

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

Delegation for relations with the Maghreb countries and the Arab Maghreb Union

II European Parliament/Libya interparliamentary meeting
27 and 28 January 2004
Brussels

Report by Gerardo Galeote Quecedo, chairman of the delegation

I. Introduction

After a visit by a working group of the delegation for relations with the Maghreb countries to Libya from 13 to 17 June 2002, a delegation from the General People's Congress of Libya accepted an invitation from the chairman and visited Brussels. The delegation was made up of the Vice-chairman and five members of the Congress. Also taking part was the First Secretary of the General People's Committee from the Libyan Embassy. The talks were relaxed and topics of interest to both parties were covered openly.

II. Topics covered

1. Domestic policy

a) Work of the General People's Congress

In the various discussions, the Libyan delegation emphasised the special rôle of the General People's Congress as a democratic institution. In their opinion, Libya was an example of a direct democracy, similar to ancient Greece, where, in the ultimate analysis, the people took political decisions. The delegation outlined its conviction that everyone had the right to take part in forming policy and that all representatives of society should be present. Decisions should be adopted by majority. Naturally, there would also be an opposition. However, this did not mean that it could impose its point of view using violence.

b) Basic principles

The Libyan delegation asserted that freedom was organised and that the people could express itself in an organised fashion. Organised freedom and discipline were the main characteristics of Libyan society.

The main thrusts of Libyan foreign policy were the defence of the rule of law and sovereignty of other countries, respect for UN resolutions, the primacy of international law over national law and the eradication of poverty.

Likewise, they stated that Libya defended freedom of the press, freedom of opinion and human rights. The revolutionary leader's Green Book contained the basic tenets in this area. There followed criticism on the part of some Members of the European Parliament, which was refuted by the delegation from the General People's Congress of Libya. In so doing, the Libyan

representatives denied the existence of political prisoners and called for the parliamentarians to view the system first-hand.

Muammar Al Qadhafi, leader of the revolution, was described as an historic figure, whose powers were clearly subject to controls. He had the power to make proposals, but the people had the final say. With this in mind, the Libyan delegation mentioned the possibility of the leader of the revolution making a visit to the EP.

c) Women's place in society

This point was explained by the only female member of the delegation, a doctor trained in Sweden. According to her, Western media had presented a false image of the position of women in Libya. There was no difference between men and women; women accounted for 50% of university students and there were women in all professions: ambassadors, doctors, professors and teachers. Women could apply for divorces and get custody of children.

d) Immigration

On this issue both sides were in full agreement. Necessary measures included combating the causes of immigration and calling for increased development and growth to check this phenomenon.

e) Bulgarian doctors

The delegation spoke of how 400 children had caught the AIDS virus as a consequence of mistaken treatment received at the hands of Bulgarian health workers at a hospital in Libya. The case was being debated exclusively in the courts, which were free and independent.

2. Foreign policy

a) Israeli-Palestinian conflict

From the Libyan delegation's point of view, blame for this conflict lay solely in the hands of the Israeli Government. They said that the Palestinian people was being exterminated by Israeli aggression in a situation reminiscent of the Holocaust. Violence had to be rejected as a solution to the conflict. In this context, the delegation referred to the Green Book written by the leader of the revolution and a copy was then presented to EP staff.

b) Iraq

Libya was opposed to any foreign military presence in Iraq. Each country deserved respect for its sovereignty. The delegation stated that Libya it was not cooperating with the government installed by the United States. Only the UN had the authority to assume a fully responsible role in the reconstruction of the country.

c) AMU (Arab Maghreb Union)

This organisation was of great importance to Libya, given that it played an active role in developing infrastructure. Nevertheless, the Sahara conflict was still an obstacle to future development.

d) Disarmament

This question had been discussed by the United States, the United Kingdom and Libya. The Libyan delegation was convinced of the importance of disarmament, but not under external pressure.

3. Relations with the EU

The delegation recalled how Libya had shown interest in participating in the Barcelona Process but had always been excluded. They hoped a new era had begun. They also said that Israel's participation in the process was not an obstacle for Libya.

The Commission representative spoke about events over the past few months:

In June 2003 a new Prime Minister was named; in September 2003 sanctions were lifted, the Spanish Prime Minister travelled to Libya and there was a show of willingness to allow checks on chemical and nuclear weapons; at the end of December 2003 there was an important phone call between the Commission President and the leader of the revolution, an invitation from the British Foreign Office, a solution to the UTA case, and talks at the Commission the day before on admitting Libya to the Barcelona Process. However, Libya could not expect to participate in this process choosing the conditions à la carte, because this was not possible for many countries. In any case, the Commission was willing to travel to Libya and start negotiations with the Libyan Government.

In a two-way conversation, the chairman of the Committee on Foreign Affairs pointed out that Libya would not be able to participate in the Barcelona Process until the Libyan authorities accepted responsibility for the fire at the 'La Belle' disco in Berlin.

