



**AD HOC COMMITTEE ON
ENERGY, ENVIRONMENT AND WATER**

DRAFT MINUTES

**of the meeting held in Amman, Jordan
on 12 March 2010**

1. Opening remarks by the Committee Chair Mr. Stefan SCHENNACH

The Chair opened the meeting by welcoming all committee members and observers to the 3rd meeting of the Ad Hoc Committee under Austrian Chairmanship. He then welcomed those colleagues attending for the first time, in particular Mr. Mongi **CHERIF** from Tunisia who follows Mr. **BOUHRIZI** as new co-chair. The Chair gave a brief overview of the work of the Ad Hoc Committee under his chairmanship, mentioning the meetings held in Vienna and Linz in 2009 and the technical visits carried out around those meetings.

He then sketched out the course of the current meeting, mentioning that the co-rapporteurs would present their reports and recommendations one after another and that each presentation would be followed by a discussion and the adoption of draft recommendations by the members of the Ad Hoc Committee. The Chair also informed the participants that H.E. Mr. Hazem **MALHAS**, Minister of Environment of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, would not be able to make his presentation due to an important commitment abroad.

2. Adoption of the draft agenda

The agenda of the meeting was adopted.

3. Approval of the minutes of the meeting held in Linz from 12 to 13 October 2009

The minutes of the last meeting of the Ad Hoc Committee on Energy, Environment and Water, held in Linz from 12 to 13 October 2009 were adopted.

4. Keynote speech

The keynote speech had to be cancelled (see above 1).

5. Report 1: Implementation of the Mediterranean Solar Plan

Rapporteur: Mr. Rosario Georgio COSTA (Italy)

Mr. **COSTA** (Italy) presented the main findings of the report on the Mediterranean Solar Plan as well as the draft recommendations resulting from it.

During the discussion, the following delegates asked questions or made comments:

The Chair mentioned a study being carried out by the Euro-Mediterranean University (EMUNI) on the topic of eco-engineering and that while EMUNI was currently looking for partner universities, it would start its activities with the new curriculum in October 2010. He also mentioned that two trade fairs on best practices in renewable energy will probably be held in Jordan and Morocco.

Mr. **NARJISSE** (Morocco) argued that high costs were the most pressing problem of solar energy and that ways had to be found to reduce them. At the same time the number of users would have to be increased and together with innovations, a favourable legislative framework and subsidies from the Union for the Mediterranean and other international donors, solar power could become very important. This would then also have a positive impact on the strained water resources in the region.

The rapporteur Mr. **COSTA** (Italy) mentioned that a lot of research in the field of solar power was currently taking place at Italian universities and that countries had to encourage and insist on research as a prerequisite for progress in using solar energy.

Mr. **ZERGDJ** (Morocco) emphasized the fact that as oil resources are diminishing, it was very important to find alternatives. However, renewable energy would only be competitive at a price of 150 USD per barrel or above.

Ms. **AYALA SENDER** (EP, S&D) raised the following points:

- identify funds and exchange that information;
- prioritise investments in alternative energy;
- show investment opportunities to companies;
- create a specific framework to achieve these goals including follow-up evaluation in order to convince others to do the same.

Mr. **HELAL** (Egypt) mentioned that with increasing oil prices the future will become very difficult for the southern partners and that support from the northern countries will be needed.

Ms. **AUKEN** (EP, Greens) mentioned that one of the important benefits of investing in renewable energy sources was the creation of job opportunities.

Adoption of the report:

The recommendations of the report were adopted by the Ad-Hoc Committee unanimously without abstentions, no amendments had been tabled.

6. Report 2: Water Management

Co-rapporteurs: Mr. Abdellah BENTOUMI (Algeria) and Mr. Robert DEL PICCHIA (France)

Mr. **BENTOUMI** (Algeria) started presenting the report and the draft recommendations by mentioning some key issues related to water management in the Mediterranean region:

- the indispensable need to preserve water resources as water equals life,
- the need to find a balance between diminishing water resources and increasing demand by reducing and/or rationalising water use in all sectors;
- the detrimental impact of pollution;
- the need to educate the citizens;
- the understanding that it is a common problem of the north and the south; and
- the urgency of finding solutions or else risk an aggravation of the situation entailing high costs.

Mr. **DEL PICCHIA** (France) went on by pointing out the discrepancy prevailing in southern countries between water scarcity and the abundance of resources in terms of sunshine and often oil. Knowing that an important amount of water is being lost unused, the main question is how to manage water resources efficiently. Parliamentarians should therefore ask politicians for action while providing them with specific solutions. One such solution would be to price water realistically by reflecting infrastructure development, another one would be to engage in close regional and international cooperation regarding water resources.

