



14th Afro-Arab Parliamentary Conference

(Abidjan, 4 and 5 May 2016)

FINAL COMMUNIQUE

At the invitation of the National Assembly of Côte d'Ivoire, the 14th Afro-Arab Parliamentary Conference was held in Abidjan on 4 and 5 May 2016.

The following delegations representing the national parliaments of African and Arab countries took part in the meetings: Algeria, Benin, Burundi, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, Gabon, Guinea, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Namibia, Palestine, Rwanda, Senegal, South Sudan, Sudan, Tunisia, Uganda, United Arab Emirates and Zimbabwe.

Representatives of the following organizations also participated in the meetings as observers: the Parliamentary Union of the OIC member States (PUIC) and the ECOWAS Parliament.

Inaugural session

The inaugural session was held at the National Assembly of Côte d'Ivoire in the presence of His Excellency Guillaume Kigbafori SORO, Speaker of the National Assembly of Côte d'Ivoire, Dr. Chafik RACHADI, Vice-President of the House of Representatives of Morocco, representing H.E. Rachid TALBI ALAMI, Chairperson of the Executive Committee of the African Parliamentary Union, Mr. Emile RAHME, Member of the National Assembly of Lebanon, representing the President of the Arab Inter-Parliamentary Union and Mr. Faez EL Shawabkeh and Mr. N'ZI Koffi, Secretary-General of the Arab Inter-Parliamentary Union and the African Parliamentary Union respectively.

The representative of the Chairperson of the Executive Committee of the African Parliamentary Union, Mr. Chafik Rachadi, started by bringing greetings from Mr. Rachid TALBI ALAMI, Chairperson of the Executive Committee of the African Parliamentary Union and President of the House of Representatives of the Kingdom of Morocco, who could not attend. He also thanked the authorities of Côte d'Ivoire for their hospitality toward the delegates.

He underlined the importance of the current Afro-Arab parliamentary conference which offered an opportunity for parliamentarians to forge and strengthen the ties that undergird their common destiny. He paid tribute to all the pioneer parliamentarians of Arab and African parliaments, who laid the ground for the joint parliamentary conference.

The ties between Africa and the Arab world, he said, dated from way back and were founded in historical, geographical, civilizational, cultural and militant roots.

In the preamble of the statutes of the Afro-Arab Parliamentary Conference, adopted in Dakar in March 1985, it was clearly stated that the representatives of African and Arab

parliaments were true to the spirit, the principles and the goals of the United Nations, African and Arab charters, which defined their framework of action and bound , to a charter of honour that called for consolidating cooperation between African and Arab brothers and friends on the one hand, and fostered the coordination of efforts, the development of dialogue, the strengthening of ties and ongoing communication between the parliaments and peoples of Africa and the Arab world.

Tackling the theme of the conference, namely “Developing interactions between Arab and African countries to promote peace and sustainable development”, Mr. Chafik RACHADI recalled the historical dimension of Afro-Arab relations.

The Abidjan meeting would be an occasion to engage in discussion on exchanges at the economic, scientific, cultural and educational levels, as well as on prospects of solidarity, coordination and harmony, which would foster sustainable development and lay the ground for cooperation and integration, as a way of ensuring peace, security and stability in our regions and in the Arab and Africa world.

Terrorism, political turmoil, armed conflicts, violence, extremism, organized crime, illicit arms and drug trafficking, fatal epidemics, human trafficking and migration are all top on the agenda of the concerns of the international community.

Faced with such challenges, he was convinced that the Afro-Arab parliamentary institution was capable of finding part of the solutions and means for overcoming such situations. Indeed, the parliamentarians had the legislative power and control to inform public policy and refocus it on the topmost priorities.

He therefore called for the devising of joint development strategies, joining of efforts and initiatives and regional coordination with a view to creating and enabling environment for sustainable development based on peace, security, democracy, stability and the wellbeing of the people and generations to come.

Mr. Chafik RACHADI said that the immense and multidimensional responsibility placed on the parliamentarians was historic, political, “civilizational”, human and moral. Parliamentarians must meet the challenge and fulfill the expectations of their people.

