



AS/Pol/Inf (2014) 16

19 June 2014

Apdocinf16_14

Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy

Conference on *Freedom of religion or belief in the Middle East and the Southern Mediterranean:*

The situation and safety of Christian communities

Athens, 7 May 2014

I. PROGRAMME	1
II. SPEECHES	3
Mr Vangelis Meimarakis, Speaker of the Hellenic Parliament.....	3
Ms Anne Brasseur, President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe	4
Mr Constantinos Arvanitopoulos, Greek Minister of Education and Religious Affairs	6
Ms Theodora Bakoyannis, Chairperson of the Committee and of the Greek delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly	8
The Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa Theodoros II	10
H. E. Monseigneur Youssef Antoine Soueif, the Maronite Archbishop of Cyprus.....	12
Mor Clemis Daniel Kourieh, Archbishop of Beirut.....	14
Father Poules Halim, Spokesperson of the Egyptian Coptic Orthodox Church	16
Dr Evangelos Venetis, Lecturer on Islamic and Iranian studies, Department of Arabic, Persian and Turkish, University of Leiden.....	17
III. CONCLUSIONS	19
IV. LIST OF PARTICIPANTS	20

Strengthening democratic reform in the southern Neighbourhood

Funded
by the European Union



EUROPEAN UNION

COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Implemented
by the Council of Europe

I. PROGRAMME

9.30am Opening of the conference

Mr Vangelis Meimarakis, Speaker of the Hellenic Parliament

Ms Anne Brasseur, President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

Address by Mr Constantinos Arvanitopoulos, Minister of Education and Religious Affairs, followed by an exchange of views

Introductory statement by Ms Theodora Bakoyannis, Chairperson of the Committee and of the Greek delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly

Guest speakers:

- The Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa Theodoros II
- H. E. Monseigneur Youssef Antoine Soueif, the Maronite Archbishop of Cyprus
- Mor Clemis Daniel Kourieh, Archbishop of Beirut
- H. G. Bishop Pavlos, Coptic Orthodox General Bishop of Greece
- Father Poules Halim, Spokesperson of the Coptic Orthodox Church, Egypt
- Dr Sotiris Roussos, Associate Professor, University of Peloponnese and Head of the Centre for Mediterranean, Middle East and Islamic Studies (CEMMIS)
- Dr Evangelos Venetis, Lecturer on Islamic and Iranian studies, Department of Arabic, Persian and Turkish, University of Leiden

Open debate with the participation of representatives of parliaments of Algeria, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, of the National Constituent Assembly of Tunisia, of the Palestinian National Council, as well as representatives from Egypt

1pm Lunch

2.30pm Continuation of the debate

Summing-up by Chairperson of the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy

3pm End of the conference and meeting of the Committee (*see separate agenda*)

6pm End of the meeting

7pm Visit to the archaeological site of Acropolis (Parthenon)

7.45pm Visit to the Acropolis Museum

9pm Dinner hosted by Ms Theodora Bakoyannis, at the Acropolis Museum

II. SPEECHES

Mr Vangelis Meimarakis, Speaker of the Hellenic Parliament

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great honour and pleasure for all of us to welcome you today in Athens, Greece, the country currently holding the presidency of the EU, the country that gave birth to democracy, the country that has taught ways of behaviour, solidarity, compassion and expression, tolerance of different views, discussion and, finally, dialogue, which produces essential and significant results.

This expression of opinions can be seen in the Council of Europe by all of us, as parliamentarians, who are genuine representatives of citizens since they vote for us in order to get real answers to their everyday issues. We convey their anxiety and their voices to governments, we endorse the decisions of governments, and, consequently, it is mainly our responsibility to try to shape and validate opinions, to communicate with citizens and find solutions to their problems, especially when it comes to democracy and human rights. The Council of Europe, which discusses and deals mainly with these topics, can and should find the necessary answers and solutions.

Moreover, it is a great pleasure and honour to host this conference, since I am confident that the Chairperson, Ms Bakoyannis, who has been Minister of Foreign Affairs and Mayor of Athens and holds the Council of Europe most dear, will welcome you in the best Greek but also Cretan way, as we Cretans know how. At the same time, I would like to say that this conference is for us a very essential and important step at the current time. As you may be aware, many of us, members of the Hellenic Parliament, were members of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, and I am delighted to see many distinguished colleagues, honorary members of the Council of Europe, who would like even now, I assume, to participate more actively. What all of us who have been part of the Council of Europe miss is not the travelling – a way to escape for a while from day-to-day worries in Greece – which all distinguished colleagues do from their own regions, but the excellent positive climate that prevailed in Strasbourg whenever we tried to find solutions with regard to human rights and the major problems facing citizens. All of us, colleagues, members of parliaments of the member states of the Council of Europe, were well-intentioned, encapsulating the spirit of brotherhood and solidarity, and sought to find solutions through debates, not always without tension; eventually, we ended up with – unanimously approved – agreements and we could, in this way, send a message to the citizens of our member States that the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe does indeed safeguard human rights and is always there to address our concerns.

Furthermore, I am particularly delighted to welcome Ms Brasseur, President of the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly, whom we hold in high esteem, not only personally but also for the institution she represents, and I am confident that the debate held today at the Senate of the Hellenic Parliament will be fruitful and productive; in addition, we will have the opportunity to give you a guided tour of the premises of the Hellenic Parliament. With these thoughts, I would like to once again extend a warm welcome to you and I look forward to a productive conference.

Ms Anne Brasseur, President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

Mr Speaker,
Madam Chairperson of the Committee,
Gathered religious dignitaries,
Dear Colleagues,

It is a very great pleasure for me to take part in the opening of this conference.

As you know, I myself have been very involved in the work on the religious dimension of intercultural dialogue, as I used to be the Parliamentary Assembly's rapporteur on the subject. I therefore attach the greatest importance to dialogue with and between religious communities.

"Let us find what unites us, appreciate what differentiates us and avoid what separates us". This quote from a speech made by Boutros Boutros Ghali in 2002 sums up the content of the report on the religious dimension of intercultural dialogue that I presented to the Parliamentary Assembly.

I agree with all those who think that one cannot and should not attempt to define religion, as it is a very personal and very individual approach that depends on each and every believer.

This personal and individual quest for spirituality has, unfortunately, over the centuries, been hijacked and exploited by those seeking power, dominance and wealth and has led to tensions, conflicts, and atrocities, and sometimes even to acts of barbarism.

We are now confronted with an upsurge in manifestations of intolerance, rejection and violence, and social cohesion stands to suffer. This can already be seen in the Middle East and in the Southern Mediterranean, the main regions we will discuss today, but they are far from the only example. Europe has had its share of violence, allegedly in the name of religion, and acts of intolerance and violence are still sometimes perpetrated supposedly on grounds of religious belief. There is an urgent need for a new paradigm for living together. Everyone must not only accept that there are various beliefs, be they religious or not, but also respect them. It is inappropriate to pretend to be indifferent and wrong to feel threatened.

We all bear responsibility for this – the public authorities, religious authorities and the leaders of movements of non-believers.

Dialogue and encounters are the necessary foundations on which to build a relationship based on what unites us and not on what separates us, and thereby avoid lack of understanding if not rejection, which may lead to violence.

As I often say, it is important not to talk about one another but to talk together. The same applies to inter-faith dialogue and I welcome this conference, which is taking place in the presence of the leaders of different religions.

