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NPA alm. del - Bilag 98
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1. Some 40 members of parliament from NATO and NATO Parliamentary Assembly (NATO PA) Mediterranean Associate countries (Algeria, Israel and Jordan) met in Naples from 1-2 July for a seminar, organized in co-operation with the Italian delegation to the NATO PA, to discuss security issues in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region.

I. SESSION I - IRAN: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

2. The first session focused on Iran, recent internal political developments, the nuclear issue and foreign policy developments. The first presentation was given by Ali Reza Sheikholeslami, who currently teaches International Politics at the American University of Sharjah, UAE, and who is a former Professor or Persian studies at the University of Oxford. He gave a detailed account of the internal political situation in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

3. Professor Sheikholeslami explained that before the 1979 revolution in Iran the political system was highly centralised and personalised, an anthropomorphic system that had taken the structure of a person. The Shah was an enlightened, patriotic and human person, but he did also make erratic decisions. This politically rather primitive system was mistaken in Europe and the US for a modern system, which it was not. After the revolution, the system transformed into the current system where many actors now take decisions. Iran today is a highly de-personalised state where office holders compete with and watch each other and where decisions are made to secure the own tenure of office. The Iranian population measures all their leaders in Iran in human terms and not a single leader is in control in Iran, unlike the cases of Saddam Hussein in Iraq, or Muammar Ghaddafi in Libya. Leadership is collective and based on horse-trading and compromises. The current political structural arrangements in Iran do not allow for adventurism in foreign policy. Professor Sheikholeslami said that those who maintain the integrity in Iran are doing a big service not only to Iran, but also to the outside world. He explicitly warned of the consequences of a potential breakdown of this rather fragile system, e. g. through a foreign military intervention. He called Iran an ethnographic museum in which only 50% of the population speak the national language. A breakdown would affect every neighbouring country, and have much more severe consequences than the current problems in Iraq. The system is held together delicately and an outside shock could be fatal. Those with the means of violence in Iran would act in an unrestrained manner and "Iraq would be a happy experience by comparison", the speaker said.

4. Professor Sheikholeslami also explained the current domestic Iranian debates on the religious and political system and on the wide range of opinions that exist among politicians and clerics. The "Republic of Iran" is an oxymoron, a contradiction in terms, it is a republic divided, as a house against itself. While some clergy stress the republican nature of the state, others advertise an even stronger role of Islam in the state. Some argue for more political party power, others against the existence of any political party. A strong ideological division exists that is also expressed in the press and discussed in parliament. Neither side is powerful enough to destroy the other side and neither wants to. Unilateral action and dictatorship are not possible in a system that can be described as having a strong balance of power. The system and the people are united, however, against fundamental threats from the outside. The only action that will unite all Iranian political forces is defending and maintaining the current system if attacked.

5. Maurizio Martellini, who is the Secretary General for the think-tank, Landau Network - Centro Volta, gave the second presentation on Iran. He mainly addressed the Iranian nuclear issue and started by elaborating on the Iranian wishes to acquire nuclear weapon capabilities and mentioned that Iranians are afraid of other countries' foreign policy agendas and remember the Western, especially US involvement in the coup against Prime Minister Mossadegh in the 1950s. Nuclear power will also allow Iran to maintain a military capacity.

6. Professor Martellini also elaborated on the double-nature of a nuclear programme, the peaceful civilian programme and the military application of often the same equipment. It is very difficult to completely guarantee the civilian use of nuclear energy in any country. He also discussed the "red line" the international community draws regarding nuclear energy use and mentioned two important thresholds. The first one is the complete mastery of the uranium cycle for fuel. The second one involved the technology necessary for making a bomb.