Lastly, he paid tribute to the illustrious figures of the African continent and the Arab world who led our nations to independence.

Mr. Emile RAHME, for his part, read out the message of His Excellency Nabih Berry, Speaker of the National Assembly of Lebanon and President of the Arab Inter-Parliamentary Union.

He thanked the authorities of Côte d’Ivoire for their support, hospitality and the efforts deployed to ensure the success of the Conference. He welcomed the importance accorded

to strengthening the ties of solidarity and cooperation between Africa and the Arab world. He also thanked the countries of the African continent, especially Côte d'Ivoire, for receiving, for over a century now, the very first wave of Arab immigrants and affording them the opportunity to work and make an honest living, complying with the laws of the land and respecting the lifestyle and society of the African people.

He commended the parliamentarians for holding a meeting to reestablish the ties between the African Parliamentary Union and the Arab Inter-Parliamentary Union. Such relations should transcend the dialogue between them toward better grasp of the issues improved cooperation in the various areas, exchange of experiences and coordination on the international scene.

There had been several positive aspects of the Afro-Arab dialogue which have made it institutional. That coordination and cooperation should lead to support of the Arab supplementary item to the agenda of the meeting of the Inter-parliamentary Union in next October.

On the theme of the conference on developing interactions, he underlined the importance to revise the laws on investment and taxes on trade.

Equally important was giving priority to the fight against terrorism at the military, security, political and cultural levels so as to preserve stability, peace and security at the national, regional and international levels leading to a constitutional political process. Jobs should also be created to enable citizens to earn their living, thereby depriving terrorists of the use of such human resources.

On behalf of the Arab Inter-Parliamentary Union, His Excellency Nabih Berry condemned the terrorist acts perpetrated last March in Grand-Bassam and in several other African and Arab countries.

He called on Arab and African parliamentarians to define a unified concept of terrorism that distinguished between the fight of the people against occupation, colonialism, and injustice, and terrorism and organized crime. There should also be support for security cooperation in terms of intelligence among our countries. All common international actions should also be supported under the auspices of the United Nations, based on international resolutions on combating crossborder terrorism, depletion of human resources, transit of weapons and terrorists between countries and continents and halting of financial flows that fuel terrorism.

The current Afro-Arab parliamentary meeting should be held annually, in the lights of developments and situations such as the economic recession, so as to introduce joint legislation that would foster the wellbeing of the Arab and African peoples.

Lastly, he proposed recommendations to be included in the final document of the conference on developing Afro-Arab parliamentary cooperation, the signing of trade and economic cooperation agreements in several areas and the situation in certain African countries and in the Arab world.

Taking the floor, His **Excellency Mr. Guillaume Kigbafori SORO, Speaker of the National Assembly of Côte d'Ivoire**, expressed the joy of the Ivorian Parliament in hosting an event as important as the 14th Afro-Arab Parliamentary Conference. On behalf of all the Ivorian parliamentarians and on his own behalf, he warmly welcomed all participants who had come to take part in the Conference, which was a celebration of fraternity between African and Arab parliamentarians. He acknowledged the presence of the following honourable Speakers:

- H.E. Edna MADZONGWE, President of the Senate of Zimbabwe
- H.E. El Hadj Mohamed El Hacem, President of the Senate of Mauritania
- H.E. Issaka SIDIBE, Speaker of the National Assembly of Mali
- H.E. MUKABALISA Donatille, Speaker of the Chamber of Deputies of Rwanda
- H.E. Boilil Mohamed, Speaker of the National Assembly of Mauritania
- H.E. Margaret MENSAH-WILLIAMS, President of the National Council of Namibia
- H.E. AGILA Saleh Essa, Speaker of the Parliament and Head of Armed Forces of Libya
- H.E. Omer Suleiman Adam Wanese, President of the Council of States of Sudan.

The Afro-Arab parliamentary conference, he said, instituted some 30 years ago, was partly in response to the need for two regions, Africa and Arab, to work together to consolidate their political, economic and cultural relations, and also in a recognition of the need of the vital role that parliaments could play by getting more involved in the resolution of African, Arab and international issues, so as to regain their rightful place in a globalized world.

