



EURO-MEDITERRANEAN PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY



WORKING GROUP ON FINANCING OF THE ASSEMBLY AND REVISION OF THE EMPA RULES OF PROCEDURE

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MINUTES of the meeting of 14 January 2010, from 10h00 to 13h00 BRUSSELS

The meeting opened at 10.05 on 14 January 2010, with Mr. Gianni Pittella in chair.

Were present:

Members of the Working Group:

Miloud Chorfi (Vice-Chair) and Fatima Chellouche (Algeria); Gennaro Malgieri (Italy); Claudia Dall'Agnol and Xavier Bettel (Luxembourg); Eduardo Cabrita (Portugal); Afifa Salah (Tunisia).

Non-members of the Working Group:

Mohamed-Kamel Rezgui (Algeria).

1. ADOPTION OF DRAFT AGENDA

The draft agenda was adopted without modification.

2. ADOPTION OF MINUTES OF THE MEETING ON 4 MARCH 2009

The minutes of the meeting on 10 December 2009 were adopted.

3. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair presented the excuses received for the meeting: Mr. Robert del Picchia (FR) and Mr. Faik Oztrak (Turkey).

4. EXCHANGE OF VIEWS ON THE QUESTION OF THE PERMANENT OBSERVER STATUS AND ON THE REQUESTS FOR BEING GRANTED THAT STATUS, RECEIVED FROM DIFFERENT ORGANISATIONS

The participants heard the Chair who recalled that the amendment of the Rule 8 "Observers and guests" was discussed several times by the Working Group and approved, on 18 September 2008.

That proposal (Annex) was subsequently submitted to the EMPA Bureau, which endorsed it on 15 March 2009 in Brussels. In addition, based on that proposal, the Bureau discussed and decided on the applications for the observer status with EMPA, received from different organisations. Since the matter was not discussed in the Plenary on 16-17 March 2009 in Brussels, it was considered as postponed and was returned to the Working Group. The Working Group was asked to re-open the discussion on modifications to the Rule 8 and to deliver an opinion on the applications it had received.

The Chair presented the organisations that submitted a request for being granted the permanent observer status with EMPA: the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe; the Arab Inter-Parliamentary Union; the Transitional Arab Parliament; the Interparliamentary Union (IPU); the International Federation for Sustainable Development and Fight to Poverty in the Mediterranean-Black Sea (FISPMED); the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean (PAM).

He pointed out that the first five organisations applied prior to the Working Group's meeting on 18 September 2008, and therefore their applications have already been considered. The only application which has not been discussed was that from the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean (PAM), submitted on 18 March 2009.

The Chair suggested that the proposal for the amendment of the Rule 8, approved on 18 September 2008, be maintained and re-submitted to the Bureau. The members agreed to the Chair's suggestion.

On the applications for the permanent observer status, the Chair further suggested, on the basis of the above agreement, that the previous recommendation be maintained, i.e.:

- the permanent observer status should be granted to:
 1. the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe,
 2. the Arab Inter-Parliamentary Union,
 3. and the Transitional Arab Parliament,

which fulfil the criteria of the proposed amendment

The members agreed to the Chair's proposal.

The participants discussed the recent application received from the PAM.

The Italian delegation pointed out that the PAM could represent a duplication of the EMPA and that that could lead to overlapping, though the EMPA is the parliamentary representation

of the UfM, whilst the PAM has no role within the Union.

While sharing the Italian delegation's concern regarding the PAM's activities overlapping those of the EMPA, the Chair considered that, on the basis of the amendment proposed by the Working Group to Rule 8, paragraph 1, the organisation meets the requested conditions.

Mr. Rezgui was of the opinion that the PAM meets the conditions laid down in the proposed amendment to Rule 8.1. Moreover, he considered that, instead of being a duplication of the EMPA, the PAM would contribute to improving EMPA's work, as it is more advanced than the EMPA.

The Tunisian delegation emphasized that all partners from the Southern side of the Mediterranean are involved in PAM's work and contribute financially to its budget. Moreover, it was of the opinion that there are no reasons for denying its permanent observer status, as it fulfils all requirements.

The Portuguese Delegation suggested that a distinction be made between the formal and the political aspects of the relations of the two Assemblies. From the formal point of view, the Working Group cannot deny the PAM fulfils the criteria for being granted the permanent observer status. As for the political question, Mr. Cabrita was of the view that either the EMPA Bureau should clarify the nature of the relations between the two Assemblies, or it could be discussed by the Plenary in March 2010.