7. According to the last report from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Iran has mastered the final step of the fuel enrichment for which 3,000 centrifuges will be used and deployed. If these 3,000 centrifuges are fully operational and running permanently, one Hiroshima-like bomb can be produced. If the same centrifuges are used with low-enriched uranium gas, six bombs could be produced. The Iranian government is allegedly planning to build 51,000 centrifuges. For the actual weaponization, Iran needs between three and eight years. The IAEA is not currently able to verify that the Iranian programme is only for peaceful purposes; while at the same time it also cannot prove that it is not. Several UN Security Council resolutions were passed requiring Iran to give an answer to the critical questions about its programme. Professor Martellini said that the Iranian regime will not give up its nuclear ambitions and that we need to find an exit strategy. A "Grand Bargain" has to be conceived from which all political players involved would benefit. He saw five options for how to engage with Iran: 1) to continue with business as usual and pass resolution after resolution; 2) to induce regime change in Iran; 3) a military strike against nuclear facilities; 4) a comprehensive bargain strategy; 5) a containment and engagement strategy. None of these options is without negative side effects, but only arrangements with 'sticks and carrots' will lead to something. He rules out the military option since Iran is a huge country that might have clandestine capacities and be able to resume its nuclear programme.

8. These two presentations were followed by a lively discussion and Q&A period. Several participants accused the international community of its "double standards" and "hypocrisy" towards Iran, especially since Israel would be allowed to have nuclear weapons. They suggested a nuclear-free zone in the Middle East, including Israel. Participants asked and commented on the potential results of a military strike against Iran, about the fragility of the Iranian political system as well as about current Russian involvement in Iran. One participant commented that the problems with Iran are a direct outcome of the war against Iraq.

9. Professor Sheikholeslami responded to the questions that Iran has a very sophisticated system today, much more developed than most political systems in the region and that the 'West' might make another mistake by interfering with this system. He also said that it is impossible for Iran to prove that it is "innocent" regarding the nuclear issue and the demand would put the usual "innocent until proven guilty" on its head. US threats against Iran are counter-productive and he mentioned that Iran has not attacked anyone since 1740. Regarding Iran's support for groups such as Hezbollah, he said that these groups actually do not need Iranian support and would be active without Iran as well.

10. Addressing the 'double standards' issue, Professor Martellini replied that the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) is a political bargain created during the Cold War and full of loopholes that the international community is now trying to fix. There are countries on this planet, such as Argentina and Brazil who have excellent enrichment facilities and can build bombs within years. Japan has enormous resources and could build up to 100 plutonium bombs within six months. These countries, however, refrained from building nuclear weapons so far. The main problem with Iran is a possible proliferation, but he clearly stated "there is no smoking gun at the moment". Addressing the idea of a nuclear-free Middle East, he replied that a political solution for the regional problems is needed first. He added that a country's decision to "go nuclear" is always the outcome of other political developments that should also be addressed, and he strongly advertised "fixing the loopholes in the NPT as soon as possible".

II. SESSION 2 - CRISIS IN LEBANON: RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

11. The second session dealt with the current crisis in Lebanon, the aftermath of the summer 2006 war and the international efforts to deal with this, especially with the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) mission, as well as with the international efforts to investigate the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri.

12. Giovanni Lorenzo Forcieri, Italy's Deputy Minister of Defence, made the first contribution by giving an overview of the UNIFIL mission in South Lebanon. The current expanded mission came into action in summer 2006 with mainly France and Italy behind it. UN resolution 1701 allowed the (increased) deployment of UNIFIL troops, Israel agreed to the mission and, for the first time ever, entrusted some of its security concerns to a multinational force. Currently more than 30,000 troops from 30 countries are deployed under UNIFIL, commanded by the Italian Major General Claudio Graziano. The equipment includes tanks, artillery, radar, mine removal teams, bomb exploders and others. In front of the Lebanese coast, about 2,000 navy personnel are deployed under German command. He regretted that recently some UNIFIL Spanish soldiers have been killed by a terrorist attack and mentioned, however, that Hezbollah condemned the attacks, denied its involvement and stated this would be against Lebanese national interests. Thus, the attacks might have been organised by Salafi groups wanting to blame Hezbollah.