The Afro-Arab parliamentary conference was the appropriate forum for cooperation between our two regions, transcending linguistic barriers to become a tool for sharing knowledge and experiences.

Faced with globalization, and the many challenges caused by the global economic crisis and its impact on peace and security, the Arab and African regions must enhance their cooperation and regional integration structures so as to put our countries back on the path to sustained growth and sustainable development.

Tackling the issue of terrorism, he observed that the 14th Conference was taking place at a historic time on our continent, marked by waves of unprecedented terrorist attacks in several African countries, including in Grand-Bassam, Côte d'Ivoire, which was recently hit, following those in Mali, Burkina, Niger, Kenya, Somalia and Tunisia.

Terrorism was a real threat to peace and international security. It could not be likened to or confused with the legitimate struggle for liberation, nor could it be associated with religion, nationality, political ideology or even civilization. The 14th Conference should afford the opportunity to launch an appeal for solidarity, international cooperation and mobilization of all States in the fight against terrorism. Regular exchange of information and experiences between our security organs and the joining of our means for fighting would bring efficiency to our collective action against terrorism.

Africa and the Middle East should continually conjugate their efforts to halt the human tragedy experienced by our people, who just want peace, happiness and freedom.

Referring to the theme of the conference, namely promoting peace and sustainable development by consolidating interactions between the Africa and Arab regions, He mentioned the responsibility of parliamentarians to ratify international agreements and pass laws integrating the goals of development identified under Afro-Arab cooperation and the institution of a true strategy for exchanges between Africa and the Arab world which would be mutually profitable and based on the respect of democratic values and good governance.

In that regard, he called for the mobilization of the Speakers of member parliaments of the Conference whenever meetings were held, to provide relevant answers to the challenges facing parliaments.

Lastly, he wished the meeting success and declared the 14th Afro-Arab Parliamentary Conference open.

The Conference then elected the members of the Bureau as follows:

- His Excellency Guillaume Kigbafori SORO, Speaker of the National Assembly of Côte d'Ivoire, as Chair of the Afro-Arab Parliamentary Conference
- Honourable Souleymane Hamid Wahdan, Vice-Speaker of the House of Representatives of Egypt, as Vice-Chair of the Conference
- Honourable Moudouma Apollinaire, Member of the National Assembly of Gabon, as Rapporteur of the Conference.

The agenda of the conference was adopted as follows:

1. Election of the Bureau of the Conference.
2. Adoption of the agenda
3. Report of the Follow-up Committee
4. Exchange of views on:

The development of exchanges between Arab and African countries with a view to promoting peace and sustainable development

5. Forming a new Follow-up Committee
6. Date and venue of the 15th Conference.

The Conference decided to consider the speeches delivered at the official opening ceremony as work documents for the continuation of the proceedings.

Report of the Follow-up Committee

The Conference heard the report of the Follow-up Committee, which met on 3 May 2016 in Abidjan with Mr. HEMREN Ahmed, Member of the National Assembly of Mauritania in the chair and Mr. Mohamadei BUNDUKJI, Member of the Senate of Jordan, as Rapporteur. The report dealt with the observations of the Follow-up Committee following the presentation by the General Secretariats of the African Parliamentary Union and the Arab Inter-Parliamentary Union, of their joint activities following the 13th Afro-Arab Parliamentary Conference.

The report also dealt with the recommendations made by the Committee, which were being tabled before the Conference, namely:

- The need to hold two meetings by year of the Follow-up Committee in line with the texts of the Afro-Arab parliamentary conference
- Jointly organizing the parliamentary forum in early 2017 on: the challenges of globalization and its effects on the national cultures in Africa and the Arab world
- Reviving and forming bilateral friendship groups between Arab and African parliaments
- Urging Arab and African parliaments to request their governments to focus on increasing diplomatic representations
- Improving coordination between African and Arab parliamentary delegations at meetings of the Inter-Parliamentary Union so as to harmonize their positions.

