n. 1962 of 2011 on the importance of dialogue among religions in promoting values founding all democratic societies; the training of religious leaders; and the dialogue between public institutions and religious communities. She also referred to Resolution n. 2076 of 2015 "Freedom of religion and living together in a democratic society", in which the PACE recognize that religious organizations are integral part of the civil society and contribute to it, while respecting common values, such as the fundamental rights of democracy, the rule of law and the human dignity. She concluded by stressing the important role of the education system and inviting parliaments and religious leaders not to remain inactive in the face of the persecution of religious minorities.

Dr Yahya Pallavicini, President of the Supreme Council for Education, Science and Culture for Muslims outside the Islamic World and ISESCO Goodwill Ambassador, mentioned the four occasions in which he presented the subject of anti-radicalism: in Strasbourg, at the Council of Europe's meeting on the role of religious leaders in promoting the peaceful presence of religions in the Western and Eastern societies, and the role of women and

families; in Sousse, Tunisia, with the President of Malta and the President of Tunisia, at the Imperial Palace, where it was agreed on the need to express dissent vis-a-vis any form of manipulation of politics or religion for subversive purposes; at the meeting organized by the Office of the UN Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide in Fez, Morocco, where participants agreed on the need to train new generations of leaders and experts with the necessary keys to fight the extreme narrative; and in Marrakech, where theologians of the monotheistic religions and representatives of different institutions have drafted the Marrakech Declaration on the Rights of Minorities, which refers to the condition of harmony that the Prophet of Islam had established with other religious communities in Medina. He then emphasized a conception of secularism that incorporates values of different faiths by recognizing their cultural and educational values, and finally invited religious leaders, believers and politicians to integrate spiritual values and civil responsibility, and underlined the need for new criteria and points of reflection, even theological, taking into account modernity, religious pluralism and democratic citizenship.

Sen. Alia Bouran, Jordan, PAM Vice-President and President of the PAM 1st Standing Committee, expressed the need to fight extremism and radicalism together, since no country can do it individually, specifying that this war must be fought with the guide of the Arab and Muslim world. She presented the Jordanian experience, specifying that the country has addressed this subject before the peace agreements with Israel, and implemented a counter-narrative program by working with young people. She cited the German Minister of Defence, for stating during the Manama Dialogue, held in Bahrain, that in the sub-Saharan region young people's access to mobile phones and Internet is higher than their access to the drinking water. She added that the control of cyberspace with police actions or total censorship is not a measure to adopt, but it is better to work at the grass-roots level with national programs aiming at consolidating societies from the point of view of the rule of law and the system of government. She went on to explain that Jordan is hosting 1.3 million Syrian refugees, of whom only 660,000 are registered by UNHCR, and only 12% live in the camps, while the rest is spread in all the country. Nevertheless, 160,000 Syrian children follow a school course, thanks to the double-turn system that Jordan had adopted for a long time, to avoid the growth of an ignorant generation that would be exploited by Daesh.

After these various interventions, a tour de table was opened, and each parliamentary delegation was invited to contribute to the debate by presenting its national experience.

***** **Debate** *****

Hon. Tahar Kellil, Algeria, PAM Vice-President, presented the strategy to fight extremism and radicalization that Algeria had adopted since 1992 at several levels and which is based on the maintenance of a high level of vigilance and mobilization of all security services and the implementation of a policy of de-radicalization. He then mentioned the policy measures

adopted, namely a series of institutional, political and socio-economic reforms. With reference to the de-radicalization in prisons, he illustrated the program implemented by Algeria in bettering religious education of the incarcerated terrorists through imams who are theology experts. In addition, the country paid particular attention to the training of imams, in order to ensure the preservation of religious unity and the good treatment of non-Muslims. He concluded by saying that de-radicalization must be the subject of sustained bilateral, regional and international cooperation, and that Algeria is taking action in this regard by fighting against violent extremism and radicalization in political exchanges with different partners, raising awareness on the phenomenon of xenophobia and Islamophobia as expression of violent extremism, and supporting and participating all regional and international initiatives on the dialogue of civilizations.