13. Mr Forcieri also mentioned the Israeli violations of the UN resolution, namely how it keeps violating Lebanese air space. While the amount of violations sometimes decreases, it increased for example during the recent Palestinian camp crises. The cluster bombs that were scattered by Israel during the last war in South Lebanon killed 32 people and wounded another 290 since the end of the war. This has hampered economic development, for example agriculture.

14. Summarising the UNIFIL mission, he described it as a success and reminded participants that the presence of UNIFIL has led to a normalisation of life in South Lebanon, but also warned about the dangers and the unstable political situation in the region. A lasting solution for Lebanon must involve Syria with which we will have to start a dialogue sooner or later.

15. Mr Forcieri also addressed the current developments in Palestine. Abu Mazen did not manage to establish a unity government and now we can see clashes between moderates and extremists. A national reconciliation should be a priority and any kind of division must be prevented. Regional players such as the Arab League have to be involved. The appointment of Tony Blair as Quartet Envoy should not be seen as a 'Western' decision, but as a new impulse for peace in the region.

16. The second intervention was made by Elisabeth Picard, Research Director at France's Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS). She started by describing the current political situation in Lebanon. President Lahoud's term is coming to an end soon and Hezbollah is politically re-enforced and well anchored in the political system. Another Israeli attack might happen soon. 15 years after the end of the war, Lebanon has gone into a downward spiral now. US\$ 7 billion were committed by the international community to rebuild Lebanese infrastructure that was destroyed by Israel last summer, but the money cannot be spent because of the current political and security situation. A massive exodus of intelligentsia and young people is ongoing.

17. She also addressed the situation in the Palestinian camps in Lebanon that are now threatening the Lebanese situation. From 1994 to 2004, the West accepted the regionalisation of the Lebanese question and developments there were not very much in the political focus. Since 2004, a very practical approach by the West has started. The US Syria Sanctions Act was passed, UN resolution 1559, and the Paris I to III conferences were held. Lebanon is now currently being considered as very important for the West. US President Bush, for example, regularly receives Lebanese parliamentarians, former ministers and others. Other UN resolutions have been passed since 2004 and UN resolution 1701 recently mandated the judgement of the assassination of former Prime Minister Hariri under Chapter VII of the UN Charter. However, the more the international community becomes involved in Lebanon, the further away an intra-Lebanese agreement seems to be. We should not try to find easy solutions and explanations such as 'Muslims against Christians'. The Lebanese system is a fragile, faith-based system ever since its independence in 1943. Prime Minister Hariri's vision for a modern state failed because it was linked to peace in the Middle East. The speaker stressed that any solution must be a Lebanese solution and that powerful Western ambassadors "must not behave like former High Commissioners". She appraised the UNIFIL mission, but also mentioned that 40,000 UNIFIL troops and 80,000 Lebanese army

troops are stationed in the 80 km of South Lebanon and that a political solution is still missing. The current situations in Lebanon and Iraq are so bad that Syria has little interest in negotiating.

18. Issa Goraieb, Columnist for the Beirut francophone daily L'Orient-Le Jour, gave the third presentation that he called 'Endless Storms over the Cedar Revolution'. He talked about the Lebanese political developments over the past years and he retold the most important events. Lebanon has been on the way to becoming free from foreign rule: UN resolution 1559 led to the repatriation of Syrian occupying forces. One million people demonstrated against the assassination of former Prime Minister Hariri on 14 February 2005. This so-called 'Beirut Spring' and 'Cedar Revolution' also led to the first free elections since 1972. Today, most Lebanese appreciate the UNIFIL mission that was born out of a "terrible onslaught of violence and destruction" after the war with Israel in summer 2006 that Goraieb called "actually a proxy confrontation between Syria and Israel". Recently, all Hezbollah and Amal party ministers pulled out of PM Siniora's government in criticism of his hasty admittance of an international tribunal for the investigation of the Hariri assassination, fearing that this would go against the interest of their Syrian ally. The Speaker of the Lebanese Parliament, Nabih Berri, blocked the parliament on a vote for the international tribunal. President Emile Lahoud is also trying to block politics by not recognising the current government. The assassination of Syrian-critical journalists and politicians in recent years has also contributed to the current instability in Lebanon. The Secretary General of the Arab League, Amro Moussa, did recently try to mediate in Lebanon, but in vain. The terror campaign against Lebanon has also intensified recently. The current ministers and parliamentarians live in total seclusion or are permanently abroad because they fear to be targeted as well.

