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Sixty-fourth session**Request for the inclusion of an additional item in the agenda of the sixty-fourth session****Observer status for the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean in the General Assembly****Letter dated 7 October 2009 from the Permanent Representatives of France and Malta to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General**

In accordance with rule 15 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, we have the honour to request the inclusion in the agenda of the sixty-fourth session of the Assembly of an item entitled "Observer status for the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean in the General Assembly".

In accordance with rule 20 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, an explanatory memorandum (annex I) in support of the above request and a draft resolution (annex II) are attached.

It would be appreciated if the present letter and its annexes could be circulated as a document of the General Assembly.

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Ambassador
Permanent Representative of France to the United Nations

(Signed) Saviour F. **Borg**
Ambassador
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Annex I

Explanatory memorandum

I. Historical background

1. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean (PAM) was established in 2006 following 15 years of cooperation among States of the Mediterranean region. This cooperation focused on themes of common interest such as political, socio-economic and environmental issues. This process, known as the Conference on Security and Cooperation in the Mediterranean (CSCM), was established in Málaga in 1992 under the auspices of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU). In 1995, CSCM held meetings in Valletta, during which the Maltese Parliament proposed the setting up of an Association of Mediterranean States to be made up of a “Council, an Assembly and a Secretariat”. That was followed by another meeting that was held in 2000 in Marseilles, France, where agreement was reached to “set up, in the long run, the Parliamentary Assembly of Mediterranean States”. The Coordinating Committee then met in Nice in 2005 in order to draw up the Statutes of PAM, which were adopted in the fourth and final Conference, held in Napflion, Greece, in 2005.

2. PAM was officially established in 2006, in Amman, where the Parliamentary Assembly adopted its main instruments and agreed to locate its headquarters in Malta. PAM has since moved into action and has gained international recognition. The Assembly has also adopted a number of reports, resolutions and declarations on matters of key interest for the region.

3. PAM is composed of 25 littoral States of the Mediterranean¹ and represents a parliamentary platform for regional dialogue, the importance of which is construed on the latitude that parliamentarians enjoy in their dealing with the government and their constituency.

II. Purpose

4. The main objective of PAM is to find common solutions to today’s challenges and work towards a peaceful and prosperous region for all.

5. PAM was established to bring together all the littoral States of the Mediterranean on an equal footing (both in terms of representation and voting rights) under a unique forum of their own, to examine questions and make decisions on issues of direct interest to the countries and the citizens of the region. The Assembly is the tool for regional parliamentary diplomacy in the Mediterranean.

6. PAM is ideally placed to organize discussions between parliamentary representatives, politicians, civil society actors, the private sector and international organizations. It aims to become the parliamentary centre of excellence on Mediterranean affairs, and to this end, it will be complementary to other regional bodies and institutions.

¹ Albania, Algeria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Cyprus, Egypt, France, Greece, Israel, Italy, Jordan, Lebanon, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Malta, Monaco, Montenegro, Morocco, Palestine, Portugal, Serbia, Slovenia, Syrian Arab Republic, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Tunisia and Turkey.

III. Organizational structure

7. The structure of this “Agora Mediterranea” is different from that of any other forum. It is a democratic institution, bringing together the Parliaments of littoral States of the Mediterranean region, each represented by five delegates. Decisions in the Assembly are preferably adopted unanimously, or alternatively, by qualified majority voting (80 per cent).

8. The Assembly is assisted by a governing body, the Bureau, which has an overall guiding and coordinating function. The Bureau is made up of eight representatives, equally divided among northern and southern countries of the region.

9. The work of the Assembly is supported by three Standing Committees dealing with political, economic and social affairs: the First Standing Committee on Political and Security-related Cooperation (Regional Stability); the Second Standing Committee on Economic, Social and Environmental Cooperation; and the Third Standing Committee on Dialogue among Civilizations and Human Rights. Within the Standing Committees there are currently two ad hoc committees and eight special task forces to collaborate on priority issues. The Assembly can also appoint special rapporteurs.

10. The Assembly and its operative bodies are supported by a secretariat. The General Secretariat headquarters started functioning in September 2007 and is located in Malta.

11. Countries having an interest in the Mediterranean can participate as Associate States, and other organizations and institutions can attend the Assembly in their capacity as observers. Voting rights are not extended to Associate States or observers.

IV. Financing

12. The budget of the Assembly is financed by assessed contributions from the member States on the basis of a cost-sharing formula.