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2nd EP-Libya interparliamentary meeting

Tuesday, 27 January 2004
Wednesday, 28 January 2004

BRUSSELS

WORK PROGRAMME

Monday, 26 January

10.30 Arrival of Libyan delegation at Zaventem Airport
 [flight 8U 920 - Afriqiyah Airways]
 and transfer to

Hilton Hotel

38 Boulevard de Waterloo, Brussels, BE 1000
Tel: [+32] 2-5041111 Fax: [+32] 2-5042111

Afternoon Programme organised by the Libyan EU mission

Tuesday, 27 January

08.15 Departure from the Hilton Hotel to the European Parliament

08.45 Arrival of the Libyan delegation at the European Parliament
 *The delegation will be greeted by Mrs Pasqualina Napoletano, 1st Vice-chairman of the
 EP delegation*

Rue Wiertz, B-1047 Brussels - Tel: 02 284 21 11

- *Entry by Paul-Henri Spaak (PHS) building*

09.00 Participation in meeting of foreign affairs committee - debate

- *Building: PHS, room: P1A002, Tel: [+02.28] 44 022 / 44 415*

10.15 Meeting with Mr Elmar **Brok**, chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee

- 10.30
 - *Building: Paul-Henri Spaak, 3rd floor, protocol room No 1*
 - 2nd EP/Libya meeting work session
 - *Building: Altiero Spinelli, room: A5E2, Tel: [+02.28] 48 116 / 46 737*
- 12.30
 - Press conference with Mr Galeote Quecedo and Mr Ahmed Mohamed Ibrahim **[to be confirmed]**
 - *Building: PHS, room: P0A50, Tel: [+02.28] 44 414*
- 13.00
 - Lunch hosted by Mr Gerardo Galeote Quecedo, chairman of the delegation for relations with the Maghreb countries and the Arab Maghreb Union
 - *Presidential room, building: Paul-Henri Spaak, 12th floor*

Bilateral meetings with EP political groups:

- *Building: Altiero Spinelli, room: A5E2, Tel: [+02.28] 48 116 / 46 737*

- 14.45
 - Confederal Group of the European United Left/Nordic Green Left **[GUE/NGL]**
 - Mr Pedro **Marset Campos**
- 15.15
 - Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) and European Democrats **[PPE-DE]**
 - Mr Hans-Gert **Poettering**, Mr Gerardo **Galeote Quecedo**, Mr Hughes **Martin**, Mr Francesco **Fiori** and General Philippe **Morillon**
- 16.00
 - Group of the European Liberal, Democrat and Reform Party **[ELDR]**
 - Baroness **Nicholson of Winterbourne**, Mr Joan **Vallvé** and Mr Bob **Van Den Bos**
- 16.30
 - Group of the Party of European Socialists **[PSE]**
 - Mrs Pasqualina **Napoletano**, Mrs Catherine **Lalumière**, Mr Alexandros **Baltas** and Mr Jan Marinus **Wiersma**
- 17.15
 - Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance **[Verts/ALE]**
 - Mr Per **Gahrton**
- 17.45
 - Union for Europe of the Nations Group **[UEN]**
 - Mr Gerard **Collins** and Mr Morgens **Camre**
- 18.30
 - Return to the Hilton Hotel

Wednesday, 28 January

- 09.30
 - The Libyan delegation meets the Speaker of the Belgian House of Representatives, Mr Hermann De Croo
 - *Palais de la Nation - Rue de Louvain 13, 1000 Brussels*
- 10.30
 - Tour of the city of Brussels

- 12.00 Arrival at the European Parliament
- 12.15 Meeting with Mr Renzo **Imbeni**, Vice-president of the EP responsible for Euro-Mediterranean dialogue and the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly
• *Building: Paul-Henri Spaak, 3rd floor, protocol room No1*
- 13.00 Lunch hosted by Mr Renzo Imbeni, Vice-president of the European Parliament, standing in for Mr Pat Cox, President of the European Parliament
• *Building: Altiero Spinelli, Members' restaurant*
- 15.00 The Libyan delegation will attend a plenary session of the European Parliament (Diplomatic Gallery). Welcome by the Presidency

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LIBYAN DELEGATION

Mr Ahmed	MOHAMED IBRAHIM	President of the delegation Vice-president of the General People's Congress
Dr Mohamed	ABDULLA HARARI	Member of the General People's Congress
Mr Ragab	MUFFTAH BOUDABOUS	Member of the General People's Congress
Mr Khalifa	AISSA AZABI	Member of the General People's Congress
Dr Soad	MOHAMED FETOURI	Member of the General People's Congress
Mr Hameid	KHALIFA ALI	Member of the General People's Congress
Mr Tahar	HASSAN DEBACHE	Deputy Director of the European Affairs Department of the Foreign Ministry

Libyan Mission to the EU

Mr Hamed	AHMED ELHOUDERI	Head of Mission
Mr Alhadi	HADEIBA	Adviser