19. The group 'Fatah al-Islam' that wants to establish an Islamic emirate in Lebanon has been fought by the Lebanese army for the last six months. It is an international group and many have come from Syria through the at least 100 illegal border crossings, the most famous one being the 'Arafat trail'. They are supported by Syria while they would not be allowed on Syrian territory. The heart of the Lebanese problems lies in Damascus, but there lies also the solution. Syria does not want diplomatic relations with Lebanon and has never recognised Lebanon or its borders. Nevertheless, a collapse of the current Syrian Baathist regime could create another chaotic situation in the Middle East. The US has not yet come to terms with the Middle East and there have not been enough carrots and sticks until now.

20. The three presentations were followed by comments and a Q&A session. One participant argued that there has to be a settlement for the Golan Heights problem first, while another participant argued that there is no link to the situation in Lebanon and that the only solution would be the disarmament of Hezbollah and that Syria gives up its dreams of an enlarged Syria. It was stressed that the problems in Lebanon could not be reduced to the existence of Hezbollah, but have a long history. The prevention of smuggling of arms into Lebanon was criticised as not being sufficient enough.

21. Mr Ghorayeb responded that a new "national pact" is maybe needed for Lebanon. The Christian leader, Michel Aoun, an ally of Hezbollah, wants to become the Lebanese president and he believes in the strong national orientation of Hezbollah. He also said that Iran benefits from the destabilisation of Lebanon.

22. Ms Picard responded that the new UN tribunal in Lebanon would be completely in the hands of the UN, not in those of the Lebanon. Hezbollah was created in 1982 as a Lebanese movement to fight against Israeli occupation and it uses this argument today to keep hold of its weapons. UNIFIL's mission is to de-militarise the area between the Litani River and the UN blue line, but not to disarm Hezbollah or to watch the borders between Syria and Lebanon. In response to a question on who would benefit from the destabilisation, Ms Picard said that Lebanese actors themselves get solidarity from their communities for maintaining the current chaos. Iran is a mighty player in the region that tries to react against US policy in the region through proxies such as Hezbollah. A settlement for the Golan Heights issue would not necessarily solve the Lebanese situation, in her view.

23. Mr Forcieri responded that UNIFIL is acting within a sovereign state and that its task is to assist the Lebanese government and army to extend sovereignty to the whole Lebanese territory. International assistance is planned for surveillance over the borders between Syria and Lebanon, but this is not a UN task. Another civil war might take place in Lebanon, but the situation might also turn for the better. A political solution, involving the US, the UN and Russia is needed. Moderate Arab governments as well as Syria also have to be engaged.

III. SESSION 3 - CIVIL SOCIETY AND MEDIA IN MENA

24. Sessions on the second day addressed the role and development of civil society and media in the MENA region, as well as recent developments in the NATO Mediterranean Dialogue (MD) and Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI).

25. Thomas McGrath, who is responsible for Media, Communication and Information for the EuroMed programme at the European Commission, gave the first presentation. He described the EU strategy to promote freedom of expression and media independence throughout the region. He started with critical remarks about the different names and concepts for the MENA region (Greater Middle East, Wider Middle East, Mediterranean Dialogue, Barcelona Process, Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, European Neighbourhood Policy etc.) and stated that a proliferation of strategies and visions for the region is taking place. The EU is dealing with the region because the Mediterranean and the Middle East is Europe's backyard. The European Security Strategy (ESS) identifies the threats of terrorism, proliferation of WMD, regional conflicts, rogue states, organised crime and others. But for the European Commission, the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership is the bulwark and the EU has been active in the MENA region since 1995, mainly through the Barcelona Process (BP). Put into context, the BP started after the 1993 Madrid Peace Conference that seemed to open the door for a comprehensive peace agreement in the Middle East. The aspirations lay in the fields of peace, prosperity and dialogue and the need for and importance of cultural dialogue was stressed from the beginning.