The fundamental values of the Council of Europe must form the basis of what unites us. No religion or school of thought can replace these fundamental values let alone take precedence over them. It is therefore essential that the various churches and religious communities uphold the European Human Rights Convention and affirm the equal dignity of all persons and their wholehearted adherence to democratic principles and human rights.

We must not forget that religions have a special responsibility in fostering and developing a culture of understanding and tolerance. All religious authorities should openly and unreservedly condemn intolerance, discrimination, hatred and violence: neither religion nor faith – nor strictly secular principles – can accept or justify behaviour dictated by contempt for others and we must all strive to eradicate such behaviour.

Many texts drawn up by religious communities share these concerns, for example the Universal Islamic Declaration of Human Rights of 1981. Article 12 on the right to freedom of belief, thought and speech stipulates in paragraph e.: that "No one shall hold in contempt or ridicule the religious beliefs of others or incite public hostility against them; respect for the religious feelings of others is obligatory on all Muslims."

By way of conclusion, I would say that we must learn to be more humble and to respect others. Other beliefs are just as valid as ours. We must not impose our way of seeing things on others. We must help to build a society in which each individual has his place, in accordance with his aspirations and his convictions. In such a society, each person will not only have the right but also the genuine possibility to live according to his convictions while not only respecting the rule of law but also those who have another approach, be it religious or not. Let us be more humble so that we can build a society where we not only “live together” but “live together in harmony”.

I firmly believe that today’s discussions will benefit from our varied and multi-religious experiences.

Thank you very much for your attention. I wish this very important conference every success.

Mr Constantinos Arvanitopoulos, Greek Minister of Education and Religious Affairs

Mr Speaker of the Hellenic Parliament, Madame President of the Parliamentary Assembly, Your Excellences, parliamentarians from the Mediterranean countries, Mr Minister, dear colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my great honour to represent the Greek government at this conference of such an important European organisation, the Council of Europe that is being hosted here today at the Hellenic Parliament.

The conference on freedom of religion and safety of Christian communities in the Middle East and the Southern Mediterranean, held at the initiative of Ms Bakoyannis, is very important as it addresses a burning international issue. The timing of this conference is also important, as it is being held a few weeks before another major political event that we are preparing in the context of Greece's presidency of the EU in co-operation with Baroness Ashton, High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Vice-President of the European Commission, which is none other than the ministerial meeting of the 28 EU member states and the members of the League of Arab States that will take place here in Athens on 10 and 11 June.

One might say Greece is the most appropriate place to hold both today's conference and the meeting of the European Commission and the League of Arab States, especially in these troubled times.

This is because Greece has always been a "crossroads" of civilisations and beliefs. Not only has Hellenism a presence in North Africa and the Middle East, but also the modern Hellenic Republic is a respected mediator between European and non-European countries of the Mediterranean and the Middle East. Moreover, one of the Greek Presidency's top priorities, which I am sure, will be continued by the Italian Presidency, is to highlight the maritime dimension of the EU that will make Europe and European policies focus on the Mediterranean. The Mediterranean is a sea shared by Europe, the Arab World and African countries.

Ladies and gentlemen, the Mediterranean can once again find peace only if the problems of security or those caused by migration flows are dealt with, if the incidents of violence which have occurred after the "Arab Spring", which, I am afraid, has turned into an "Arab Autumn", are addressed, but, mainly, if growth opportunities arise.

Ladies and gentlemen, we are all watching with great concern the rise of religious fundamentalism and terrorism. All the events in the Middle East, all the problems caused by the so-called "Arab Spring", the events of the war in Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as the unresolved Palestinian issue have burdened the overall climate and created a negative environment, particularly for Christians in the Middle East. Of course, we should not forget the civil war still raging in Syria and all the problems it has caused to Christian communities.

For our part, we place emphasis on and are rekindling Greece's truly close relations with the Arab World; relations which are not only political and economic, but also cultural and historical. At the same time, we seek a solution to all the problems that have existed for decades in relation to religious communities and their organisations in Greece by undertaking the appropriate initiatives. Both the Ministry and the government as a whole hope to make Greece a model country as far as relations between religious communities are concerned, thereby proving that this can be possible, also at Mediterranean level as a whole.

We have completed drafting a bill, which is already in the process of public consultation and is going to be put to the vote in the Greek Parliament, on the organisation of the legal status of religious communities in Greece. Our aim is to regulate in the best possible way a sensitive issue, that is the organisation and legal status of religious communities – while at the same time safeguarding and respecting the fundamental individual right to religious freedom. Regulating, through legislative means, the organisation of religious communities will solve problems that have been accumulating for decades.

At the same time, we are proceeding with the construction of a mosque in Athens. The Hellenic Parliament passed the relevant law in 2011 and the government has undertaken all the necessary procedures in order to appoint a contractor. Currently, the issue is being examined by the Hellenic Council of State, but this is the case with all major works carried out in Greece. It is worth noting that it took 105 hearings for the construction of the Acropolis Museum alone, and the last one was won by a single vote. In any case there is the will to build the mosque, the contractor has been appointed and the whole process is under way.

In Thrace, the Ministry of Education employs 240 Islamic Studies teachers, who teach the Holy Koran to public school pupils of the Muslim minority excused from religion classes, while the Sharia continues to be applied with regard to family and inheritance issues.

Ladies and gentlemen, dear friends, I am aware that, as we speak, nearby in the Middle East, in the Southern Mediterranean, Christian beliefs are being put to the test. Acts of intolerance are being committed in the name of religious belief, as sometimes religious self-determination becomes an element of division, intolerance, fanaticism and violence.

It is the responsibility of all of us – the Greek government, the EU, the Council of Europe, as well as all international organisations – to actively participate in the resolution of the major well-known and real problems of the region, to strengthen intercultural dialogue, to safeguard human rights, to promote policies of growth to combat poverty, since poverty has always paved the way to fundamentalism and intolerance.

For all these reasons today's conference is a major event, as it addresses these important issues. I am confident that the speakers in this conference will offer solutions to all these problems. For our part, we would like to express the will of the Greek government to safeguard religious freedom, establish an overall culture of tolerance, and protect Christian communities in the Middle East in particular. Thank you.

Ms Theodora Bakoyannis, Chairperson of the Committee and of the Greek delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly

Monseigneur, Your Excellences, Mr Minister, dear colleagues, dear friends,

I am particularly happy to welcome you today in the Hellenic Parliament, in the chamber that hosts the Senate, an institution provided for by the Constitution during the Second Hellenic Republic, in the mid-war period.

I would have liked to be equally happy concerning the progress made on the issue which is the subject of our meeting today, here in Athens. But this is not the case because the situation of Christians on the southern and south-eastern side of the EU's external borders has improved very little; in fact, for the most part, it has dramatically deteriorated. But I am happy that we are all gathered here today in order to discuss how we can reverse, as soon as possible, such a negative course of events regarding religious tolerance or, rather, full respect for religious minorities.

Our Parliamentary Assembly has on numerous occasions addressed freedom of religion and belief, as stipulated in Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights and Article 18 of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

I took the initiative to hold this present conference with the sole objective of highlighting the problems faced by religious minorities, in particular Christian minorities, in the Middle East and the Southern Mediterranean. By way of example, I will mention some events that prove how crucial the situation is.

On 31 October 2010, after an attack on the Syriac Catholic Cathedral of Baghdad, 58 worshippers were killed and 75 were seriously wounded. On 1 January 2011, a suicide bombing in the Coptic church of Alexandria left 21 people dead.