The Conference approved these recommendations with addition of the following:

- Entrusted the Follow up Committee to set up mechanisms aimed at implementing the decisions of the conference and submit them to the next Afro-Arab Summit according to international procedure.

Constitution of the new follow up committee

The Conference approved the new Follow up Committee as follows:

African side: Burundi, Guinea, Mali, Namibia and Uganda

Arab side: Egypt, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya and Palestine.

The Conference also approved the following:

I – The situation in Africa

The 14th Afro-Arab Parliamentary Conference,

Reaffirming the importance of promoting peace on the African continent through dialogue as a means for conflict resolution and underlining the fact that peace is a prerequisite for sustainable development,

1. Urges the parties to the Agreement on peace and reconciliation in Mali, which resulted from the Algiers process, signed in Bamako on 15 May and 20 June 2015, to pursue their efforts toward the implementation of the Agreement, to lead to the total isolation of terrorist groups in Mali and further urges them to enhance their commitment to peace and reconciliation, as well as the wellbeing of the Malian people.
2. Calls upon all stakeholders in Guinea-Bissau to commit themselves resolutely to political dialogue, without exclusion, so as to bring an end to political and institutional tensions, to consolidate peace and stability in the country and reach consensus on the implementation of reforms.
3. Encourages the Burundi authorities and the other actors to continue the already launched inter-burundian inclusive dialogue, in conformity with the constitution, the Arusha agreement and with the different adopted resolutions of the UN Security Council; consequently condemns all the terrorist acts perpetrated in the country and which threaten peace and stability in Burundi.
4. Welcomes the formation of the transitional government of national unity and calls upon the two parties, with the help of the international community, to fully implement the signed Peace agreement on the resolution of the conflict in the Republic of South Sudan.
5. Welcomes the positive developments in the Central African Republic with the holding of presidential and legislative elections, and urges all the other Central African parties to work together to promote national reconciliation and good political and economic governance.
6. Supports the efforts by countries combating the Boko Haram terrorist group; it underlines the need to step up efforts deployed under the Multinational Joint Task Force to combat Boko Haram, set up by the Lake Chad Basin Commission and Benin.
7. Welcomes the commitment of the Federal Government of Somalia to work in the spirit of the Mogadishu Declaration of 16 December 2015, by promoting national political dialogue and reconciliation toward the holding of elections by 2020.

8. Salutes the return to constitutional rule and the end of the transition in Burkina Faso with presidential and legislative elections on 29 November 2015 and calls on the international community to support the country's efforts to revive its economy and deepen the democratic process.
9. Condemns the terrorist attacks perpetrated in Somalia, Tunis, Bakissa (Kenya), Bamako, Ouagadougou and Grand-Bassam (Côte d'Ivoire) and *stresses* the need for renewed and coordinated African efforts to forestall and combat terrorism in all its forms as well as violent extremism, based on relevant continental and international instruments.

II. The situation in the Middle East and in Arab countries

The 14th Afro-Arab Parliamentary Conference,

Recalling the recommendations adopted by Afro-Arab parliamentary conferences and by the Arab Inter-parliamentary Union on the situation in the Middle East and the Arab world:

1. Affirms that there will be neither peace nor stability in the Middle East without finding a just and comprehensive solution for the Palestinian Cause; such solution must be based on the resolutions of the international community and geared towards ending the Israeli occupation of all Arab territories occupied since 1967 and towards the establishment of an independent Palestinian State whose capital is Jerusalem and with the borders specified on the 4th of June 1967. Furthermore, the Conference affirms the international resolution no. 194 regarding the Palestinian right of return.
2. Calls upon Arab and African Parliaments to provide the necessary support for the success of Palestinian and Arab efforts aiming at conducting an international peace conference for the implementation of International Community's resolutions related to the Palestinian Cause; which aims at ending the Israeli occupation and establishing the Palestinian State whose capital is Jerusalem and with the borders specified on 4th of June 1967 and with Jerusalem as its Capital City. Furthermore, the Arab Parliaments are asked to support the Palestinian and Arab efforts to protect Palestinian People through the UN Security Council and condemn and stop the settlement.
3. Extends its greetings and pride to the Palestinian People for their resistance and courageous uprising, for exercising their legitimate right of self-determination, and thwarting the crimes of Israeli occupiers and extremist settlers; and urges for the lifting of the embargo on Palestine;

