

Final speech by Mr Rigoni

Ladies and gentlemen,

We are coming to the final stage of our conference – the adoption of its concluding document – the Final Declaration.

I should inform you that this declaration was discussed and approved by both sub-committees on cooperation with non-European countries of origin and transit and on integration.

You all have it in your files, but let me read it out in English:

Draft Final Declaration

1. We, members of the parliaments of European and South Mediterranean countries, gathered in Lisbon on 7-8 September 2017 at the Conference organised by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) on the invitation of the Portuguese Parliament agreed to:

2. Create a Parliamentary Network on Diaspora Policy with the aim of promoting policy and legislative reforms regarding diaspora's role in the countries of origin and host societies;

3. Focus the activities of the network on:

3.1. empowering parliamentarians to address the needs of diaspora communities and build inclusive societies;

3.2. promoting political co-operation between countries of origin and host countries;

3.3. promoting democratic participation of diasporas;

3.4. promoting the role of diaspora associations in the integration of migrants in host communities;

3.5. strengthening dialogue between members of the network and diaspora associations.

4. Appoint Mr Andrea Rigoni (MP, Italy) as co-ordinator of the network for a one year period.

5. Entrust the Secretariat of the Committee of Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons of the PACE with the tasks of the Secretariat of the Network.

6. Convene the next meeting of the network in on the invitation of the Parliament (tbc).

7. Promote and declare the day of the issuing of this declaration, 8 September, as European Day of Diasporas.

Done in Lisbon on 8 September 2017

We suggest that all parliamentarians and members of diaspora associations represented at this conference will constitute the core of the parliamentary Network on Diaspora Policy.

As you have noticed, we would like to convene the next meeting of the network in one of the national parliaments, therefore if any of you would be interested in hosting such a meeting, please come to us with your suggestions.

Do you have any questions or suggestions to the text of the Declaration?

If not, I would suggest that we accept it by acclamation.

Dear participants,

I think that this conference has been a great success and I would like to thank the Portuguese Parliament and Ms Mendes, the head of the Portuguese Delegation to the PACE, personally, for hosting this conference.

Finally, I would like to thank all of you for your active participation and open dialogue. This conference initiated a very stimulating exchange of ideas and experiences, best practices and legislative initiatives promoting diaspora engagement in European development and in the development of their countries of origin.

The original sense of the word “diaspora” refers to a mass dispersion of people from their home country on an involuntary basis. Our network will give a new sense to “diaspora” term by bringing people together freely with the humanistic purpose of uniting our intellectual potential to work for a better life in Europe.

I hope that the activities of this network will facilitate the development of trust between politicians and diaspora associations and contribute to the promotion of the Council of Europe values: democracy, human rights and rule of law.