



## Euro-Med parliamentary delegation to go to Middle East

**President Borrell and the Speakers of the Greek, Egyptian and Tunisian Parliaments have adopted a declaration, thereby deciding to send a Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly (EMPA) delegation to Lebanon, Israel and the Palestinian territories. The text will be sent to EU Member States ahead of Friday's meeting with Kofi Annan to define the European contribution - which the EMPA Bureau says should be substantial - to the United Nations International Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL).**

At its extraordinary meeting of 24 August 2006 in Brussels, the Bureau of the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly (EMPA) discussed developments in the situation in Lebanon, Gaza and the West Bank.

The EMPA Bureau, represented by Fouad Mebazaa (EMPA Chair), Josep Borrell (President of the European Parliament), Anna Benaki-Psarouda (President of the Hellenic Parliament) and Ahmed Sorour (President of the People's Assembly of Egypt) issued the following declaration.

"The Bureau:

- A. Supports UN Security Council Resolution 1701 and calls on the international community to face up to its responsibility for ensuring that it is fully implemented as quickly as possible; stresses in this connection that no ceasefire can be sustainable without the political will to tackle the causes of the recent crisis;
- B. Requests, in this respect, the convening of an extraordinary meeting of the Euromed Council of Foreign Affairs Ministers of the Barcelona Process as soon as possible;
- C. Calls for the reinforcement of the international force of the United Nations (UNIFIL), provided for in Resolution 1701, to be deployed as soon as possible in order to ensure optimum conditions for the maintenance of the ceasefire, and asks the EU foreign ministers meeting in the General Affairs Council on 25 August 2006 to decide on a substantial participation in this force;
- D. Calls on the European Union to work with all the parties involved, and on the parties to respect scrupulously their commitment under Resolution 1701, so as to allow immediate access for emergency humanitarian assistance and the return of displaced persons under the safest possible conditions; urges, in this context, the lifting of the air and sea blockade of Lebanon;
- E. Believes that a comprehensive settlement to the conflict will require an overall regional peace agreement based on the relevant UN Security Council resolutions and, in view of this, denounces the deterioration of the situation in Gaza and the West Bank;

F. Reiterates its condemnation of the arrest of the President of the Palestinian Legislative Council, Mr Dweik, on 5 August 2006 and of Palestinian parliamentarians and ministers, and calls for their immediate and unconditional release;

G. Recalls the terms of Resolution 1701, which provides for the unconditional release of the abducted Israeli soldiers and, mindful of the sensitivity of the issue of prisoners, encourages the efforts aimed at urgently settling the matter of the Lebanese prisoners detained in Israel;

H. Requests the opening of political and diplomatic direct negotiations between the Israeli Government and the Palestinian Authority, which could achieve an exchange of prisoners between the two parties.

The Bureau also considers that the EMPA, as the Barcelona Process' only parliamentary institution for elected representatives of the peoples of the southern Mediterranean shore and the European Union, should assume up to its responsibility for facilitating the resumption of dialogue and cooperation between the parties to the Middle-East situation and accordingly decides:

1. To convene, as soon as possible, an extraordinary meeting of the Committee on Political Affairs, Security and Human Rights of the EMPA, in order to take the first steps in resuming constructive dialogue, the one real condition for putting a stop to all forms of hostilities, and for securing a re-launch of the peace process throughout the region and the peaceful coexistence of three sovereign states;
2. Hopes, in this connection, that the Palestinian vice-chairman of that committee, Mr Khreisheh, and his Israeli counterpart, Mr Whbee, will bring their authority to bear with a view to ensuring the resumption of constructive dialogue among the parties;
3. To send a delegation of the EMPA to the Lebanese, Israeli and Palestinian territories which will subsequently report to the EMPA Bureau, and charges its Political Committee to issue to the latter the conditions and the programme of this mission;
4. Calls on the European Commission to take all necessary steps to limit the disastrous impact of the oil slick that has polluted a large section of the Lebanese shoreline, and charges its Committee on Improving Quality of Life, Exchanges between Civil Societies and Culture to look carefully into all aspects of this situation and report back to the Bureau;
5. Calls on the international community, the European Union and humanitarian organisations to give all their support to the reconstruction of Lebanon and, in this connection, welcomes the initiative to convene an international donors' conference in Sweden in the near future, as a first step towards a political settlement in Lebanon;
6. Calls, on this basis, on the international community to pursue its efforts, with the same political will, to reach an overall negotiated solution for lasting peace in the Middle-East region".

**Contact :**

**Jean-Yves LOOG**

Press Service

E-mail: [jean-yves.loog@europarl.europa.eu](mailto:jean-yves.loog@europarl.europa.eu)

BXL: (32-2) 28 44652

PORT: (32) 0498.983.589