For this reason, our Assembly adopted Recommendation 1957, pointing out that Christians have existed in the Middle East for 2000 years now. Although they are indigenous, they have been declining in numbers in recent decades, mainly due to emigration and low birth rates. The situation has become dramatic over the past ten years and, if not properly dealt with, the Christian communities of the Middle East and the Southern Mediterranean will soon belong to the past. This would entail the loss of a long-established cultural heritage, which has constituted a building block of the region for centuries now.

On that basis, our Assembly adopted Resolution 1878 supporting efforts to build a democratic and pluralist Syria, respectful of human rights and the religious freedom of its minorities, as well as Resolution 1928 condemning in unequivocal terms persecutions against religious groups throughout the world.

Ladies and gentlemen, our meeting today has a very important historical and political symbolism: Athens is a European Union city located, geographically and historically, very close to the Arab world – and in general the Muslim – world. Relations between Greeks and Arabs are age-old and of capital importance, not only for them but for the European and the Arab civilisation in general.

After the unavoidable conflicts that occurred with the first wave of Arab imperialism which changed the religious and cultural map of the Southern Mediterranean and the Middle East from Greco-Roman to Arab, an equilibrium was established: the two strongest and most advanced powers of that era, i.e. the Greek-speaking Byzantine Empire – the Roman Empire – and the Arab-speaking world, the main centre of which had long been Baghdad, learned eventually to live together. But there is more: both civilisations greatly influenced one another.

Let us consider the degree to which the basic construction of mosques has been influenced by the church of Hagia Sophia, the great work of two Greek architects, Anthemius and Isidorus.

In contrast, let us consider the degree to which the mathematical intelligence of Arabs has had its influence in Europe; how the Arabs from Spain disseminated Greek philosophy in Western Europe etc. The list is long and full of surprises! Dear friends, the list almost always included religious tolerance and mutual understanding: three Greek Orthodox Patriarchates still exist today in the Arab world.

For centuries, the Coptic and other Christian churches have been bringing together large congregations. It is a pleasure to have here with us the Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa, the Maronite Archbishop of Cyprus, the Archbishop of Beirut and the Coptic Orthodox Church of Egypt.

But how did we get from tolerance and mutual respect – with the Prophet Muhammad personally guaranteeing the rights of the Patriarchates and of the Monastery in Mount Sinai – to the current situation, dear friends?

How did we end up facing an unbelievable reality – the persecution of Christians being the number one issue of religious human rights worldwide, as each year it concerns areas inhabited by 100 to 200 million Christians?

How did we get to the point where one Christian suffers harsh physical violence every 5 seconds, and 85% of such violence takes place in Muslim countries?

Here, in our neighbouring Middle East, how did the Christian share of the total population, which exceeded 20% in the first part of the 20th century, come to represent barely 2% nowadays?

In the space of one week, 82 Christian churches were burned down in Egypt, some of them dating back to the 5th century A.D.! In Syria, it has been a year now that the Greek Orthodox Bishop Paul of Aleppo and the Syriac Orthodox Bishop Yohanna Ibrahim have been missing. An unprecedented story is taking place there, in which the secret services of Lebanon, Qatar, Turkey and Egypt are involved. Meanwhile, bloodshed continues and hundreds of thousands of Christians flee the country, while a similar mass exodus has taken place in Iraq. The situation has rapidly deteriorated over approximately the last 15 years; and the West is not without blame, since it has repeatedly intervened in the area with neither good reason nor a positive outcome.

We come to one conclusion: Christian countries, at least the ones that constitute in their vast majority the Council of Europe, are no longer willing to tolerate this situation.

For this reason, I proposed that we, as a Parliamentary Assembly, should address this issue in a more formal way, by drawing up a relevant report.

I am pleased that our meeting today is one of the first, albeit highly important, actions that we are undertaking.

Dear friends, being an old friend of the Muslim world, I think I have the right to tell our friends on the Southern shores of the Mediterranean and in the Middle East that all the things that are happening there are incongruous not only with the Charter of the United Nations and with democracy; they are also incongruous with the centuries-old tradition of tolerance, interaction, respect and co-existence of Christians, Muslims and Jews.

Respect for Christians – as well as for any other religious minorities in this area – is more than just a request; it is also a demand of the mostly Christian Europe. I believe it is, or at least it should be, a permanent demand of every Muslim who has an excellent knowledge of the history of his/her religion.

So, I welcome both Christians and Muslims to Athens, a major Christian capital which is closest to the heart of the Arab world, having in mind a great goal: here, in this city, whose ancient philosophers were introduced to Europe by the Arab civilisation, let us engage in a well-structured, lasting dialogue between the member States of the Council of Europe and the states of the Southern Mediterranean and the Middle East for the gradual, but at the same time speedy and ultimate elimination of religious intolerance and persecution. A phenomenon that, as I have already mentioned, does not do credit either to the European or the Arab – or, in general, the Muslim – civilisation. Let us fight it systematically, over time, by joining our forces, starting TODAY, here in Athens.

Dear guests, we welcome you to the Greek capital.

Thank you.

The Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa Theodoros II

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am here with you today following the kind invitation from the Chairperson of your Committee, Ms Theodora Bakoyannis, a fellow Cretan and a good friend of mine for decades, who asked me, as the Primate of Orthodoxy in Africa, to give a voice to the Christians of the South Mediterranean. I am here today, in this temple of Greek democracy, to convey to the oldest European organisation, the Council of Europe, the concerns of today, and the hopes for the future, of those Christians who in spite of the times and circumstances hold fast to the historic cradle of Christianity.

Two millennia ago, Christianity was born, put down roots and began to reach out to people all over the Ecumene and share with them the answers to the quests of life, to the concerns and existential questions of the living world. This reaching out was not imposed by external factors, nor was a historical necessity. It was the fruit of the ecumenical spirit and the holy mission of the Church to bring about "*the obedience of faith for the sake of His [Jesus Christ's] name among all nations*" (Rom. 1, 5).

Over the course of these two millennia, the Christians of the Middle East and North Africa have often been found in the crossfire and amid the changing tides of history and have often had to tread the fine line between life and death. The challenges and difficulties have steeled their spirit and have not erased from their genetic code the sense of responsibility to preserve and spread God's promise "*in Jesus Christ through the Gospel*" (Eph. 3, 2-6).

Today, two thousand years on, Christianity in the Middle East and North Africa continues to bring to the world the universal message of Christianity, which is beyond time, place and nations. However, the spirit of Christians is being tested, as political and social peace, a core value of all religious traditions and beliefs that have flourished in this region, far from being a self-evident given, has become a hard-to-reach goal, a goal often drifting out of sight, as conciliation is undermined by the use of violence and hope for tomorrow is weakened by fear.

Religious self-determination, instead of being a factor of peace, becomes at times a factor of division and intolerance, fanaticism and violence. This happens when religious consciousness is manipulated and religious fundamentalism denies the freedom of others in the name of God. This happens when religious consciousness falls prey to the forces of messianism, fundamentalism and ideological exclusivity.

This development can be dangerous today, when, both in the region and globally, there is no human society that does not encompass people coming from different cultural backgrounds or having different views on the relations between God and man. This development can be dangerous today, when religious self-determination tends to outstrip national self-determination as a driver of human behaviour.