26. On the topic of why Europe should help in the MENA region, Mr McGrath mentioned mainly three issues: demography and migration, energy and self-interest. By 2020, the Middle East and North Africa region will have as many inhabitants as the EU, between 450 and 500 million people and the migration to Europe is expected to rise. "Maghreb is our Mexico", he added. Since the MENA region is the owner of the world's main petrol and gas reserves, it should be a long-term energy partner as well. The EU is also the number one trading partner of the MENA region.

27. The media situation in the MENA region is not particularly encouraging. Many media are state-owned, Internet filtering takes

place in many countries, especially in Syria, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, UAE, Yemen, and there is a growing list of assassinated journalists. The dialogue with the MENA region went into a downwards spiral with the Muhammad cartoons crisis. Mr McGrath believes that there is no straightforward solution. Freedom of religion is a fundamental right and so is freedom of speech and it has to be used carefully and wisely. The EU is thus trying to promote quality of information in the MENA region, involving the producers of information, the multipliers, the censors and state agents and the access to information.

28. The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership mechanisms exist for dialogue at a political, economic, social and cultural level and this dialogue also includes the field of media. The European Commission tries to engage with all kinds of media in MENA. A project was launched in Jordan recently, with the agenda and the impetus provided by MENA media representatives themselves. The EU asked them to develop strategies and needs with which the EU could help them and a task force consisting of 500 media representatives from 37 countries provided this information. The EU is pursuing several aims with this initiative. The visibility of the Barcelona process and the EMP should be increased in the MENA region. Training and networking, as well as safety and security for journalists are also important aims, as are the promotion of freedom of expression and independent media, gender equality and the struggle against xenophobia and racism.

29. Ambassador Mahmoud Kassem of the Ibn Khaldoun Centre for Development in Cairo gave the second presentation of the session and described efforts to develop civil society in the MENA region as a whole. He first reminded the audience that MENA is a very diverse region, influenced by different economic, political and social developments, but all countries have one thing in common, the lack of democratic development. In some countries, for example Mauritania, Jordan, Bahrain and Qatar, we are seeing shy measures of the legislature to limit the powers of the government. Careful reforms are taking place in Egypt, but they are always accompanied by human rights violations. Development in general faces structural difficulties in the areas of governance, gender, employment and trade. Beyond oil as a commodity, there is little economic integration into the outside world and little competitiveness.

30. The major challenges in the region are political conflicts and unemployment. The MENA region should create 4-5 million jobs per year to keep up with the population growth. Creating jobs would help also help to face the prevailing insecurity. It could be helpful for the West to give support to grass-root level civil society initiatives etc. But he questions whether civil society organisations in the MENA region are active and effective. In the region, civil society organisations are not necessarily liberal. They can also be structured like the states in an autocratic and anti-liberal way.

31. Recently, political awareness has been raised and discussions on civil society are taking place in the MENA countries themselves. A revived Western attention to the region is a positive development, even if it is motivated by the negative developments in Palestine, Iraq, Lebanon, Afghanistan, Iran, Sudan, Somalia and by the 'fight against terrorism'. The international community can support civil society developments by raising awareness on a broad scale, encouraging accountability and with mobilising civil society as advocates, watchdogs, and service providers. They might however face reluctance from some governments in the region. Civil society organisations (CSOs), if supported, can complement the efforts of international bodies such as the UN in the areas of conflict prevention, weapons trade, preventive diplomacy, human rights etc. A number of CSOs are working in this field, but their skills are rarely recognised or used effectively.