V. Activities

13. The highlight of the annual calendar of events of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean is the plenary session which, from year to year, is hosted by the national parliament of a different member country. The core purpose of the plenary session is for the parliamentarians to consider and adopt a number of reports and resolutions produced in the framework of PAM’s ad hoc committees and special task forces under the three Standing Committees, or by the Bureau at the end of the year. Although the reports and resolutions adopted by PAM are not legally binding per se, they are a “soft diplomacy” tool when dealing with parliaments, governments and civil society in the region. A dozen reports and resolutions are adopted each year.

14. Throughout the year, the activities of PAM concentrate on the parliamentary work of the Standing Committees and the Special task forces and ad hoc committees. Meetings are held regularly in different member countries in order to

prepare the draft reports and resolutions to be adopted at the plenary session. The Bureau also meets frequently to discuss the overall management of PAM. Field missions are also organized for PAM delegates to observe and report on specific situations and issues in the Mediterranean.

15. Delegates of PAM participate and regularly attend meetings and conferences with officials from member States or third States, with international and regional organizations and non-governmental organizations, and with the civil society, in order to enhance cooperation with third parties, understand and include their points of view in PAM's parliamentary work, and disseminate PAM's work. The Assembly itself organizes many events to this end.

16. The activities of PAM are focused on the priority issues facing the Mediterranean region, which can be partially or fully answered by enhanced cooperation between Mediterranean Parliaments, and include regional issues such as the Middle East peace process, energy and related issues, organized crime, terrorism, small and medium-sized enterprises/maritime trade, environment and climate change, disaster management, gender and equality, dialogue among cultures and religions, migration, and so forth.

17. Every year on 21 March, each PAM National Parliament organizes a symbolic event on the occasion of "Mediterranean Day", which celebrates the cultural and historical ties that unite the Mediterranean region.

VI. Relations with other organizations

18. PAM has developed close relations with the United Nations. Many high-ranking United Nations officials have participated in PAM meetings and conferences. Official cooperation agreements have been or are in the process of being concluded with several United Nations bodies and agencies, among them the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), the United Nations Environment Programme/Mediterranean Action Plan (UNEP/MAP) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

19. As Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon himself said in his message to the 3rd plenary session of PAM in Monaco last year, "The collaboration between parliamentarians and the United Nations has brought valuable returns over the years. Parliamentarians have helped to strengthen political awareness and support on many issues of common concern". In that spirit, relations between PAM and the United Nations continued to be nurtured with the full approval of both sides. The common interest in the Mediterranean was reaffirmed in April of this year, when Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and the Secretary-General of PAM, Dr. Sergio Piazzi, had a bilateral meeting in Malta during the former's official visit to the island State. As a matter of fact, reference was made to ongoing cooperation between the United Nations and PAM on topics such as terrorism, migration, climate change and energy.

20. Many encounters and meetings between the United Nations and PAM have taken place to date, as summarized hereunder:

(a) One of the first important occasions of United Nations participation at PAM events was the live videoconference held from New York in February 2008 by Mr. John Holmes, United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator. He addressed the First Standing

Committee on Political and Security-related Cooperation on the outcome of the visit he had just concluded to the Middle East. When asked what PAM could do as an Assembly to support the efforts of the United Nations in the Middle East, Mr. Holmes pointed out that PAM could add its weight to those who were calling for an end to collective punishment and an end to the blockade of Gaza, for the reopening of the crossing points and for permitting far more goods into Gaza, both humanitarian and commercial, in order to allow living conditions to improve.

(b) On the same occasion, Mr. Liviu Vedrasco, representative of the United Nations Pandemic Influenza Contingency, also addressed the PAM delegates of the First Standing Committee. He gave a highly informative presentation on the state of pandemic preparedness in the Mediterranean region. On the whole, he commented that the PAM States were ill prepared to face the consequences of the next pandemic and that PAM members needed to take action. He also offered the establishment of a memorandum of understanding with PAM.

(c) Later on in the year, the Deputy Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), Mr. Paolo Garonna, at the meeting of the Second Standing Committee on Economic, Social and Environmental Cooperation, had the opportunity to identify the major socio-economic challenges of the Mediterranean. The economic gap and the demographic disparity with respect to the North Mediterranean, as well as an investment deficit in the South Mediterranean, were major issues that he stressed needed immediate attention.

(d) The PAM parliamentarians were also addressed by Mr. Paul Mifsud, Coordinator of the United Nations Environment Programme/Mediterranean Action Plan, at the 2nd meeting of the Second Standing Committee. Mr. Mifsud highlighted the fact that one way to develop solutions aimed at safeguarding the Mediterranean, from an environmental point of view, was through capacity-building, so that member States could deal with pollution and promote sustainable development as a collective effort.