Hon. Zuhair Sanduqa, Palestine, said that all religions have unique and common points, namely tolerance, equality and justice, and that the real problem stems from the manipulation of religion to serve political interests. It also called for the protection and safeguarding of the freedom of each individual to practice one's own faith and called on schools and cultural institutions to implement initiatives aimed at keeping young people away from all forms of violence and of notions of hatred, and to train them on the basis of the principle of tolerance. He also blamed the United States for creating Al Qaeda, and concluded by expressing his surprise that the wounded of Al Nusraa are being treated in Israeli hospitals, and that no terrorist has ever shot against an Israeli target.

Hon. Eleni Avlonitou, Head of the Greek delegation to PAM, recalled the long tradition of tolerance and cohabitation between people of different religions in Greece, on the basis of mutual respect, and the today drama of the expulsion of minorities in the Mediterranean region. She also highlighted the existence of incitement to hatred and violent extremism at the international level by non-state groups and the fact that most of the suicide bombers do not master theology, which proves that it is rather a political problem. She concluded by reiterating the importance of interfaith dialogue to achieve peace and progress.

Mr. Hohamed Abou El-Enein, Egypt, PAM Honorary President, stressed the gravity of ideological and intellectual extremism and the need to modernize religious discourses, as done by Al-Azhar in Egypt, which created an observatory for that, and organized international conferences and seminars with the Vatican and the church to reiterate the condemnation by Islam of all terrorist groups and to highlight the values of Islam. He stressed on the training of Imams as an effective action to improve the performance of religious leaders, and invited all States and the United Nations to create initiatives to prevent an attack on religions and their exploitation. He stressed the need to combat poverty and unemployment to counter the spread of extremism and violence, through increased investment, development of the region and job creation for young people, stressing their key role in disseminating the value of tolerance. He concluded his statement

by calling for an end to the conflicts in Syria and Yemen and a solution to the Palestinian issue.

Hon. Nabil Toumeh, Syria, stated that religious societies in the southern shore of the Mediterranean have not yet reached a certain level of social and cultural maturity, as it is the case in Europe, and that policy manages the various religious denominations to make its interests prevail. He invited all participants to focus on the roots of the problems affecting the Mediterranean region, and to consider the best way to have transparent relations between the two shores, stating that the entire southern shore is hit by serious problems concerning the relations with religion, which has repercussions on the social reality.

Sen. Pier Ferdinando Casini, Chairman of the Committee on Culture of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Italian Senate, underlined the failure of European neighbourhood policy, which is likely to be placed on the pinnacle because of exclusive agreements aiming at blocking migrants. He stated that a good EU neighbourhood policy with the countries on the southern shore of the Mediterranean should be dictated not by the urgencies of the moment but by a prospect of the future, and reiterated the need to settle together the problems of the region, such as terrorism and illegal immigration, in order to avoid being overwhelmed. In this context, he called on all countries to counter the falsification of religion together, referring to his last meeting with the Imam of the Al-Azhar Mosque, which had asked the Western countries to better control some places of worship in Europe where the risk of the falsification of Islam is high. He concluded his remarks by stressing the need to train young people on the value of coexistence, and to fight against the wrong idea that a religious confrontation is ongoing, since it is just the inappropriate use of religion which is taking place.

Hon. Justine Caruana, Head of the Maltese Delegation to PAM, reiterated the seriousness of the exploitation of religion and the exploitation of the dissatisfaction of young people by terrorist organizations. She pointed out that school curricula should give young people the ability to think critically and relate to people of different backgrounds or beliefs, and called on parliamentarians to maintain higher levels of behaviour, as models for the generations. She referred to the Institute for the State of Rights founded in Malta in 2014, to confront terrorism and listed the priorities identified by the forthcoming Maltese Presidency of the Council of the EU, by pointing out that, on terrorism and radicalization of young people, the parliamentary dimension of the Maltese presidency is committed to promoting dialogue between parliamentarians from different member countries in order to achieve an inclusive dialogue on the egalitarian basis and destroy the narrative of the terrorist. She concluded by reiterating the need to support open societies and ensure mutual respect.