32. The third presentation on the specific circumstances of Palestinian civil society was outlined by Lilian Feidy, Secretary General of MIFTAH, the Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue and Democracy. Ms Feidy first gave an historical overview of Palestinian civil society developments, starting with Ottoman rule under which there were several ethnical, tribal, and kinship-based associations that engaged in and organised the lives of different communities. Later unions, charitable societies, clubs and professional associations developed to serve the Palestinian need, often also in connection with Palestinian refugees. The advent of the PLO led to modern political associations and civil society also played an important role in resistance against Israel.

33. Today, Palestinian civil society is a highly criticised success story. These organisations are contributing positively to the democratic transformation in society and to the political system by playing the role of opposition and launching advocacy. They are also providing services to the people, enhancing the culture of dialogue and respect for human rights, women and democracy. There is criticism, however, of duplications, a lack of sustainability of projects, as well as a lack of accountability and internal democracy. Ms Feidy concluded by saying that future Palestinian civil society developments will depend on the political situation that is currently adversely affecting various social structures, as well as on a functioning legal system, the enforcement of the rule of law and the protection of civil liberties.

34. The three presentations were followed by questions and comments. It was asked how the NATO PA could contribute to strengthen civil society developments and their counterparts from MENA parliaments. It was also added that engineers, surgeons and other professionals have associations who often comprise important civil society activities. The concept 'MENA' in general was criticised by stressing again the differences of every MENA country. It was also criticised that Western NGOs are often only working in capitals, e. g. in Amman, Jordan, but neglect the countryside with their development projects. Another obstacle to economic development that was mentioned is the unproportionally high military expenditure in most MENA countries.

35. Ms Feidy replied that the West Bank and Gaza strip and its institutions are linked and little has changed with the take-over of Hamas in Gaza. Her organisation, for example, is keeping contact with videoconferences. The only remaining problem is a transfer of money between the two entities because even Arab banks are currently afraid of doing this. She said that a third party intervention, for example from Saudi Arabia, Jordan, or a Western country, would be needed to solve the current Palestinian crisis. Ms Feidy mentioned that the Palestinians are also suffering from their own authorities, but much more so from the Israeli occupation that prevents civil society and public life through hundreds of checkpoints in the West Bank, through many restrictions and incursions. People residing in the West Bank, for example, can no longer travel to Jerusalem.

36. Ambassador Kassem replied to the question on how parliaments could be strengthened that not even all MENA countries have a parliament and that the existing ones are not necessarily developed ones. To strengthen them, the number of exchange meetings should be increased, so that NATO PA gets used to how parliamentarians in the MENA region look at developments.

He also defended the use of the term 'MENA' mentioning that a common religion, language and Arab culture have a major effect in the MENA region.

37. Mr McGrath replied that the concept 'Broader Middle East and North Africa' was certainly a US construct, but that the EU is using a different approach. He also mentioned that there is no other foreign policy question that divides Europe and the US so much as the Middle East and Iraq. For the US, dealing with these countries is only a question of security, while for Europe it is dealing with its neighbours. The US has a rather assertive and impatient approach, while Europe is more patient. In order to guarantee Europe's security and prosperity we have to care for our Mediterranean neighbours. He stressed again that the EU's projects are not imposed on the MENA countries, but that the EMP's ethos is to build the partnership on consensus and shared ownership.

IV. SESSION 4 - RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN THE NATO MEDITERRANEAN DIALOGUE (MD) AND THE ISTANBUL COOPERATION INITIATIVE (ICI)

38. The fourth and final session focused on recent NATO developments concerning its Mediterranean Dialogue (MD), Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI) and Operation Active Endeavour in the Mediterranean, currently NATO's only military mission based on Article 5 of the Washington Treaty.

39. In the first presentation, Alberto Bin of NATO's Political Affairs and Security Policy Division informed NATO PA members of the recent NATO Training Cooperation Initiative towards MD and ICI countries that was launched at the 2006 Riga Summit. The aims of this initiative are to build an expanding network of NATO activities. NATO is willing to share its own developments of the last 60 years, especially in the important fields of education and training. Another aim is to further the MD and ICI programs, the interoperability of forces, the fight against terrorism and the modernisation of the armed forces.

