



13th Conférence parlementaire Afro-Arabe

Rabat, 25-27 June 2013

FINAL COMMUNIQUE

Final Communiqué of 13th Afro-Arab Parliamentary Conference

At the invitation of the Parliament of the Kingdom of Morocco, the 13th Afro-Arab Parliamentary Conference took place in Rabat on 26 and 27 June 2013.

The following delegations representing the National Parliaments of African and Arab countries participated in the Conference : Algeria, Bahreïn, Burkina Faso, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Egypt, , Gabon, Ghana, Equatorial Guinea , Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Nigeria, Palestine, Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Sudan, Chad, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates and Yemen.

Representatives from the following organizations took part in the conference as observers: the League of Arab States, the Consultative Council of the Union of Arab Maghreb, the Parliamentary Union of Islamic Cooperation, the Parliament of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the IPU-IGAD.

Inaugural session

The inaugural session took place at the Parliament of Morocco under the chairmanship of Dr Mohamed Cheikh Biadillah, President of the House of Councillors. At his sides, there were the Honourable Rose Mukantabana, Speaker of the House of Deputies of Rwanda et Chairperson of the Executive Committee of the African Parliamentary Union, the Representative of the President of Arab Interparliamentary Union, Mr Abdullah Al Dussary and the Secretaries General of the two Unions.

In his opening address, the President of the House of Councillors, Dr Mohamed Cheikh Biadillah, made two major observations regarding the convening of this 13th Afro-Arab Conference: its convening at a time when a number of African and Arab countries are undergoing dynamic changes and the extreme timeliness of the themes placed on the agenda of this important conference.

Mr Biadillah also pointed out the rapid changes having taken place on the Arab political scene thanks to the movement of the Arab spring as well as the challenges posed by terrorism and organized crime, thus giving rise to a dual situation: some countries are enjoying peace, stability and development while others are threatened by instability, terrorism, violence and organized crime.

The President of the House of Councillors put emphasis on the timely theme of religions and sacred places while considering that the developments related to these two subjects induce us to engage in collective thinking in order to find the mechanisms that can guarantee respect for religions and sacred places, protection of the various national cultures without undermining the values of social unity and respect for the right to the political participation and representation of religious and cultural minorities.

In the same vein, it is urgent to strengthen the channels of dialogue among African and Arab communities and consolidate the foundations of conciliation and coexistence while involving African and Arab Parliaments in the production of legislations and laws and the contribution to the development of efficient public policies in such a way as to combat all forms of discrimination whatsoever.

Following the welcome speech of the President of the House of Councillors, **the Chairperson of the Executive Committee of African parliamentary Union** delivered his speech.

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After having expressed, on behalf of the African Parliamentary Union, her deep gratitude and to Morocco for having hosted this conference which follows that held in Abuja in April 2009, the Hon. Rose Mukantabana greeted this organization of the 13th conference after a period marked by the difficulty in finding a host country. She added that this conference will allow resume with Afro-Arab Parliamentary Dialogue of which the importance could not be questioned.

Talking about the international situation, the Chairperson of the APU Executive Committee considered that it showed heavy uncertainties on the future of populations of our countries. Indeed, the international economic relations always remained marked by injustices.

On the African continent, the Chairperson indicated that the growth rate in certain countries did not settle insufficiencies at the social level because a lot of populations continue to suffer from poverty and its effects. So, she invited investors to be interested in Africa which not only has big and still unexploited potentialities in several sectors, but also offers today one of the highest investment return rate in the world.

Henceforth, the importance of the economic theme included in the conference agenda on "The promotion of Afro-Arab cooperation to support the economies of African and Arab countries and, in particular, the joint economic projects".

To this end, she called on a closer solidarity between Africa and the Arab world by recommending a genuine partnership based on taking consideration of their well understood interests, a win-win partnership benefiting from a convenient environment for investments.

She invited Parliamentarians who have an important role to play with their respective government to adopt necessary legal measures to raise the obstacles to the development of investments while working to ensure a stable environment based on the respect for democratic values and good governance.

So she added that we should be able to build a genuine Afro-Arab strategy of investment in our countries within the framework of South-South cooperation.