(e) The Hon. George Vella, Member of the Maltese Parliament and Rapporteur of the PAM Ad Hoc Committee on the Middle East, addressed the United Nations International Meeting on the Question of Palestine, which was held in Malta in June 2008. A year later, PAM was also present at the United Nations meeting in Cyprus discussing the same topic. Dr. Vella stressed the importance of dialogue, regular contact, open debate, the airing of grievances, and the search for innovative solutions in order for peace to become a reality. In Cyprus, the United Nations requested the support of PAM to organize a parliamentary meeting on the Middle East peace process, which is now programmed to be held in Malta in February 2010.

(f) Another important contribution to the activities of PAM was the opening address by Mr. Maxwell Gaylard, Deputy Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, at the 3rd plenary session of PAM in Monaco in November 2008. It was a moment of reflection, particularly about the situation on the ground, as Mr. Gaylard himself emphasized. In his opinion, although the obstacles were many and the road ahead was difficult, with the support of individuals such as the PAM parliamentarians everyone could do their own part to ensure that the parties remained committed to a process which would lead to the resolution of the conflict and the establishment of a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East.

(g) At the beginning of 2009, the Agreement between PAM and the Republic of Malta on the juridical status of the Assembly was presented to the Office of Legal Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat. The Agreement was registered during a ceremony held at United Nations Headquarters in New York, and the documents were handed over to Ms. Annebeth Rosenboom, Chief of the Treaty Section of the aforementioned Office. Other meetings were held with the Department of Political Affairs, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the International Civil Service Commission.

(h) This year, PAM established a Reflection Group on Terrorism, which began its activities in Istanbul. On that occasion, the parliamentarians were addressed by Mr. Walter Gehr, Chief of the Counter Terrorism Legal Services Section I, Terrorism Prevention Branch, of the Division for Treaty Affairs of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). Mr. Gehr confirmed that the PAM countries had a good ratification record with respect to the 16 sectoral conventions on terrorism. Mr. Mahmood Ayub, United Nations Resident Coordinator in Ankara, was also present at the meeting on terrorism.

(i) Energy and environment go hand in hand. In Egypt, during the meeting of the Ad Hoc Committee on Energy, PAM had the pleasure to host Mr. James Rawley, United Nations Resident Coordinator in Cairo. He recalled the progress made since the signing of the 1992 Rio de Janeiro Convention on Biological Diversity and its respective 2000 Protocol (Montreal) and stressed that international cooperation could lead to very good results.

(j) In Cyprus on 21 February 2009, Mr. Michel Jarraud, Secretary-General of the World Meteorological Organization, and Mr. Fabrizio Gentiloni, Chief of the External Relations and Support Mobilization Branch of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, both addressed the 1st meeting of the PAM Special Task Force on Disaster Management. Later that year in March, while in Rome for the meeting of the PAM Third Standing Committee on Dialogue among Civilizations and Human Rights, Mr. Jürgen Humburg, Senior Regional Protection Assistant of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), contributed to PAM discussions under the Standing Task Force on Migration.

(k) The month of May 2009 was an important moment for PAM since its Bureau visited the Middle East on a fact-finding mission. A high-level delegation led by the President of the Assembly, the Hon. Rudy Salles of France, travelled to Cairo, the Occupied Palestinian Territories (Gaza and Ramallah), Jerusalem and Amman. The United Nations presence in the region was instrumental from a logistical point of view, as well as for its first-hand experience and knowledge of the situation on the ground. The PAM delegation met Mrs. Karen AbuZayd, Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), and it is important to mention that the visit to Gaza could not have happened without the Agency's support. In Ramallah, the Occupied Palestine Territories, a meeting was held with Ambassador Robert Serry, United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process (UNSCO).

(l) In May 2009, the Hon. Sonia Sanfona of Portugal, Rapporteur on Dialogue of Cultures and Civilizations, attended, on behalf of PAM, the UNESCO Forum on Higher Education in the Europe Region, held in Romania.

(m) In June 2009 in Geneva, the Secretary-General of PAM addressed the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR) meeting of Parliamentarians at the second session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction — “How to Make Disaster Risk Reduction a Tool for Climate Change Adaptation”. During the event, ISDR requested the support of PAM to organize a world meeting of all regional parliamentary assemblies in order to prepare a common action plan for the Copenhagen Conference in December, in which PAM will participate as a full observer.

(n) It has been further agreed that in the first quarter of 2010, UNESCO and PAM will co-organize a follow-up United Nations meeting to the Copenhagen Climate Change Conference for regional parliamentarians, to be held in Paris. It has also been agreed that PAM be officially appointed as the parliamentary forum of the Mediterranean region for UNESCO.