40. The contents of the initiative are the expansion of existing opportunities for training and education, building on what NATO has already established in the MD and ICI networks. A Middle East faculty is to be established at the NATO Defense College in Rome, the name for this is yet to be determined. At this faculty, academics and professionals from MENA countries will research and teach, thus fostering NATO's dialogue with the region itself. Courses on the MENA region with a mix of strategic and operational levels will be held for high-level military and civilian personnel.

41. The planned Regional Training Center will be under joint MENA country and NATO ownership. An assessment of the needs and priorities of the MENA partner countries has taken place through expert teams from NATO to the seven MD and four ICI countries. All 11 countries were also given a questionnaire to find out their needs and wishes. Based on these two assessments, NATO will now tailor the initiative. It is planning to come up with follow-up action before the summer break in August, making sure it has the full involvement of the partners.

42. Mr Bin concluded his presentation by looking at future opportunities and challenges. The opportunities are the existence of a wide network of training and institutions and that interested countries might join NATO's MD and ICI programmes. The challenges are various conflicts in the MENA region, especially the Middle East conflict that also affects NATO's work. A solution to the conflict would make life easier. NATO is also sometimes facing too high expectations of what it can do in the region. It can provide knowledge and added value, but is a defence and security organisation above all. Securing funding for the MD and ICI initiatives will also remain a challenge, but despite all of this, Mr Bin stressed the two major assets, being the involvement of partners through joint ownership of projects as well as a networking that will bring the MD and ICI countries closer to NATO.

43. Rear Admiral Tony Rix, the new Chief of Staff of CC Mar/AFSOUTH, gave the second presentation. He briefed participants on recent political and military developments with regard to Operation Active Endeavour (OAE) in the Mediterranean. OAE has been running for five years now and its general aim is to demonstrate NATO's resolve to defer, defend, disrupt and protect against terrorism. Geographically, the mission focuses on the Mediterranean Sea and its shores, but also extends to the Black Sea Region, the Eastern part of the Atlantic, as well as the Arabian Peninsula and the Red Sea. The end state of the mission would be reached if all national states around the Mediterranean could deal with maritime terrorism effectively themselves. So far, NATO has been able to demonstrate its capabilities in the fight against terrorism and to establish a strategic and practical co-operation network. Terrorist and other illegal activities in the Mediterranean could be reduced and OAE is succeeding on a strategic, operational and tactical level. Several non-NATO members have also joined OAE or are in the process of joining the OAE, including Russia, Ukraine, Israel, Albania, Croatia, Algeria, Morocco, Georgia, Sweden and Finland. OAE is also co-operating with other missions, e. g. FRONTEX of the EU. A by-product of OAE is NATO's Maritime Situational Awareness (MSA) that leads to a deeper understanding of military and non-military events and activities associated with the maritime environment that are relevant for current and future NATO operations and exercises.

44. The following questions included a question about the co-operation between NATO and EU in the maritime field and how NATO sees EU aspirations to have its own EU maritime military capabilities. It was also asked whether OAE could be extended to the Black Sea and how the co-operation with the French navy is working. Other questions included whether the operation had experienced serious incidents in the Mediterranean so far and whether it is also dealing with illegal immigration.

45. RAdm Rix replied that Active Endeavour is not only a military mission and that NATO is trying to co-ordinate with the EU to avoid duplications. An extension to the Black Sea is not necessary at the moment because Turkey is running the 'Black Sea Harmony' mission there. Active Endeavour has prevented numerous events over the past 12 months and a greater awareness now exists of all the bad things happening in the Mediterranean, including drug smuggling, weapons trade, illegal migration etc. The operation is an anti-terrorism activity mainly, but all this information is given to the relevant institutions. France is participating in navy operations and the co-operation is working well.

46. The two-day seminar in Naples offered excellent opportunities for parliamentarians from NATO and Mediterranean Associate

Countries to inform themselves about and to discuss current NATO-relevant political developments in selected fields. Naples, as an important and old Mediterranean city offered a fine setting for the meeting.