During the discussion, the following delegates asked questions or made comments:

The Chair mentioned that the Ad-Hoc Committee was dealing with the issue of water precisely because there were more than purely economical aspects to the problem.

Mr. **ABU AYYASH** (Palestine) stated that Israel was using water as a weapon against the Palestinians who have less than one third of the amount of water that is available to the Israeli population.

Mr. **WHBEE** (Israel) commented that water was indeed a very important topic and that Israel has significant experience in this field (e.g. irrigation and desalination). Israel is therefore ready to share its experience and know-how through international cooperation.

The Chair then went through the amendments submitted by Sweden and the EP. In Amendment 2 a linguistic change was made to the French version and in Amendment 3 it was decided to delete the part after "...regional development". All other amendments were accepted.

Adoption of the report:

The recommendations of the report including six amendments tabled were adopted by the Ad-Hoc Committee unanimously without abstentions.

7. Special Report: The Situation in the Jordan Valley

Co-rapporteurs: Mr. Stefan SCHENNACH (Austria), Mr. Mongi CHERIF (Tunisia) and Ms. Antonya PARVANOV (European Parliament)

The Chair started out by giving an overview of the genesis of the special report, mentioning as the starting point a letter by the Vice-President of the EP Rodi KRATSA-TSAGAROPOULOU to the EMPA-Bureau regarding the possibility of having the Jordan Valley introduced on the UNESCO World Heritage list. He insisted on the fact that the report was part of an ongoing process or dialogue that will eventually lead to having both the Dead Sea and the Jordan Valley on the UNESCO list. Finally he called upon all countries present in the Committee to ratify the UN-Convention on the Law of the Non-navigational Uses of International Watercourses adopted by the United Nations on 21 May 1997, which has been ratified by 16 countries so far but would need the ratification of 35 countries in order to enter into force.

Ms. **PARVANOV** (EP, Liberals and Democrats) then reported on the Fact Finding mission of the Ad Hoc Committee to Jordan, Israel and the West Bank from 29 January to 1 February 2010. She went on to give an overview of the recommendations of the special report and concluded by saying how much the subject of water and peace is interconnected in the region.

Mr. **CHERIF** (Tunisia) stated that the whole world was worried about the unequal distribution of water in the region and he insisted that strong cooperation and an important amount of goodwill would be needed in order to reduce the suffering of all peoples in the region and to solve the problem for the generations to come. He went on to say that the whole ecosystem around the Dead Sea was under stress from the current water situation and he welcomed the idea of having the Dead Sea and the Jordan Valley as UNESCO World Heritage sites.

During the discussion, the following delegates asked questions or made comments:

The Chair took note that amendment 7 was agreed upon as no objections were made. He then went on to say that a seminar would be held in due course with the participation of the three co-chairs as well as with Israel, Jordan and the Palestinian Authority in order to continue the discussion on the topics covered by the special report.

Mr. **WHBEE** (Israel) stated that his country had some experience in peace-talks with Arab states regarding water issues and he invited Mr. Cherif to visit and to get all the information that was also given to the members of the Fact Finding mission. He went on to say that regarding the recommendations of the Committee he had some reservations. In particular it should not be recommended to alter existing agreements and that Israel would not revisit such agreements. Furthermore, he added that the technical committees between Israel and the Palestinians have always worked, even in times of crisis. Finally, he mentioned that Israel has been a partner in the Red to Dead Sea Canal project from the beginning and that it was ready to contribute funding to its realisation.

Mr. **ABU AYYASH** (Palestine) mentioned the exiting environmental concerns regarding the Red-Dead Canal project. He also blamed Israel for contributing to the problem of lacking sewage treatment plants by not issuing any permits in area C. He therefore called upon Israel to abide by the rules and agreements.

Adoption of the report:

The recommendations of the report including one amendment of the Swedish delegation were adopted by the Ad-Hoc Committee.

8. Any other business

Mr. **ALSO'OD** (Jordan) welcomed the reports and the planned seminar on the Jordan Valley and emphasized that regional cooperation was the key to solving the existing problems.

Mr. **RAIVO** from Estonia asked who would be financing affordable renewable energy in the region. **The Chair** replied that development Banks, the European Commission, UNEP and others had special funds for renewable energy and that in the future representatives of these institutions would be invited to meetings of the Ad Hoc Committee.

The Chair concluded the meeting by informing the members and observers that the Ad Hoc Committee would very probably be transformed into a standing Committee of the EMPA.