Sen Abdelilah Elhallouti, 2nd Vice-President of the House of Councillors of Morocco, presented the experience of his country as a laboratory of coexistence, stating that there is no inter-religious or intercultural conflict in the country. In Morocco, the members of all

religions are considered Moroccan citizens without any distinction. He specified that even the government coalition has had to embrace a party referring to Islam and another referring to the communist ideology. In addition, Morocco has as revised and modernized its educational pathways and curricula and, in terms of security and intelligence, the country is almost a model, since it has dismantled more than 500 terrorist cells since 2003 and has remained immune to terrorist acts. He also urged Europe to investigate the motivations for terrorist acts committed by young people, and concluded by recalling the unresolved issue of Palestine, and asserting that the fight against terrorism must be conducted by the countries of the southern and northern shores of the Mediterranean, but also by the United Nations.

Hon. Yilmaz Tezcan, Turkey, stressed on the fight that his country has been conducting against the PKK organisation for 30 years, and presented the Turkish experience in the field of de-radicalization by the development of different projects, namely educational programmes by the Ministry of Social Affairs to protect children and youth from radicalization; special programs to integrate infants of ethnic and religious minorities, including Syrian women and children living in the Turkish camps, in cooperation with UNICEF; the development of a project on islamophobia in 2011, and lunch of the UN Alliance of Civilization, 10 years ago, to intensify co-ordinated engagement and achieve peaceful cohabitation.

Hon. Gabriela Canavilhas, Portugal, referred to the ecumenical commitment of Pope Francis and his efforts to unite all religions. She also urged all participants to never forget that the threat of Islam comes from the extremists, who distort the authentic message of Islam, and called on the leaders of the Islamic world to be more present in the Western media to fight the ignorance about Islam. She concluded by reminding the parliamentarians of their responsibility, as political actors, for not fighting ignorance with the same means that have been devoted to wars.

Mr. Majalli Whbee, Israel, PAM Roving Ambassador, called on all religious and political authorities to make it clear that the world will never accept terrorism and will not be defeated, and to work together to end this scourge and identify common elements for peace, in order to achieve the hopes of the peoples of the Mediterranean. In answering the question of the Palestinian delegate, he stated that Israeli hospitals host everyone and never ask where they come from.

***** **Second session** *****

Before starting the second session of the meeting, Sen. Fattorini invited **Sen. Nicola Latorre, Chairman of the Defence Committee of the Italian Senate**, to address the meeting. He stressed the need to overcome the contradictions between the need of Interreligious dialogue and the political process characterized by the construction of new walls and more

obstacles to relations between peoples and countries. He recalled the responsibility of everyone to counter all attempts of promoting confrontations and hatred, and to attach special attention to the new generations, by raising in them a disposition for dialogue.

Sen. Fattorini then stated that the trap of the clash of civilizations must be avoided, but also the recognition of the importance of the cultural and religious components in today's tensions is essential. She recalled the problem of the manipulation of religion and the persecution of Christian minorities in the Mediterranean, explaining that the need for interreligious dialogue originates in the deep connection between the civilizations of the region. She also mentioned the meeting of religious leaders in Assisi in 1986, and stressed the need to question each religion on the origin of hatred towards the others, in order to show that this sentiment has no religious foundation. She reiterated the need for more rigorous training and wider theological knowledge, but also secular education, by teaching young people the meaning of the human dignity as the basis of their identity. She therefore called for the accountability of universities and recalled the idea of the former president Romano Prodi to launch the Erasmus of the Mediterranean, recalling the PAM Academic Platform activities. She called for secularism as a legitimate public space for religion, and gave the floor to the first keynote speaker of the afternoon session.