4. Supports the efforts exerted for the success of the Libyan political agreement and underlines the effective right of the House of Representatives for its adoption and its constitutionalization; calls for the respect of the constitutional declaration and the legislation in force as the expression of the will of the people, and also underlines its support for the efforts granted by the Libyan State in its fight against terrorism and extremism and in ensuring security in all the country by the lifting of the arms embargo imposed to the Libyan army.
5. Greets the efforts exerted by Morocco in the promotion of the Libyan dialogue of reconciliation which led in Skhirat.
6. Underlines the necessity of supporting the international and regional efforts aimed at assisting the Libyan State in mine-clearing operations, particularly in Benghazi and Birak.
7. Welcomes the fact that Parliamentary activities are taking place again in Egypt as a way of completing the last item on the Agenda of the “Roadmap.” It also affirms its support for Egypt in its ongoing talks regarding the Nile River. The Conference has attentively looked as well at the current grand vital projects aimed at boosting the economy, development, and investment in this country.
8. Supports Lebanon to be able to complete the process of liberating its land, implement all the items of the UN Security Council’s resolution no. 1701 and demarcate its maritime boundary.
9. Calls upon the support of the Lebanese army and security services and provides them with arms to confront the terrorism present on its national borders and on the community boundaries.
10. Underlines its solidarity with Syria and supports its legal right to liberate the entirety of the occupied Syrian Golan with its borders as specified on 4th of June, 1967, according to related UN resolutions. Also, the Conference considers all procedures taken by Israel to annex the Syrian Golan to be null and void, in violation of the International Community’s resolutions.
11. Insists on the unity of Syria’s land and people, and strongly refuses any proposal to divide the country, whether in the form of federalism or in any other form.
12. Affirms its support for the current dialogue between the Syrian parties to come up with political solutions based on the UN Security Council’s resolutions and other international agreements.
13. Supports Jordan in confronting Israel against its repeated violations of Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Christian holy sites in Jerusalem. The Conference highly appreciates the role of Jordan in protecting the Islamic and Christian holy sites.

14. Follows the challenges faced by Iraq and praises its role and sacrifices in its fight against terrorism. The Conference also calls upon Iraq's political leaders to accelerate the achievement of reforms, change, and national reconciliation through reinforcing good governance principles and establishing an institution-based State.
15. Renews its support for United Arab Emirates to exercise its full and legitimate right over its three occupied islands: Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb, and Abu Musa. It also supports all procedures and peaceful means undertaken by UAE to restore its sovereignty over its occupied islands.
16. Highly appreciates the international efforts to peacefully resolve the crisis in Yemen according to the UN resolutions, as well as the role played by the State of Kuwait.
17. Highly appreciates all the efforts exerted to realize peace and national dialogue in the Sudan especially those made by the common mediation of the UNO, the African Union, the League of Arab States, and the OIC; and particularly appreciates the constructive and persistent efforts exhibited by the State of Qatar to reach the Doha Treaty for the Peace in Darfur; calls upon all the parties to join the national dialogue.
18. Supports the just demand of the Sudan as for the lifting of penalties and for the cancellation of its foreign debt.
19. Appreciates the work undertaken by the EL Qods Committee presided by His Majesty Mohamed VI the King of Morocco and calls upon the support of all the parties which contribute to the end of the occupation of El Qods.

III- The struggle against terrorism

The 14th Afro-Arab Conference, recalling the recommendations adopted by the conferences of the Afro-Arab parliamentary dialogue, the Arab Inter-Parliamentary Union and the African Parliamentary Union meetings on the fight against terrorism:

1. Condemns all the terrorist acts perpetrated in Africa and in the Arab world, and calls for joint international efforts in line with the resolutions of the United Nations Security Council to eradicate this scourge which is threatening international stability and security.
2. Urges African and Arab countries to cooperate in the fight against terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and against extremism.
3. Reaffirms the need to distinguish between terrorism and the right of the people to fight against the occupation of their land, in an effort to recover their legitimate right.