Speaking on the second theme to be examined by the conference, namely: "The role of African and Arab Parliaments in ensuring the respect of religions and holy places in both regions and protecting the national cultures of the African and Arab populations in the face of the impacts of globalization", the Chairperson asked participants to pay a particular attention on this issue with regard to the development of inter-religious and anti-religious violence noticed this last year. Crimes and violations of religious rights and symbols are every day committed in the world. She so considered that these demonstrations of violence question all of us taking into consideration our responsibility as legislators to set up policies aimed at respecting religions and faiths as well as protected holy places, worship places, sanctuaries and religious symbols.

She furthermore underlined the threats of the globalization process on the culture and local and national identities and the fear of the progressive constitution of an unipolar world of exclusion and conflicts. She considered that if globalization is necessary to prosper, the conservation and the management of cultural diversity are the foundation of peace and one of the means to control this globalization.

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The Hon. Rose Mukantabana noted that there are many common challenges for Africa and Arab world and that our countries should mobilize themselves to raise them by using our capacities to undertake a joined and united step at the national and international levels in conformity with their objectives of fair development defined within the framework of Afro-Arab cooperation.

The Chairperson of the Executive Committee ended her speech by reiterating her thanks to the host country and wished full success to the conference.

At his turn, after having thanked the Morocco authorities for hospitality and effort exerted in view of the success of the conference, Mr. Abdullah Al Dussary, first Vice-President of the Parliament of Bahrain, representing the President of the Arab Parliamentary Union congratulated the importance given to the strengthening of Afro-Arab solidarity and cooperation.

Regarding the development of Afro-Arab cooperation he called for the institution of integrated development with regard to the complementarity between the two Africa and Arab regions.

As for the respect for the religions and national cultures, the representative of the Arab AIPU particularly underlined the role to be played by the MPs in the protection of holy places such as El Qods Al Sharif.

He finally wished full success to the 13th conference.

The President proceeded to the election of the members of the Bureau as follows :

- Hon. Angel, Speaker of the House of People's Representatives of Equatorial Guinea, as Vice President of the conference
- Hon. Sanduqa Zuhair, Member of the Parliament of Palestine, as Rapporteur

The agenda of the conference including the following items was adopted:

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:
 - a. Promotion of Afro-Arab cooperation to support the economies of African and Arab countries and, in particular, the joint economic projects.
 - b. The role of African and Arab Parliaments in ensuring the respect of religions and holy places in both regions and protecting the national cultures of the African and Arab populations in the face of the impacts of globalization.
5. Setting up of the new Follow-up Committee.
6. Date and venue of the 14th Conference

Report of the Follow Committee

The conference held the report of the Follow up Committee which met under the Chairmanship of Mr. Abdelsalam Balaji, Member of the House of Representatives of Morocco with Mr. Al Khidhi Abbas Al Hassan, Member of the Sudan National Assembly, as Rapporteur. The Report concerned the observations of the Follow up Committee following the presentation by the General Secretaries of APU and Arab AIPU on their common activities after the 12th conference. Underlining the importance of Afro-Arab cooperation, the committee members particularly insisted on the strengthening of Afro-Arab cooperation and the necessity of holding Afro-Arab parliamentary meeting according to the statutes.

Constitution of the new Follow up Committee

The Conference approved the new Follow up Committee as follows :

African side: Burkina Faso, Djibouti, Ghana, Democratic Republic of Congo, Chad (and Rwanda as representative of APU)

Arab side: Algeria, Jordan, Morocco, Mauritania, Yemen (and Kuwait as representative of the AIPU)

The Conference approved the following:

I – Situation in Africa

The 13th Afro-Arab Parliamentary Conference, having examined the political situation in Africa , and considering that peace is a pre-requisite to development and to the promotion of investments and growth, and that at this end , it is necessary to opt for dialogue as a mean to resolve conflicts,