H.Em. Miguel Ayuso, Secretary General of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, spoke of the harmonious coexistence of the three monotheistic religions in the Mediterranean that lasted for centuries, and the major challenges facing the region today, indicating the exercise of solidarity, the opposition to xenophobia and the closing of borders, and the respect of the dignity, liberty and religious convictions of each individual as the only way to live together. He noted that intercultural and interreligious dialogue helped to form a consciousness that goes through schools, universities and places of worship, inviting respect for differences but at the same time reaffirming the respective identities. He also reiterated the key role of the family in the acceptance of pluralism and the transmission of values between generations, and reiterated the call of Pope Francis to include the culture of dialogue in all academic curricula and to teach young generations a peaceful way to resolve conflicts. He concluded by calling on religious leaders to educate their communities on the respect and knowledge of others, and reiterating the close link between interreligious dialogue and the responsibility of believers in political life.

Dr Ahmed Kostass, Director of Islamic Affairs at the Ministry of Endowments and Islamic Affairs of the Government of Morocco, recalled the role of religions in disseminating peace, justice and equality. He also quoted a verse of the Quran where believers are invited to look for joint values and understanding, specifying that these principles should be consolidated at home and at school, so that the new generations can play a concrete role in spreading tolerance and respect for others. He then presented in detail the Moroccan experience, based on the primacy of the believers, who are presided over by the King, who is a descendant of the Prophet; the Maliki School, characterized by moderation and association

of logic to the sacred texts, and the Sufi school, which represents the moral aspect of Islam. He illustrated the measures adopted by the Ministry Islamic Affairs to ensure these constants, in particular with reference to the training of imams and the fight of the phenomenon of preachers who appear on the screen, through satellite channels and which are considered the root of extremist religious beliefs and behaviours. In particular, he pointed out the imam's training programme, which includes theological and human sciences, such as courses in philosophy, social sciences, monotheistic religions, foreign languages. Moreover, the Academy of Traditional Arts and Architecture allows students to learn even techniques and artistic talents. He concluded his speech by blaming the Western media for often inviting imams without having any information about their origin or education.

Dr Abdallah Redouane, Secretary General of the Islamic and Cultural Centre "The Great Mosque of Rome", stated that dialogue should consider the way to overcome the manipulation of religion for political purposes and to free religious thoughts from the political influence, by pointing out that Islam had already faced all forms of extremism and deviation. In addition, he specified that Islam's position in dialogue with other monotheistic religions is based on the principle of their recognition, which is part of the Muslim's creed, and that Islam has defined the method of dialogue with the disciples of the monotheistic religions in the Koran. He recalled the conflicts in the region and the proliferation of terrorist organizations that cause the persecution of minorities, stressing the need to establish dialogue through the search for solutions that allow an unconditional return to peace, the immediate return of populations and minorities to their territory and the restitution of their rights, and the guarantee of the territorial integrity of their countries. He pointed out dialogue and respect for human dignity as the only solution, and referred to the phenomenon of the radicalization of young European Muslims, demanding more reflection its origins. He concluded by recalling the double challenge that the Islamic community is launching in Europe: this community is called to seek a balance between being Muslim and being a European citizen, and this challenge must be taken up by the northern democracies and the emerging ones in the south of the Mediterranean, in order to be able to integrate and ensure the protection of the rights of all minorities who are part of society.

Dr Hicham Rachdi, Vice-President of the Italian Islamic Confederation, reiterated the need to give space to interreligious and intercultural dialogue to face violent extremism and geopolitical tensions that could rekindle the clash of civilizations. He stressed that fundamentalism is present in all religions, and invited all participants to promote awareness campaigns against incitement to hatred and discrimination through training programs aimed at ensuring social inclusion, especially of children and youth at risk. He also emphasized the importance of promoting intercultural education, citizenship and intercultural and interreligious dialogue through long-term multidisciplinary actions, based on common values, to prevent radicalization and marginalization at all levels, and appealed to religious and social institutions to work together to develop concrete proposals in these terms. He

also referred to the problem of the misinterpretation and manipulation of religious texts to justify acts of violence, underlining the commitment of the Italian Islamic Confederation for a better understanding and careful teaching of religious beliefs and a revision of the training programs for religious leaders, to encourage them to promote respectful treatment of others and counter misinterpretation of sacred texts. He invited intellectuals and professors not to isolate themselves but to immerse themselves in their community and stay in contact with religious leaders to achieve these goals. He concluded by recalling that in the 10th century the University of Al Qarawiyyin of Fez, Morocco, had hosted Pope Silvestre II before he was elected Pope, and in the 13th century Rabbi Moussa Ibn Maymoun, one of the the most influential rabbis in the Israelite culture, studied there.