Faced with this reality, it is necessary to understand that a way out of the current political, economic and social rigidities cannot be provided by a radicalisation of society through religious politicalisation or the firm embrace of political and religious ideologies. Wherever and whenever this has been pursued in the Middle East and North Africa, societies have been divided into hierarchical layers on the basis of religion, and the consequences have been painful.

To avoid a "religionisation" of politics and a politicalisation of religion, it is necessary to enshrine institutionally and apply in practice, the supremacy of citizenship over any other aspect of a person's identity, whether ethnic, religious or political. To avoid both the oblivion and fanaticism of what is firmly believed to be the truth, it is necessary to enshrine institutionally and apply in practice, not just tolerance of others, but active respect for others.

Christianity places at the top of its proposed life paradigm and system of values, which it has advocated in this sensitive geographical area for centuries now, the example set by the life of its founder. Jesus Christ proved in practice that the concept of tolerance is not only insufficient, but can actually be negative when it involves an underlying feeling of superiority that disparages others, those who are different, or those who disagree with us. He often experienced the inability of people to understand Him. He often experienced rejection.

He chose an “outsider”, the Samaritan, to illustrate how we should fulfil the commandment of loving our neighbour. He extended His hospitality to all those in need of compassion. He offered hospitality to those who had been pushed to the margins of society. He proved in practice that acceptance of others is not confined to members of our community. Instead, He called us to love even our enemies and pray for them.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In the context of efforts to develop a new model of social cohesion and at a time when the broader region of the South-eastern Mediterranean is feeling the birth pangs of a historic transformation with an uncertain outcome, the Council of Europe can and must employ its versatile tools to promote peace, stability, security, development and prosperity in the region. Allow me to identify the fight against poverty, through development action, as a potential priority area that could benefit from your years-long expertise in the field of unity-building in Europe. This is because poverty can be a hotbed of fundamentalism and intolerance.

Europe has the historical duty to help Africa and the Middle East to bridge the gap between the north and south of the Mediterranean and promote the values of civil society, including the freedom of every man and every woman to practise religion and believe whatever they wish, with only one red line that should never be crossed: unlawful proselytism. I know that the road will be long and difficult. However, if we do not take this road, things will not change. Let us be guided by the words of St. Augustine: “*Faith is believing what you cannot see, the reward is getting to see what you believe*”.

Thank you.

H. E. Monseigneur Youssef Antoine Soueif, the Maronite Archbishop of Cyprus

We are considering this subject in a crucial situation in which the presence of native-born Christians in this region of the world is a historical and contemporary reality: the presence of Christians ever since the first Christian communities in the days of the Apostles right up to today. That presence helps to develop humankind's religious and cultural heritage. If there were no longer any Christians left in the region, this would be a true loss for the world as a whole. This is why there is an urgent need to bring an end to the violent conflicts and persecution to which all the communities are subjected, particularly the Christians, through the introduction of areas of religious freedom and dialogue for the good of all.

In this context, we should like to make the following observations:

In the spirit of the Second Vatican Council, Pope Benedict XVI confirmed in the Apostolic Exhortation "Ecclesia in Medio Oriente" that "Religious freedom is the pinnacle of all other freedoms. It is a sacred and inalienable right. It includes on the individual and collective levels the freedom to follow one's conscience in religious matters and, at the same time, freedom of worship. It includes the freedom to choose the religion which one judges to be true and to manifest one's beliefs in public. It must be possible to profess and freely manifest one's religion and its symbols without endangering one's life and personal freedom. Religious freedom is rooted in the dignity of the person; it safeguards moral freedom and fosters mutual respect." (Second Vatican Council, Declaration on religious freedom - *Dignitatis Humanae*, 2-8; Benedict XVI, *Ecclesia in Medio Oriente*, 26).

Human freedom ensures the common good of all citizens in society, transcending their cultural, religious and ethnic affiliations. In this context, the Declaration on religious freedom – *Dignitatis Humanae* points out that "the right to religious freedom has its foundation in the very dignity of the human person as this dignity is known through the revealed word of God and by reason itself. This right of the human person to religious freedom is to be recognized in the constitutional law whereby society is governed and thus it is to become a civil right." (Second Vatican Council, Declaration on religious freedom *Dignitatis Humanae*, 2).

On the basis of these fundamental principles, we should ask ourselves objective questions about the socio-political and civil systems in many of the region's countries. And, while respecting the religious and social traditions of the place, it is necessary to develop in this region the concept and application of "citizens' equality" and of freedom in all its dimensions, namely freedom of expression, freedom of religion, freedom of worship, freedom of conscience, freedom to manifest one's faith in public and freedom to change religion. Promotion of this concept and its application will have a positive effect on the future of religion and on societies' stability, and this within the process of an intercultural and inter-faith dialogue where the culture of the acceptance of "others who are different" will be the yardstick.

Education for coexistence, based on equality in citizenship, rights and duties, will be the expression of a modern social practice in which the religion factor will come to bring with it a message of love, brotherhood and peace for society. In these conditions, we can ensure that human rights are honoured. Human rights can never be measured using the subjective criteria of different socio-political realities, since they are universal values for every human being and every community, at all times and in all places. In order to achieve this objective, sacrifices will have to be made, and the process will take time amongst individuals and communities; the process is an educational and social one which will bear fruit in terms of a healthy development of values, and hence social confidence and political and economic stability. As a whole, this is a process which needs to be based on justice and equality, universal principles of human and religious thought.

Christians should not have to live "protected" lives, in stark contrast to the right to "citizenship" and to benefit from all human rights, and particularly freedom. That tradition and that practice which, by its very nature, is subject to changes associated with political circumstances and the disposition of those in authority, and which unjustly affects minorities, including Christians, regarding them as second-class groups. This situation does not chime with human rights.

Those who have been baptised should not withdraw into their "ghettos" either, whether in geographical, cultural or religious terms; such an attitude would be the very opposite of the teaching of the culture of the Gospel. And Christians, along with their fellow citizens, have the task of consolidating the dialogue of life, working together to resolve social problems, combating all kinds of violence within the family and violence against women, and giving charitable assistance to the poor, the marginal, migrants and the weakest members of society. Together, they tackle economic problems, unemployment, and educational, health and

ecology issues. Christians, given their history and culture, have much to share and to offer in the service of the development of their societies. This kind of attitude and practice could be what saves the whole region, as it passes through critical times. Co-operation of this kind, based on this spirit of togetherness, creates a vital opportunity for dialogue and appeals to everyone's conscience to put an end to all kinds of discrimination, violence and persecution directed at others. The disappearance of any community would be a loss for all. Pope Francis, who conveys to the world a message of universal brotherhood, peace, reconciliation and truth, has referred to the reality of so many Christians persecuted in today's world just for having a Bible or making the sign of the cross; "perhaps there are as many or more martyrs now than in the early days" of the Church (Pope Francis, Homily at Santa Marta, Rome, 4 March 2014).

Every kind of persecution of Christians, or of any other minority or community, whether direct or indirect, is a loss for human society as a whole. It is a sin against God and against humankind; it impoverishes human nature, which is rich in its diversity and unity.