1. welcomes the positive development of the situation in Mali particularly after the agreement of 18 June 2013 signed in Ouagadougou between the Malian government and Touareg movement, agreement which opens the way to the organization of the presidential election scheduled on 28 July 2013; encourages the Malian actors, the future UN mission for the stabilization in Mali (MINUSMA), the African Union and the whole international community to continue their efforts for peace, stabilization process and completion of the restoration of the constitutional order in Mali;
2. welcomes the continued positive developments in the situation in Côte d'Ivoire and encourage the whole of Ivorian stakeholders to join the reconciliation process and contribute positively to the ongoing peace consolidation efforts; calls on the African Union and the international community to support the ongoing process;
3. Exhorts all the Guinean parties to resort to dialogue in order to create conditions conducive to free, fair and credible legislative elections;
4. expresses its concern on the situation in Guinea Bissau and insists on the necessity to hold elections that will mark the restoration of constitutional order to be held

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before 31 December 2013, and calls upon the Bissau-Guinean stakeholders to accelerate the implementation of the Transition process;

5. Condemns the coup d'état in Central Africa and expresses its concern as for the recurrence of unconstitutional changes and the instability situation in that country; asks the international community to support the efforts made by the African Union and ECCAS;
6. Welcomes the signing by eleven countries of the Great Lakes region , on 24 February 2013 in Addis Ababa (Ethiopia) , of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the DRC and the Region and congratulates the efforts made by the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) and SADC;
7. Expresses its satisfaction for the progress made in the Darfur peace process, as well as the successful convening of the Doha Donors' Conference; the conference encourages the Joint Special Representative and to the AU High-Level Implementation Panel (AUHIP) to maintain their efforts aimed at promoting peace, security and stability in Sudan; the conference calls upon the armed groups that have not yet done so to join the peace process; addresses its congratulations to the Sudan and South Sudan for the progress made and to urge them to expedite their efforts towards the resolution of the remaining outstanding issues, particularly the settlement of the Abyei issue;
8. Welcomes the recent developments in Somalia, especially the political progress and the efforts being made to resolve outstanding constitutional issues; congratulates the commitment of the Somali Federal Government to use dialogue with the regional authorities with a view to foster national reconciliation and unity, on the one hand, and the efforts to rebuild the armed forces and integrate militias, on the other hand; asks the Somali political leaders and all the parties to show unity so as to consolidate the gains recorded in Somalia and calls upon the international community to increase its support to the AMISOM to enable the Somali authorities to extend their control on the whole territory;
9. expresses concern at the continued impasse in the peace process between Eritrea and Ethiopia and calls upon the African Union and its international partners to intensify efforts aimed at helping these two countries to overcome the difficulties met in the peace process , and to lay the foundations for sustainable peace and security in the region;
10. Affirms the urgent necessity to implement the 6 June 2010 Agreement signed between Djibouti and Erythrea in order to address all the outstanding issues and consolidate the normalization of the relations between the two countries.

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

The 13th Afro-Arab Parliamentary Conference, recalling the recommendations adopted by the conferences of Afro-Arab Parliamentary Dialogue on the situation in the Middle East and Arab countries:

1. Firmly supports the aspirations of Arab peoples to freedom and democracy and to the respect of human rights, and expresses its congratulations for the results achieved in certain countries;