After the interventions of the various keynote speakers, the debate was opened.

***** **Debate** *****

Dr Said Mokadem, Secretary General of the Maghreb Consultative Council, stated that the theme of intercultural and interreligious dialogue is still the best way to achieve peaceful coexistence. The Maghreb countries, conscious of this, had adopted the 5+5 mechanism in all different forms, in light of the condemnation of acts of violence, and to confirm the need to separate religion from all acts of violence. He stressed the fundamental role of religious institutions, universities and other institutes, and their possible collaboration even if there is a difference between religions, and concluded by calling for the consolidation of cooperation in intercultural dialogue, to make it the tool to a real and better knowledge in a world characterized by different civilizations.

Sen. Luigi Compagna, Italy, PAM Rapporteur on Terrorism, agreed with the Jordanian delegate, saying that the problem lies mainly within Islam, but at the same time he invited other countries, such as France, Belgium and Italy, to investigate the causes of the failure of their policies of integration of Islam. In this connection, he referred to the failure of the Conference for French Islam, organized under the presidency of Mr Chirac in the 1990s, and later copied by Italy. Moreover, he also invited to stop challenging Israel's right to exist, and criticized the UN and UNESCO for creating "rhetoric of banality", whose main victims finally were those young Arab people committing terrorist acts through suicide bombing. He called on Western countries to correct their political mistakes made over the past 25 years, but in a Mediterranean dimension, by referring to the 6th meeting of the parliaments of the member states of the "Dialogue 5 + 5", which PAM organized in Marseille, France, on 27-28 October 2016, stressing the promotion and recognition of diplomas.

Sen. Bouran pointed out that in the period 2014-2015, Daesh was able to share some 90,000 messages every day on social networks, targeting young people, and that this represented a great threat, since the average age of the populations of the Arabs and Muslims countries is 30 years old. For this reason, Jordan focuses on youth, training,

education and interreligious dialogue. In particular, the country has modified and modernized academic curricula on the basis of the Jordanian culture and the true values of Islam. She concluded by thanking the Vatican and Pope Francis for the collaboration with Jordan in the interreligious dialogue.

Hon. Michel Vauzelle, PAM Vice-President and Head of the French delegation to PAM, spoke of the violent policy pursued by the French Republic with regard to religion since 1789 until the law on secularism and the separation of the church from the state in 1905. He also stressed the uniqueness of French secularism, asserting that his country now has an attitude of modesty and that it is challenged by the presence of French Muslim citizens to rethink its idea of secularism, in a globalized Mediterranean world where this idea is not universal. He continued by referring to the possible victory the upcoming elections in France by an extreme right party, and by asserting that we all belong to a community of destiny, and we must agree in a peaceful space where believers and non-believers can live peacefully. He also highlighted the problem of unemployment and the exclusion of Mediterranean youth, indicating these problems as the origin of cultural or religious identity revolts. He mentioned his meeting, shortly before the first Gulf War, with Saddam Hussein, who had informed him of his wish to restore the caliphate, pointing out how today Daesh had taken up this idea in other forms, with some members of the entourage of Saddam. He also expressed the need to make the work of PAM better known by the public stream, and called on the French left-wing intellectuals to understand the need of the people to have an identity to be proud of. He concluded his speech by expressing his readiness to commit himself for these issues, even when he will no longer be a parliamentarian, and pointing out the considerable arming of some great powers and the arrogance of the law of money as the most serious threats.

The **MP from Syria** affirmed that the Syrian people were crushed by terrorism born from its interior, but the country is fighting it. He then indicated that the meeting was not a dialogue, and asked to discuss academic studies in future event. He also called for the substitution of "cohabitation" with "integration" and "complementarity", the delete of the expressions "conflict, clash, confrontation between civilizations", and rather to speak of "complementarity between civilizations", underlining the fact that religions are not separated, but that concepts are manifested in a different way, and that the books of the three monotheistic religions never address directly their disciples as "Christian", "Jewish", "Muslims" but believers, blaming Mr. Vauzelle for having used the word "unbeliever".