This region, long subject to conflicts, needs peace. Christians' fundamental wish and the Church's appeal for a stable present and a prosperous future for the region signify a wish for dialogue and peace. Religious freedom is vital to the establishment of lasting peace. The war in Syria must stop and a solution be found to enable migrants and displaced persons to return home. Syria's tragedy is the loss of human lives and the disappearance of a culture which underlies so many civilisations. Emigration from the region, and particularly from Iraq, by huge numbers of Christians as a result of insecurity is bringing about demographic change and affecting people's friendly feelings. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict which has caused so much suffering in the Middle East must find a path towards a fair and peaceful solution in which the city of Jerusalem would rightly bear the name by which it is known: "city of peace". Thus it will be a city of unity amongst all religious families and a universal symbol of brotherhood, forgiveness and reconciliation. An end must be put to the sufferings of Egypt's Christians, so as to enable those communities to be reborn and that country to recover its role as a creative force in cultural diversity. Lebanon, prey to internal conflicts organically connected with the region's problems, must be saved and enabled to remain an area of freedom and democracy, both constitutionally and in fact.

In some countries of the southern Mediterranean there is a need to put into practice the principles of freedom which exist according to their constitutions, but which are often forgotten and neglected. We have spoken about free access to places of worship and the conversion of holy sites for cultural, social and sometimes unworthy uses. The holy sites must indeed remain outside conflict, so that they can be places of forgiveness, spiritual renewal and purification of both memories and hearts.

Current conflicts bring a risk that Christians will sell their properties and emigrate. That entails great danger, not only to them, but also to everyone around them who believes in the values of coexistence and openness. Clearly, when Christians leave, the first losers are the other communities, before the Christians themselves. Here we appeal to the conscience of those in positions of authority, who should establish the principle of citizenship and equality for all, thus making possible the creation of social stability and the elimination of the dangers that conflict brings with it.

The persecution and discriminatory treatment of Christians is a reason for showing greater unity, not only amongst Churches, but also in terms of the dialogue between faiths and within civil society, which should oppose all forms of isolationism and extremism based on ideologies and on the culture of rejecting others.

Freedom gives meaning to the existence of both the individual and the community, in a spirit of mutual respect based on the concept of human dignity. The right to choose one's faith and to practice one's religion paves an exquisite and peaceful path towards personal fulfilment, a path on which it is religious freedom that gives their humanity to human beings.

Mor Clemis Daniel Kourieh, Archbishop of Beirut

Your Holiness,
Eminences, Graces and Excellencies, Respected guests.

It is my great pleasure today to be with you in this meeting especially as it is convened in this beloved country, the country of freedom and democracy, Greece, where I studied and graduated from the University of Athens.

As you all know, in these days, the Middle East in general is living great and very quick political changes and our Oriental church with all its branches is facing huge challenges like losing the freedom of religion along with the increase of political Islam in the region.

Christians – "who are the minorities and the weaker group" – are perhaps the true victims because they are suffering from the persecutions of the Islamic extremists.

Their churches and monasteries were bombed and attacked, many of them have been killed, and many have been forced to emigrate to Europe and America fearing slaughter. Some bishops, priests and faithful were kidnapped, namely our beloved bishops of Aleppo Youhanna Ibrahim and Boulos Yazigi, who have been abducted for over one year now.

Their abduction has had a negative and deep impact on the Christians.

We have not noticed to date any serious attempts to determine their fate, especially from the European countries.

We have come to believe that there is an indirect plan to drain the Orient from its Christians. This renews in us the memory of historical fear from religious persecution and genocide, especially the one where the Armenians, Syriacs, Assyrians, and Greeks of South Turkey and Mesopotamia were victims at the beginning of the last century.

I would like to highlight that there are no major problems with moderate Islam that respects the Islamic teachings of mercy and peace. We have lived with this Islam for 14 centuries.

However, political and fanatic Islam is presenting itself as terrorism and violence losing by that, all hope for peace and democracy. This is violating all human rights and changing the concepts of religious freedom into discrimination and more fanaticism.

In my opinion, the following is what's required from the International Community in order to face these challenges:

1. To pressure Middle Eastern regimes to adopt serious policies that respect religious freedom and develop an educational program that is based on the respect of differences, religious liberties and acceptance of others.
2. To condemn and acknowledge the religious genocides that took place in the Middle East and to historically record them in a way that leads to reconciliation and restorative justice according to the active framework that protects the people and churches from reliving such genocides and persecutions.
3. To raise awareness of "positive secularism" in a civic society wherever possible in the Middle East.
4. To encourage and support all the minorities in the East, especially Christians to feel secure, hold firm and preserve their history, heritage and civilization in their own land and not as permanent residents or asylum seekers in Europe.
5. To put political and diplomatic pressure, even economic sanctions on countries that are helping or funding terrorism especially in the Middle East.
6. The West should be careful of the fanatical Islamic groups who are living on their lands and benefitting from the privileges and technologies that exist there.
7. Last but not least work on stopping the religious conflict in general and the Sunni-Shia conflict in particular, in all its forms.

Dearly beloved,

The oldest Christian communities in the world are disappearing in the lands where their faith was born and first took root.

Middle East uprisings are creating new pressures for Christians and other religious minorities.

Today, most of the countries of the Middle East are seeking to establish new constitutions and to find new democratic regimes. They are at a crossroads between choosing Islamic law, Shari'a, as a basis for their constitution (though they are not truly Muslim, rather they are fanatical and extremist), and thus turning the governance of the country into a new theocratic regime that will contribute to the immigration of what is left of the non-Muslim and Christian minorities.

The other option is to establish their constitutions on human rights, dignity and freedom; in this way, they would contribute to the building of a bright future based on true democracy that aims at preserving the equality between all citizens and preserving the Christians that are rooted in this Orient.

Father Poules Halim, Spokesperson of the Egyptian Coptic Orthodox Church

In the Name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit; One God, Amen

History is witness that civilizations are built and developed only in the presence of freedom of thought, creativity and belief. All civilizations founded on repression have collapsed. Hence, the importance of religious freedom.

First, Status Quo:

The situation as it stands today has been greatly affected by the obvious discrimination and hate speech that dominated the political and social scene before June 30th 2013 in Egypt. The Coptic churches have paid an expensive price on that front; this has been very well put by His Holiness Pope Tawadros II when he said: "*Our burnt churches are but a sacrifice that we offer for the redemption of Egypt and indeed it is a dear and expensive price for freedom.*"

And we are confident that the institutions and people of Egypt will indeed erase this impact.

Second, Desired Status:

Uncompromised full citizenship for all Egyptians.

Third, the Proposed Solutions:

1. Legislative:
 - a. Constitution: activating the constitutional articles pertaining to freedoms and their protection against all sorts of breaches or violations; this could be achieved through providing training sessions for key people in the media, education, culture, ministry of Interior, governmental officials and civil society figures.
 - b. Parliament: Availing opportunities for members of the parliament to spread awareness on the ideology of legislation which flows in the direction of freedoms and non-discrimination.
2. Education: Training on curriculum development which provides guidance on the fundamental principles of equality and non-discrimination in curriculum development.
3. Culture: the creation of an informed stream through the production and distribution of cultural materials that promote anti-discrimination beliefs.
4. Elections: the training of candidates in the parliamentary elections on how to develop marketing messages that are biased in favor of citizens and non-discrimination, and that also face religious hate speech and create a vision that criticizes the extremist voter. Encourage citizens to participate in the elections – In that we are guided by the renaissance in Poland.
5. Economic development: Support Egyptian projects in the field of economics because if democratization is not accompanied by a mainstream renaissance economic project, it will remain a cosmetic procedure.