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2. Congratulates the admission to UNO of Palestine as a State and consider the acquisition of this statute will help the Palestinian people the completion of its independence and the creation of its state with EL Qods – East Jerusalem as capital, while denouncing the Israeli practices against human rights and insistently call for the immediate liberation of all the Palestinian prisoners especially the Palestinian MPs inequitably detained;
3. Strongly supports the will of the Syrian people to establish a rule of law where the public freedoms will be respected and the people's will freely expressed. The Conference denounces the exactions committed as well as the violence undertaken on innocent civil population and call upon all the parties to immediately stop the hostilities and initiate serious negotiations which should lead necessary to the alternation of the power and to the institution of a democratic regime were all the communities will live in symbiosis in the respect for human rights en for universal principles of democracy.
4. Solemnly supports the moroccanity of Ceuta and Mellilia and the Jaafarine islands, endorse all initiatives of the Kingdom of Morocco aimed at restoring its occupied territories and call on the Kingdom of Spain to start negotiations which would lead to the liberation of these two cities and their neighbouring islands.
5. Declares the belonging of the three islands (Abu Musa and the Greater and Lesser Tunbs) to the State of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and call on the Islamic Republic of Iran to immediate initiate negotiations in order to resolve this conflict through peaceful means and in accordance with the principles of the international law.
6. Welcomes the recent developments in Tunisia and firmly support the action led by the National Constituent Assembly in order to complete the drafting of the new constitution of the Republic and set up the democratic institutions.
7. Welcomes the recent developments in the Republic of Yemen and support all initiatives initiated by this country to fulfill the aspirations of the people to alternation and to life in a democratic political system; support the efforts deployed by the UN to establish peace and security in this country and commend the convening of the national dialogue conference and hope that it will lead to a definitive resolution of the situation by the enforcement of democratic principles and respect for human rights.
8. Welcomes the developments in Libya and the establishment of a democratic system that can restore peace and security in this country and enable it to fully assume its role in Africa and in the Arab world.
9. Denounces the criminal terrorist acts perpetrated in Africa and in the Arab world and supports all measures taken by the countries to eliminate terrorism and preserve peace and security in these regions.
10. Re-affirms the necessity for the respect of States' sovereignty and the non interference of countries in their internal affairs.

III. Promotion of Afro-Arab cooperation to support the economies of African and Arab countries and, in particular, the joint economic projects.

After exchanges of views on this item, the participants considered that with a view to supporting economies of African and Arab countries, the following actions should be implemented within the framework of Afro-Arab cooperation:

a/ Environment convenient to the development of investments

An Afro-Arab cooperation profitable to both parties requires an environment convenient to investments. In this respect, legal provisions must be adopted to raise the obstacles to the development of investments. The legislators and Governments have certainly a role to play to this end by implementing the following measures:

- Act in favour of the resolution of conflicts and the establishment of a climate of peace and security and the conservation of stability based on the respect for the democratic values and for good governance;
- Strengthen peace efforts by condemning States which attack other States within the two regions in violation of the principle of sovereignty of each State;
- Adopt legislations and incentive measures likely to spur investment and implement arrangements regarding coordination of investment policies in the African and Arab countries;
- increase the African and Arab capacities in the domains of consultation and elaboration of contracts for the implementation of investment projects;
- eliminate the administrative obstacles related to investment procedures;
- cooperate in development of human resources to have experts and qualified personnel in all the domains and increase the flexibility of the labour markets especially for migrants without distinction of race or religion according to international laws;
- favour the development of the afro-Arab trade by banishing the unfair commercial practices;
- coordinate the struggle against drug production and trafficking, organized crime, corruption and human trafficking;
- lift the financial constraints connected to the financing of projects;
- develop infrastructures and ensure the availability of energy and means of transport;
- support the joint projects in the priority sectors and mobilize necessary funds;

- implement the existing decisions concerning the creation of zones of preferential exchanges and a system of guarantee for investment between African and Arab regions;
- create an Afro-Arab Fund for the financing of joint economic projects within the framework of implementation of afro-Arab development strategies.

b/ Setting up an Afro-Arab strategy for investments in Africa

With a view to laying down, in our countries, the necessary conditions for the development of investments, the afro-Arab strategy for investments, particularly in Africa, should be focused on the following actions:

- Set up an afro-Arab economic information center as well as a data bank on the possibilities of investments, especially in the industrial, agricultural and commercial sectors;
- establish partnerships between Arab and African investors with the aim of financing development programs, particularly in the industrial and agricultural sectors;
- promote investments between the African and Arab countries in the sectors of natural resources exploitation to stop their illegal exploitation, agriculture, water resources as well as the necessary infrastructures; the goal of these investments will be to guarantee the food security of African and Arab countries;
- reinforce communication ways between the two African and Arab regions, particularly by realizing the old project of construction of the highway linking the North and South of Africa with connections to Arab countries ;
- promote private and public investment in industrial and agricultural sectors, as well as in the field of food-processing, to facilitate the implementation of production units and joint commercial companies;
- promote joint research in the field of agricultural development and food security;
- develop joint projects between African and Arab countries in the domains of hydrocarbons, mining and tourism, communications; this will make the Arab financial excess used in sectors with high profitability; the Arab experience can also be useful to African countries;
- encourage investments between Arab and African countries within the framework of a mutually advantageous partnership (winning - winning); these investments would be directed to sectors of infrastructures, telecommunication networks, transport, electricity, education and health;
- create joint Afro-Arab enterprises/companies for production, processing, marketing and trade of agricultural basic and mining products;
- encourage the creation of joint Afro-Arab Agencies in marketing and trade;
- set up an Afro-Arab ministerial Committee within the framework of the African Union and the League of Arab States, the mission of which would be to promote strategic partnership of development between African and Arab countries in the domains of investment and trade;