4. Rejects any link between terrorism and Islam, which is a religion of peace and tolerance, and calls for legislation on fighting the culture of hatred and violence, in an effort to build pluralistic societies that promote coexistence between different peoples, on the one hand, and adoption of the Amman document of November 9th, 2004, translated into several languages and adopted by most of the European countries as reference in the fight against terrorism and violence, on the other hand.
5. Calls for compliance with international law in terms of assisting and protecting civil populations who fall victim to terrorism.

IV. Development of exchanges between Arab and African countries with a view to promoting peace and sustainable development

Following an exchange of views on this point, participants were of the view that developing Afro-Arab interactions to promote peace and sustainable development called for undertaking the following actions to inject fresh dynamism into the cooperation between African and Arab countries:

A) At the political and security level

1. Establish or revive bilateral joint commissions and implement the agreements between the two parties;
2. Build national and regional capacities of conflict prevention mechanisms, resolve them and deal with post-conflict situations;
3. Strengthen and develop the legislative institutions to allow them to perform their legislative and control functions;
4. Take part in the construction process of post-conflict countries, by developing Afro-Arab interregional cooperation;
5. Exhort to the adoption of the principles of good political and economic governance, the fight against corruption, management of conflicts, including the potential causes and impacts of these phenomena;
6. Fight terrorism and maritime piracy;
7. Build capacities and exchange information on counter-terrorism, piracy and transnational organized crime, including drug trafficking, money laundering, human and arms trafficking;
8. Work for promotion of human rights and citizenship values.

B) At the economic, social and cultural levels

1. Promote Afro-Arab trade by introducing an appropriate legal mechanism to regulate trade between the African and Arab regions;
2. Facilitate the access to national data on foreign trade;
3. Work for the dynamization of free trade agreements among African and Arab countries;
4. Harmonize investment policy and regulation in the two regions;
5. Take measures to enhance trade and investment in the two regions;
6. Streamline national economic resources (energy, mining and water);
7. Support and facilitate private and public investment;
8. Consolidate trade agreements in the area of exploitation of resources;
9. Establish economic information exchange networks using information and communication technologies;
10. Facilitate interactions between investors and decision-makers by developing information on investment opportunities;
11. Create a favorable environment for investment activities and trade promotion;
12. Call on regional and financial institutions to provide financial support for investments in the African and Arab regions;
13. Set up support bodies for trade and investment operations;
14. Set up joint Afro-Arab chambers of commerce with a view to creating an Afro-Arab common market;
15. Set up Afro-Arab businessmen councils;
16. Exchange experts and experiences in trade and industrial areas;
17. Adopt policies that ensure the quality of products that comply with international standards and specifications, in an effort to improve competitiveness at the regional and global levels;
18. Set up a system for the mutual recognition of standards and quality of products traded;
19. Take measures aimed at encouraging the private and public sectors to play an active role in the development of trade between African and Arab countries;

20. Facilitate the circulation of goods and services and capital between the two regions so as to promote the creation of a preferential trade area between African and Arab countries;
21. Develop multimodal means of communication in the area of road and rail infrastructure and ensure connections between transport networks;
22. Promote joint projects in the Africa and Arab regions, in the area of renewable energies and electricity network interconnections;
23. Participate in economic and cultural fairs and events;
24. Exchange qualified manpower between the two regions in health, education and equipment fields.

V- Next Afro-Arab Parliamentary Conference

The conference welcomed the proposal of Egypt to host the 15th Afro-Arab Parliamentary Conference. The General Secretariat of the Arab Inter-parliamentary Union was charged to hold consultations with the host country with a view to fixing the date.

VI – Vote of thanks

The Conference addressed its thanks and gratitude to His Excellency Allassane Ouattara, President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, to express to him its high consideration for the importance and interest to its proceedings.

The Conference also addressed its congratulations and thanks to Honourable Guillaume Kigbafori SORO, Speaker of the National Assembly of Côte d'Ivoire, for the importance given by the national Assembly and its Administration for the success of the meeting.

Abidjan, 5 May 2016