**Dr Evangelos Venetis, Lecturer on Islamic and Iranian studies, Department of Arabic,
Persian and Turkish, University of Leiden**

Today the dramatic reduction in the number of Christians in the Middle East combined with the blatant violation of human rights at the level of religious tolerance and freedom of speech, security of lives and property of Christians and other religions of the region, including Islam, are worrisome events that need to be addressed.

In Turkey during the last decade and after 80 years of Nationalist government, the Islamic AKP government started, slowly but steadily, the reintegration process of Christian, Jewish and other recognized minorities in everyday social life in Turkey. This was achieved bureaucratically through the position of Representative of the non - Muslim Religious Foundations in the Council of the General Assembly of the General Directorate of Religious Foundations. Key issues relating to property and legal affairs of minorities remain unsolved, for instance, the reopening of the Christian Orthodox Theological School of Halki which remains *desideratum*.

Besides Christians, the non-recognition of millions of Muslim Alevi in Turkey is a challenge to the concept of respect for human rights for such a large portion of the Turkish population. It is necessary that the Turkish government to end religious discrimination against Alevi, giving them full rights.

Elsewhere, in some Arab countries, the situation for religious minorities and majorities is serious. In Syria and Bahrain majorities of Sunni and Shiite are politically marginalized. The same happens with the Sunni minority in Iraq and the Shiite in Egypt and Yemen respectively. The result of such a discrimination are Christians, Muslims and others who are forced to migrate, often illegally to Europe, as evidenced by their numbers in detention centers in the countries of southern Europe. Obviously safeguarding the rights of persecuted wherever they are and whoever they are, is a prerequisite for sustaining social and geopolitical peace.

Main Part: The issue of religious discrimination is associated with both Islam and Europe.

I) As regards the Muslim society, it should be noted that it is about:

First, the conflict between political Islam-tradition and secularism-modernity in the societies of Sunni Islam; Second, the regional Sunni-Shiite competition.

The persecution of Christians and other religions suffer is not promoted by the state but by marginalized outlawed Sunni extremist groups, e.g. in the case of the Monastery of St. Catherine of Sinai, Egypt.

The threat of religious discrimination also means a threat to the secular nature of Muslim societies.

II) The negligence of Europe on this issue due to the following causes:

The distinction between religion and state affairs in the last two centuries, which has led to the so far lack of strong interest of Europe for religious affairs of Middle Eastern countries

Moreover, the EU policy is still dictated by national criteria with religion having a secondary role, especially when it comes to non-EU citizens staying in other regions. Religion is simply not part of the game.

It is therefore proposed that Europe must show keen interest to develop an action plan to address the problem of violations of religious freedom in the Middle East. The time passes quickly.

What is needed is:

- The creation of a framework for cooperation between the EU institutions and the governments of countries in which religious freedoms are at stake.
- The EU should discuss and highlight the problem with visits by officials of the respective countries.
- At the same time it is necessary to enable civil society groups to spread the message of respect and observation of religious human rights in the countries of the Middle East.

Lastly, it should be noted that for Europe, the respect for religious freedom in the Middle East is the duty of Europeans to the past, present and future of European civilization.

Therefore, active cooperation is needed to ensure the human rights of Christians and other religions in the region and prevent the possibility of religious freedom to fall on deaf ears of the distinction between religion and politics in Europe and the political dimension of religion in the Middle East.

III. CONCLUSIONS

Summing-up by Ms Theodora Bakoyannis, Chairperson of the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy and of the Greek delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly

Dear friends, Your Excellencies,

I am very pleased that all speeches and statements of our current regional conference contributed to highlighting the real problems faced by Christian and other religious communities in the Mediterranean and Middle East region.

The speeches delivered by our distinguished guests will be published within the next weeks. Conclusions and specific proposals for the follow-up will be part of my report on "Violence against Christian Communities in the Middle East and the Southern Mediterranean, and its consequences", that I will prepare as a Rapporteur. This report will also include proposals on which, hopefully, we will all agree.

Let me briefly and simply refer to some topics of our current debate. I would like to remind you of the statement of Mr Meimarakis, Speaker of the Hellenic Parliament, that our Parliamentary Assembly has traditionally found solutions to problems, based on points of convergence and agreement.

President Basseur underlined the need to demonstrate sensitivity towards diversity. She stated, reasonably so, that instead of talking about each other, it is preferable to talk all together, laying stress on intercultural dialogue which is of key importance.

Mr Arvanitopoulos, Greek Minister of Education and Religious Affairs, emphasized the need for strengthening inter-Mediterranean co-operation with a view to eradicate poverty and stimulate growth. His Beatitude the Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa Theodoros II underlined that instead of being a peace factor, religious self-determination becomes a factor of division and intolerance. Yet, all distinguished speakers from the Maronite and Coptic Churches, as well as the academic community underlined the fact that religious tolerance is not enough, a fact on which, in my opinion, there is broad agreement. Equality of citizens as well as human rights and fundamental freedoms that are universal, such as freedom of religion or beliefs and freedom of expression should be institutionally guaranteed through constitutional and legislative reforms and effectively implemented. That is, beyond tolerance, there is a practical need for respect of diversity.

Ladies and gentlemen, nowadays the Middle East and the South-Eastern Mediterranean region experience an unprecedented geopolitical transformation. As the oldest international organisation in our region, the Council of Europe is by nature committed to using all available tools to promote peace and stability. We, Northern Mediterranean, have the historical duty to make every effort in order to bridge the gap with the Southerners. Certainly, as I have already said, it is not our aim to ask the people of the Arab world to adopt the Swedish level of democracy and respect of individual liberties in a very small period. Yet, our aim is to support them so that they can build healthy economies.

I firmly believe that improving standards of living and, hence, standards of education of these people will strike a definitive blow against religious fanaticism and unbridled proselytism. Education is a key element in order to become aware of different approaches both in religious matters and in human rights.

If we truly want to protect the rights of the Christian and other religious communities that live in the area, fighting poverty and higher educational levels are undoubtedly the only way. For that reason, as repeatedly said today, it is absolutely necessary to define a specific framework of co-operation between the Council of Europe and our partners in the near Muslim world, the exact form of which will be decided in our next debates, with a view to making evident our points of agreement in all levels.

We need a permanent and genuine dialogue which will help our partners to build strong democracies. Europe should, primarily, provide help to rebuild communities and societies in the Middle East and the Southern Mediterranean. Our Parliamentary Assembly can make a special contribution to this, through the partner for democracy status.

Dear colleagues, I know that this procedure is hard and time-consuming, but it is the only one that can balance the situation in the long run. It can fight religious fanaticism and protect individual rights. I promise you that my report will not take long to be finalised. Very shortly, I will present it to you, so that we can take final decisions. Thank you very much. I declare the meeting closed.