- introduce mechanisms of cooperation between the Chambers of Commerce, industry and agriculture of African countries and those of Arab countries;
- organize specialized economic conferences with the participation of MPs , economists and experts from Africa and the Arab world;
- create Afro-Arab businessmen association;
- hold a conference gathering businessmen and economic actors in African and Arab countries;
- set up mechanisms of financing to encourage the realization of joint industrial projects between African and Arabic countries;
- act with a view to holding a conference gathering charged with human rights in Africa and in Arab world, in cooperation between Parliaments of Morocco and Iraq, on the one hand, and human rights organizations in the two countries , on the other hand, in order to consider the means to be implemented for peaceful coexistence in the two regions.

c/ The Palestinian economy

The Conference denounces, on the one hand, the Israeli policies aimed at weakening and destroying the Palestinian economy such as the embargo,, the blockade, the close of frontiers, the prohibition of imports and exports via the Israeli checkpoints and , on the other hand, the Israeli control on the revenues of Palestinian customs , and the depletion of Palestinian natural resources , especially hydraulic resources; also denounces the obligations imposed to Palestinian farmers by forbidding them the their fruits picking and by allowing armed Israeli settlers to attack Palestinian farmers and their farms by destroying their houses and institutions, prohibiting their rebuilding especially in Jerusalem and its surroundings, while building new settlements as well as a racist separation wall which forbid to Palestinian citizens the free movement in their national territory through a lot of checkpoints.

IV. The role of African and Arab Parliaments in ensuring the respect of religions and holy places in both regions and protecting the national cultures of the African and Arab populations in the face of the impacts of globalization

We Parliamentarians,

1. Believing that the diversity of the national languages and cultural expressions of our Arab and African countries is a rich and precious universal heritage that ought to be protected and promoted;
2. Confirm our aspiration to harmony and unity in diversity, and to the reconciliation of our cultures and coexistence of our peoples with their differences. In this regard, our Arab and African populations must be able to fully exercise their equal and unalienable rights as recognized by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and

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the other international instruments of human rights and humanitarian law, without any discrimination based on culture, race, colour, language, ethnic origin or religion.

3. Being concerned and appalled by the spread of discourses and acts of exclusion and intolerance, of racism, of xenophobia, among other alarming forms of discrimination and defiance which groups and individuals continue to suffer from in several Arab and African countries on account of their religious, ethnic, cultural, linguistic or racial belonging;
4. Stress the necessity to reconcile diversity with social cohesion to maintain trust and confidence within and among our Arab and African societies, and to enjoy progress, prosperity and high quality life. Differences of language, culture, ethnic origin, religion, race and colour are clear and obvious in a number of our societies, and every experience is unique;
5. Stress the importance of coordination between the Afro-Arab Parliamentary Conference and international organizations such as UNESCO, and Afro-Arab non-governmental organizations in the field of promotion of cultural diversity and dialogue of civilizations;
6. Call for reinvigorating the role of our parliaments in raising awareness about and respecting the richness of all religions while working towards providing a common ground for civilizations with a view to jointly addressing the challenges posed to humanity;
7. Recognize that globalization is a source of greater communication among individuals and increasing interaction among civilizations and cultures while underlying the challenges of preserving intellectual, cultural and civilizational diversities;
8. Encourage the adoption of legislations that can combat trafficking and trade of antique and cultural riches and return stolen objects to the countries of origin.
9. Reaffirm our commitment to the freedom of thinking, opinion and expression, we strongly and unequivocally condemn all acts of intimidation or incitement to extremism, fundamentalism, hatred, racism, xenophobia and violence.
10. Insist on:
 - The holding of free elections on a regular basis and the right to vote for all citizens without any distinction whatsoever;
 - Respect for the rule of law, equality before the law and the right of the individual to the equal right of the law;
 - Freedom of thinking, conscience and religion, freedom of expression, particularly freedom of media, and freedom of association, failing which there can be neither active and engaged civil society, nor exchanges among citizens of the world;
 - Respect for the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of all;
 - Express prohibition of all forms of discrimination; and
 - Establishment of legal framework entrenching and preserving these rights and values.