Hon. Vauzelle replied that he had never pronounced the term "unbeliever", and that he considered all believers of liberty, goodwill, and fraternity, which were the teachings of all religions. He suggested rejecting "integration" and "populism" as they are ambiguous.

The delegate of **Greece** made a general presentation on the role of religion in opposing violent extremism, stressing that there is no peaceful or belligerent religion, as long as all religious texts can be interpreted to promote peace or conflict, depending on the goals, and

that political and religious leaders can have a positive effect on the choice between a peaceful exchange or a violent confrontation. She also reiterated the problem of the manipulation of religion to draw dividing lines between people, and stressed the importance of promoting interreligious dialogue to understand that religions are very similar.

Hon. Kasem Bilal, Palestine, Vice-President of the PAM 3rd Standing Committee, referred to what Sen. Compagna had said, pointing out that the decision of UNESCO was a result of a study and had nothing to do with religion. In addition, he stated that after 50 years of excavation under the Al-Aqsa Mosque and other sites, Israel found no evidence of the presence of the Temple of Solomon. He then evoked the Palestinian values of hospitality to different peoples, stating that the construction of a wall separating Palestinian towns or preventing prayer in the Al-Aqsa mosque does not lead to peace, and that a dialogue between the three religions should start by stopping the “Judaization” of Jerusalem. He concluded by appealing for recognition of the existence of two states and pointing out that terrorism has no religion.

Mr. Vicente Garcés Ramón, President of the Assembly of Citizens and Citizens of the Mediterranean, recalled that he was a parliamentarian before, and stressed the difficult period that the Mediterranean is facing. He emphasized the role of citizens in constructing the counter-powers of existing powers, provided that they are educated to tolerance and diversity, which is the primary responsibility of the political power. He concluded by inviting MPs to help strengthen civil society to build Mediterranean citizenship.

Prof. Rizzi, UNIMED Secretary General, expressed his pessimism about the current situation in the Mediterranean and Europe, who reacted to the migrants and refugees’ crisis by building walls. He stressed the importance of considering the diachronic aspect in analysing the situation of the Mediterranean, and called for respect of the movements in the Arab world. He stated that UNIMED brings together 93 universities from 22 countries, affirming that there are the tools but sometimes the political will is lacking. He then called in question Senator Compagna who asked in a parliamentary interrogation if UNIMED is anti-Zionist, replying “yes” and mentioning that in its board there is the Prof. Rami Hamdallah, the current Palestinian Prime Minister. He concluded by reaffirming UNIMED’s availability to advance and realize collaboration with PAM and its academic platform.

President Lmarbouh ended the meeting, by recalling PAM commitment in this subject since its establishment. He also specified that the purpose of the meeting was not to find conclusions to impose for everyone or to suggest a model of society, but to discuss the differences to better build a common destiny. He also referred to the "big players in the geo-strategic game", inviting them to draw lessons, because they continue to support, from Afghanistan, some groups even if they know in advance that they have an extremist dominant. He also expressed his regret for the fact that the radicalization of the young people has not been sufficiently discussed during the meeting, stating that he had just been

informed of Christians and Jews people joining Daesh. He then referred to socio-economic development as the first challenge and the need to fight exclusion to destroy extremism, emphasizing the difference between the countries of the west, which separated the state from the church a long time ago, and the countries of the southern Mediterranean shore, where it is unthinkable today to talk about secularism. He urged all to be very vigilant, as politicians, in all actions in the name of religion, saying that the formation of political parties in the name of religion is a real danger, and recalling that in Morocco it is prohibited by the constitution to create a party with religious, ethnic or regional references. He concluded by asking not to grant Daesh the status of “state” in order to avoid becoming familiar with these terrorists, and recalling the gravity of linking Islam to each terrorist attack.