IV. LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

HOST COUNTRY PAYS HÔTE

Mr	MEIMARAKIS	Vangelis	Speaker of the Hellenic Parliament / <i>Président du Parlement hellénique</i>
Mr	ARVANITOPOULOS	Constantinos	Minister of Education and Religious Affairs / <i>Ministre de l'éducation et des Affaires religieuses</i>

GUEST SPEAKERS ORATEURS INVITÉS

THEODOROS II	The Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa Theodoros II / <i>Le Pape et Patriarche d'Alexandrie et de toute l'Afrique Théodore II</i>
H. E. Monseigneur Youssef Antoine SOUEIF	Maronite Archbishop of Cyprus / <i>Archevêque de Chypre des Maronites</i>
Bishop Daniel KOURIEH	Archbishop of Beirut / <i>Archevêque de Beyrouth</i>
H.G. Bishop PAVLOS	Coptic Orthodox Bishop of Greece / <i>Église Copte Orthodoxe de Grèce</i>
Father POULES HALIM	Spokesperson for the Coptic Orthodox Church, Egypt / <i>Porte-parole de l'Église Copte Orthodoxe, Égypte</i>
Dr Sotiris ROUSSOS	Associate Professor, University of Peloponnese and Head of the Centre for Mediterranean, Middle East and Islamic Studies (CEMMIS) / <i>Maître de conférences, Université du Péloponnèse et Chef du Centre d'études pour la Méditerranée, le Moyen-Orient et l'Islam (CEMMIS)</i>
Dr Evangelos VENETIS	Lecturer on Islamic and Iranian studies, Department of Arabic, Persian and Turkish, University of Leiden / <i>Attaché de recherches sur les études islamiques et iraniennes, Département arabe, perse et turc, Université de Leiden</i>

PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE
ASSEMBLEE PARLEMENTAIRE DU CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Mme BRASSEUR Anne President / *Présidente*

Members of the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy
Membres de la Commission des questions politiques et de la démocratie

Ms	BAKOYANNIS	Theodora	Greece, Chairperson of the Committee / <i>Grèce, Présidente de la Commission</i>
Mr	ALIGRUDIĆ	Miloš	Serbia, Vice-Chairperson of the Committee / <i>Serbie, Vice-président de la Commission</i>
Lord	ANDERSON	Donald	United Kingdom, Chairperson of the Sub-Committee on the Middle East and the Arab World / <i>Royaume-Uni, Président de la Sous-commission sur le Proche-Orient et le monde arabe</i>
Mme	DURRIEU	Josette	France, Vice-Chairperson of the Sub-Committee on the Middle East and the Arab World / <i>France, Vice-présidente de la Sous-commission sur le Proche-Orient et le monde arabe</i>
Mr	BOCKEL	Jean-Marie	France, Vice-President of the Sub-Committee on relations with the OECD and the EBRD / <i>Vice-président de la Sous-commission des relations avec l'OCDE et la BERD</i>
Mr	AMON	Werner	Austria / <i>Autriche</i>
Mr	BADEA	Viorel	Romania / <i>Roumanie</i>
Mr	BAGIŞ	Egemen	Turkey / <i>Turquie</i>
Ms	BAYKAL	Deniz	Turkey / <i>Turquie</i>
Mr	BINLEY	Brian	United Kingdom / <i>Royaume-Uni</i>
Mr	CONDE	Agustín	Spain / <i>Espagne</i>
Mr	COZMANCIUC	Corneliu	Romania / <i>Roumanie</i>
Mr	CRUCHTEN	Yves	Luxembourg
Mr	DENEMEÇ	Reha	Turkey / <i>Turquie</i>
Mr	DÍAZ TEJERA	Arcadio	Spain / <i>Espagne</i>
Ms	DJUROVIĆ	Aleksandra	Serbia / <i>Serbie</i>
Mr	DRAGASAKIS	Ioannis	Greece / <i>Grèce</i>
Mr	FRÉCON	Jean-Claude	France
Mr	HAJIYEV	Sabir	Azerbaijan / <i>Azerbaïdjan</i>
Mr	HOOD	Jim	United Kingdom / <i>Royaume-Uni</i>
Ms	KARADJOVA	Deniza	Bulgaria / <i>Bulgarie</i>
Mme	KHIDASHELI	Tinatin	Georgia / <i>Géorgie</i>
Ms	KYRIAKIDES	Stella	Cyprus / <i>Chypre</i>
M.	LEGENDRE	Jacques	France
Mme	MAURY PASQUIER	Liliane	Switzerland / <i>Suisse</i>
Mr	MOTA AMARAL	João	Portugal
Mr	PAPADIMOULIS	Dimitrios	Greece / <i>Grèce</i>
Ms	de POURBAIX-LUNDIN	Marietta	Sweden / <i>Suède</i>
Mr	RIGONI	Andrea	Italy / <i>Italie</i>
M.	ROCHEBLOINE	François	France
Mr	SEKULIĆ	Predag	Montenegro / <i>Monténégro</i>
Mr	SHEVCHENKO	Andriy	Ukraine

Mr	TZAVARAS	Konstantinos	Greece / Grèce
Ms	VÁHALOVÁ	Dana	Czech Republic / République tchèque
Ms	VĚSAITĚ	Birute	Lithuania / Lituanie
Mr	WALTER	Robert	United Kingdom / Royaume-Uni
Ms	ZELIENKOVÁ	Kristýna	Czech Republic / République tchèque

Committee ex-officio Members
Membres de droit de la Commission

M.	MIGNON	Jean-Claude	France	Former President of the Parliamentary Assembly / Ancien Président de l'Assemblée parlementaire
Mr	AGRAMUNT	Pedro	Spain / Espagne	Chairperson of the Group of the European People's Party / Président du Groupe du parti populaire européen
Mr	GROSS	Andrea	Switzerland / Suisse	Chairperson of the Socialist Group / Président du Groupe socialiste
Mr	XUCLÀ	Jordi	Spain / Espagne	Chairperson of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe / Présidente de l'Alliance des démocrates et des libéraux pour l'Europe

Other Members of the Parliamentary Assembly
Autres Membres de l'Assemblée parlementaire

Greek delegation to the Assembly / Délégation grecque auprès de l'Assemblée

Ms	PIPILI	Foteini
Ms	RAPTI	Elena
Mr	TALIADOUROS	Spyridon
Mr	TRIANTAFYLLOS	Konstantinos
Ms	VALAVANI	Nantia

Other member of the Assembly / Autre membre de l'Assemblée

Mr	SAAR	Indrek	Estonia / Estonie
----	------	--------	-------------------

Honorary Members of the Assembly / Membres honoraires de l'Assemblée

Ms	PAPADIMITRIOU	Elsa	Former Head of the Greek delegation / ancienne Présidente de la délégation grecque
Mr	PAVLIDES	Aristotelis	Former Head of the Greek delegation / ancien Président de la délégation grecque
Mr	VRETTOS	Dinos	Former Head of the Greek delegation / ancien Président de la délégation grecque
Ms	ZISSI	Rodoula	

**PARTNER FOR DEMOCRACY DELEGATIONS
DELEGATIONS DE PARTENAIRES POUR LA DEMOCRATIE**

Morocco - House of Representatives / Maroc - Chambre des Représentants

M.	YATIM	Mohamed	Vice-President of the Moroccan Chamber of Representatives, Chairperson of the Assembly partner for democracy delegation / <i>Vice-Président de la Chambre des Représentants marocaine, Président de la délégation partenaire pour la démocratie auprès de l'Assemblée</i>
M.	AMEUR	Mohammed	Deputy / <i>Député</i>
M.	BENSAID	Mohammed	Deputy / <i>Député</i>

Palestine – Palestinian National Council / Palestine – Conseil national palestinien

M.	SABELLA	Bernard	Member, Chairperson of the Assembly partner for democracy delegation / <i>Membre, Président de la délégation partenaire pour la démocratie auprès de l'Assemblée</i>
M.	KHRISHI	Ibrahim	Secretary General of the Palestinian Legislative Council, Permanent Secretariat of the Palestinian partner for democracy delegation to the Assembly / <i>Secrétaire Général du Conseil législatif palestinien, Secrétariat permanent de la délégation palestinienne partenaire pour la démocratie auprès de l'Assemblée</i>