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11. Call on our parliaments to resort to all available means in order to preserve diversity both within and among our Arab and African societies. Among these means, we can cite the concrete actions aimed at:
 - a) Adopting and enforcing international conventions providing for basic human rights, civil, economic and social rights, as well as applicable instruments which support and encourage the measures aimed at preserving cultural differences and recognizing the special rights of ethnic and linguistic minorities such as the right to promote their culture and use their language in education and media;
 - b) Adopting laws and provisions of political character in such a way as to reinforce the acceptance of diversity among members of different social groups and to encourage understanding, tolerance and mutual respect;
 - c) Adopting and enforcing laws, particularly in civic rights, which provide for and reinforce the effective participation of groups of diverse backgrounds in the decision-making processes, including in Parliament;
 - d) Preventing, combating and eliminating all forms of discrimination, repeal all discriminatory laws, and adopting laws to combat the propagation, in media and the internet, of messages of hatred, extremism, fundamentalism, racism, xenophobia and violence;
 - e) Promoting policies and laws that protect and guarantee the individuals' right to fully exercise their basic rights and freedoms related to their religious or linguistic identity;

12. Call on our parliaments to take efficient measures in the field of intercultural dialogue, namely:
 - a) To establish and encourage intercultural dialogue and cooperation with civil society and groups representing diversity in our Arab and African societies to better sensitize them to the new challenges as well as to the new expectations and concerns of our culturally pluralist populations;
 - b) To adopt and enforce a national legislation, policies or strategies for intercultural dialogue as part of a structure allying the various areas of public intervention, namely education, youth and sport programmes, and media and culture, which provide instruments for understanding and respecting diversity, help enjoy a concrete experience of intercultural dialogue and foster rapprochement of different value systems; and
 - c) To involve the civil society and groups representing cultural, religious, racial, ethnic and linguistic diversity in developing the laws and policies affecting them.

The Conference supports the content of the "Amman Message" whose initiatives aim at promoting respect for religions and protection of sacred places as well as mutual respect among religions and their preservation.

The Conference denounces the grave violations perpetrated by the Israeli occupation authorities against the human, cultural, religious and historical rights of the Palestinian people through such legislative measures as alteration of names of places, avenues, villages and cities, change of their Arabic name into others in Hebrew as well as the inclusion of the religious sites and the Palestinian heritage into the Hebrew heritage list, and the excavations undertaken beneath and in the surroundings of Al Aqsa Mosque which threaten its foundations and may cause its destruction in case of light earthquakes.

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Other denounced measures include the obligation to enforce Israeli curricula, the looting of Palestinian historical and cultural riches and alteration of the demographic structure of Palestinian territories, destruction of dwellings and confiscation of lands and the establishment of new colonies and the racist separation wall, desecration and occupation of sacred places, the fires set deliberately in churches and the offensive graffities against Jesus and Virgin Mary.

Lastly, the Conference denounces the adoption of such racist legislative measures as the law on citizenship and Judaization of the State and the non-punishment of security and army agents for the crimes committed against Palestinians in different regions.

V – Next Afro-Arab Parliamentary Conference

The Conference requested the General Secretariat of the African parliamentary Union to have consultations with the member Parliaments in order to fix the date and venue of the 14th Afro-Arab Parliamentary Conference and inform the Arab side.

Rabat 27 June 2013