The Chair suggested that the Working Group recommends to the Bureau that the observer status be granted to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean, while, at the same time, asks the Bureau to clarify the nature of relations between the two organisations, due to the scope for competition between the two Assemblies.

The members agreed to the Chair's proposal.

Mr. Rezgui pointed out that the Algerian delegation will consult the authorities of its Parliament on the question of granting to the PAM the observer status with the EMPA and will inform the Working Group in due time on its position.

5. EXCHANGE OF VIEWS ON THE QUESTION OF THE FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS BY EMPA MEMBER PARLIAMENTS TO THE EMPA BUDGET

The Chair recalled the decision taken by the participants at the meeting on 10 December 2009 concerning the setting up of a minimal operational budget for the EMPA, to cover the costs for organising the meetings of the Assembly's bodies. In line with that agreement, following that meeting, the budget estimation was calculated and sent to all participants. The estimation revealed that the minimum necessary budget would be 608.720 Euros.

The members heard the Chair who also recalled the agreement of 10 December 2009 on the parameters to be used in the calculation of financial contributions from the EMPA member Parliaments. Accordingly, the proposed distribution of financial contributions was calculated based on both the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and the Human Development Index (HDI) of each country member of the Union for the Mediterranean. Furthermore, the calculation

was done in line with the algorithm proposed by the Greek delegation on 26 February 2008.

The Chair pointed out that the proposal could not be sent to the members of the Working Group prior to the meeting due to the lack of public information on the economic figures for Monaco and to the difficulties that brought in the calculation. For that reason, some approximations had to be figured out in order to overcome that problem. For all Euro-Med member countries, excepting Monaco, the data used were those published by the World Bank in its 2009 report (for the GDP) and by the UNDP in its 2009 report (for the HDI). As for Monaco, the GDP used represents an approximation of that announced by the Monegasque authorities in 2007. Concerning Monaco's HDI, it was considered that it equals 0,900, since the HDI for the developed countries varies between 0,900 and 1 (UNDP studies).

The members agreed unanimously to the proposed distribution of the financial contributions to the EMPA budget. The Portuguese delegation pointed out that the final decision is to be taken by the Plenary, on a recommendation from the Bureau.

Ms. Salah considered that the expenses for interpretation, which were discussed at the meeting in December, were too high. The Chair reminded that the interpretation fees used in the estimation of the budget were those paid by the European Parliament's interpreting services.

6. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Participants raised the question of the eight languages in which interpretation should be provided for the Plenary sittings, in line with the estimation for the budget. The Chair pointed out that the EMPA Bureau should decide on the five languages in which interpretation should be provided at plenary meetings, alongside the three official languages of the Assembly. However, he agreed that the Working Group could discuss the topic.

The Italian delegation considered that it would be appropriate that interpretation, at Plenary sessions, be provided into Mediterranean languages (such as Italian, Spanish, Turkish), apart from the three working languages of the Assembly.

Mr. Rezgui expressed the view that interpretation in more languages than those which have been already agreed upon (eight) should be the responsibility of the European side, which should agree upon the needed languages and should, subsequently, pay for the necessary interpretation.

The Portuguese delegation was in favour of a flexible approach to be applied for Bureau and Plenary meetings, in order to cover the real needs of each meeting.

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Mr. Rezgui complained about the flow of information from the Bureau, considering that the Bureau's discussions regarding the Working Group's work should be communicated to the members of the Working Group in order to enable them prepare for the meetings.

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Mr. Rezgui proposed the introduction of an amendment to the EMPA Rules of Procedure that would allow the members from the Southern side of the Mediterranean enter the EU without

being requested to have a visa. He asked the Chair to raise that question at the EMPA Bureau meeting in Rabat on 22 January 2010.

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On the question of observers and guests, Mr.Rezgui suggested the EMPA should request the observer status with the organisations to which it would grant such a status (i.e. the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, the Arab Inter-Parliamentary Union, the Transitional Arab Parliament).

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The Vice-Chair emphasized the importance of the proposals agreed upon by the Working Group and requested the Chair to present them to the EMPA Bureau at its next meeting on 22 January in Rabat, in order to enable their implementation in the near future.

7. DATE AND PLACE OF NEXT MEETING

Next meeting will take place in the first week of March 2010 in Brussels. The date will be communicated by e-mail.

The meeting closed at 11.50.