**REPRESENTATIVES OF THE TURKISH CYPRIOT COMMUNITY IN ACCORDANCE WITH
RESOLUTION 1376 (2004)
REPRESENTANTS DE LA COMMUNAUTE CHYPRIOTE TURQUE CONFORMEMENT A LA
RESOLUTION 1376 (2004)**

Mr ÇAĞLAR Mehmet

**REPRESENTATIVES OF THE POLITICAL FORCES ELECTED TO THE KOSOVO¹ ASSEMBLY
REPRESENTANTS DES FORCES POLITIQUES ELUES A L'ASSEMBLEE DU KOSOVO**

Mr HYSENI-KALOSHI Hydajet

¹ All references to Kosovo, whether to the territory, institutions or population, in this text shall be understood in full compliance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 and without prejudice to the status of Kosovo. / *Toute référence au Kosovo mentionnée dans ce texte, que ce soit le territoire, les institutions ou la population, doit se comprendre en pleine conformité avec la Résolution 1244 du Conseil de Sécurité des Nations-Unies et sans préjuger du statut du Kosovo.*

**OTHER REPRESENTATIVES OF PARLIAMENTS – ASSEMBLIES – POLITICAL FORCES
OF THE SOUTH MEDITERRANEAN REGION AND OF THE MIDDLE EAST
AUTRES REPRESENTANTS DE PARLEMENTS – ASSEMBLÉES – FORCES POLITIQUES
DE LA REGION DU SUD DE LA MEDITERRANEE ET DU PROCHE-ORIENT**

Algeria – National People’s Assembly / Algérie – Assemblée Nationale Populaire

M. TAIBI Mohamed Deputy / *Député*

Egypt / Égypte

Mr EL GHOR Galal Head of the Energy Committee, Free Egyptian Party / *Chef de la Commission de l'énergie, Parti Libre de l'Égypte*
Ms MALAK Marianne Former parliamentarian / *Ancienne parlementaire*

Jordan – House of Representatives / Jordanie – Chambre des Représentants

Mr AL QARNEH Yousef Member / *Membre*
Mr ALSHARMAN Moh'd Member / *Membre*

Lebanon – National Assembly / Liban – Assemblée nationale

M. MOUKHEIBER Ghassan Deputy / *Député*

Tunisia – National Constituent Assembly / Tunisie – Assemblée Nationale Constituante

M. NAJAR Abdelmajid Rapporteur of the Committee on Preamble, Fundamental principles and of the Revision of the Constitution / *Rapporteur de la commission du préambule, des principes fondamentaux et de la révision de la constitution*
Mme CHAABANE Nadia Member of the Committee on Rights and Liberties and on External Relations / *Membre de la Commission des droits et des libertés et des relations extérieures*

**EUROPEAN UNION
UNION EUROPÉENNE**

Ms EKSTRÖM Monica Head of Sector « Political Reporting and Policy Analysis », Representation of the European Commission in Greece / *Chef de la Section « Reporting et analyse politiques », Représentation de la Commission européenne en Grèce*

**OTHER PARTICIPANTS
AUTRES PARTICIPANTS**

M.	AL ANSARI	Abdelkader	Moroccan Ambassador in Athens / Ambassadeur du Maroc à Athènes
M.	BEN ALLAL	Hassan	Senior advisor to the Moroccan Embassy in Athens / Premier conseiller à l'ambassade marocaine à Athènes
Ms	ARBOGAST	Francesca	Secretary to the Socialist Group / <i>Secrétaire du Groupe socialiste</i>
Ms	BIDENKO	Tetiana	Secretary of the Ukrainian Delegation to the PACE / <i>Secrétaire de la délégation ukrainienne auprès de l'APCE</i>
Ms	DERROUS	Ghyslaine	Advisor to the office of the Speaker of Moroccan House of Councillors / <i>Conseillère au Cabinet du Président de la Chambre des Conseillers marocaine</i>
Mr	DORNSEIFER	Rainer	Secretariat CDU/CSU / <i>Secrétariat CDU/CSU</i>
Ms	ESPE	Tanja	Secretary of the Estonian Delegation to the PACE / <i>Secrétaire de la délégation estonienne auprès de l'APCE</i>
Mr	HAWAMDEH	Hazem	Jordan House of Representatives / Chambre des représentants de Jordanie
Ms	KRUPOVÁ	Veronika	Secretary of the Czech Delegation to the PACE / <i>Secrétaire de la délégation tchèque auprès de l'APCE</i>
Mr	MILIVOJEVIĆ	Dejan	Secretary of the Serbian Delegation to the PACE / <i>Secrétaire de la délégation serbe auprès de l'APCE</i>
Mr	POURGOURIDES	Panicos	Secretary of the Cypriot Delegation to the PACE / <i>Secrétaire de la délégation chypriote auprès de l'APCE</i>
Ms	SUMSKIENE	Laura	Secretary of the Lithuanian Delegation to the PACE / <i>Secrétaire de la délégation lituanienne auprès de l'APCE</i>
Ms	ÜLGEN ÖZSER	Esmâ	Secretary to the Delegation of representatives of the Turkish Cypriot Community / <i>Secrétaire de la délégation de représentants de la communauté chypriote turque</i>

**SECRETARIAT OF THE HELENIC PARLIAMENT
SECRETARIAT DU PARLEMENT HELLÉNIQUE**

General Directorate on International Relations and Communication / *Direction générale des relations internationales et de la communication*

Ms MILIOU Nayia Head of the General Directorate / *Chef de la Direction générale*

Directorate for International Relations and Organisations / *Direction des organisations et des relations internationales*

Ms SYRIGOS Voula Head of the Directorate for International Relations and Organisations / *Chef de la Direction des Organisations et des relations internationales*

Ms KARTSAKLI Aikaterini Head of Department for the IPU and Other International Organisations / *Chef de service pour l'IPU et autres organisations internationales*

Communications Directorate / *Direction des communications*

Ms FLOUDA Margarita Head of Directorate / *Chef de la Direction*

Ms PAPAFILIPPOU Lia Head of Department for Protocol and Ceremonies / *Chef du Service du Protocole et des Cérémonies*

Other / *Autre*

Mr CHATZIVASSILEIOU Anastasios Special Counsellor , Private Office of Ms D. Bakoyannis / *Conseiller spécial, Bureau de Mme D. Bakoyannis*

**SECRETARIAT OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE
SECRETARIAT DU CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE**

Ms TAYLOR Verena General Director of Programmes / *Directrice générale des programmes*

**SECRETARIAT OF PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE
SECRETARIAT DE L'ASSEMBLEE PARLEMENTAIRE DU CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE**

**Secretariat of the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy
*Secrétariat de la Commission des questions politiques et de la démocratie***

Ms CHATZIVASSILIOU Despina *Head of the Department / Chef du service*

Mr ARY João *Deputy Head of the Secretariat / Chef adjoint du Secrétariat*

Ms ARZILLI Silvia *Co-Secretary of the Committee / Co-Secrétaire de la Commission*

Ms STEMP Nicola *Assistant / Assistante*

Mme BONIFAIX Frédérique *Assistant / Assistante*

**Private Office of the President of the Assembly
*Cabinet de la Présidente de l'Assemblée parlementaire***

Mme HEURTIN Isild Deputy to the Head of the Private Office of the President of the Assembly / *Adjointe au Chef du Cabinet de la Présidente de l'Assemblée*