(o) This year Lisbon was the final act of the Standing Committees’ calendar for 2009. There all the resolutions and reports were endorsed in view of their presentation for further adoption by the Assembly in Istanbul (23 and 24 October 2009). Once again due attention was dedicated to the Middle East situation. Mr. Filippo Grandi, Deputy Commissioner-General of UNRWA, addressed the First Standing Committee and stated that parliamentary diplomacy had a crucial role in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

(p) In June 2009 in Lisbon, the PAM parliamentarians also welcomed Mrs. Margareta Wahlstrom, Assistant Secretary-General for Disaster Risk Reduction (ISDR). She addressed the PAM meeting of the Second Standing Committee, speaking on disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation. As far as the role of parliamentarians was concerned, she said that they should work more closely together in order to share their experiences and hopefully produce a document in which agreed approaches and guidelines were proposed.

(q) This overview of the steps taken to establish and consolidate cooperation activities between the United Nations institutions and PAM epitomizes the importance placed on the overall outreach vision of the Assembly in that actions built upon the results achieved so far by the international institutions can only give greater impetus to further interventions in favour of the populations in the region. Recently, in September 2009, a PAM Bureau delegation visited United Nations Headquarters in New York to further strengthen the cooperation between PAM and the United Nations. PAM delegates met the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Ban Ki-moon, as well as Mr. B. Lynn Pascoe, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Mr. Alain Le Roy, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Mr. John Holmes, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Ambassador Paul Badji, Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, and Mr. Janos Pasztor, Director of the Secretary-General’s Climate Change Support Team. During the visit, delegates also expressed the will for PAM to be granted observer status in the General Assembly.

21. In addition to collaboration with the United Nations family, PAM has extended cooperation with other partners with whom to share its proposal and concerns. PAM has regular contacts with, inter alia, the League of Arab States, the Arab Inter-Parliamentary Union, IPU, the International Organization for Migration, the Parliamentary Assemblies of Euro-Med, the Organization of the Islamic Conference,

the Arab Maghreb Union, the North Atlantic Treaty Alliance, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Council of Europe, the Western European Union and the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation. Within these regional assemblies, PAM carries the responsibility to give a primary role to parliamentary diplomacy, and that it will continue to do so in the coming years as a key regional institution.

VII. International character of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean

22. PAM originated from the Conference on Security and Cooperation in the Mediterranean under the auspices of the Inter-Parliamentary Union; as for the latter, it falls under the category of parliamentary inter-State organization and represents 25 national parliaments.

VIII. Reasons for seeking observer status for the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean

23. PAM and the United Nations have had a successful relationship of cooperation since the establishment, in 2006, of PAM as a regional assembly for the Mediterranean basin. Within this period of time, the continuously increasing frequency of meetings between the two organizations has confirmed the mutual interest in this cooperation on issues of common concern.

24. The activities of PAM have followed, from the very beginning, the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, which is considered to contain the main procedures according to which the development of any international policy should be based, thereby recognizing the legitimacy and the leading role of the United Nations.

25. PAM follows the spirit of the United Nations Millennium Declaration of 8 September 2000 (General Assembly resolution 55/2), in which the Heads of State and Government confirmed the importance of regional and parliamentary diplomacy. Such diplomacy is recognized as being capable of achieving particularly fruitful results concerning a variety of issues such as peace and security, economic and social development, international law and human rights, dialogue among religions, environment, democracy and gender issues. PAM believes that parliamentary dialogue is able to create a horizontal, comprehensive and open dialogue among the Parliaments around the Mediterranean Sea and the international organizations relevant to the region.

26. By agreeing with and adopting the idea of the promotion of international cooperation at all levels, PAM echoes the ideals of and endorses the rules of the Charter of the United Nations. In its capacity of a regional assembly, PAM — among other similar organizations — initiates and is involved in debates on the most relevant issues of concern to the region. Particularly given its parliamentary dimension, PAM represents a unique platform for dialogue between relevant international, regional and national organizations.

27. PAM consistently endeavours to contribute actively to the work and efforts of the United Nations system in order to reach goals of common interests. Through its

meetings, PAM seeks and obtains the views of parliamentarians on progress, obstacles and further initiatives that could contribute to the above-mentioned common interests.

28. The two meetings between the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the representatives of PAM in April 2009 in Malta and in September 2009 in New York represent key events in the institutionalization of the relationship between the two organizations.

29. PAM envisages the following concrete methods by which the strengthened cooperation between the United Nations and the national parliaments of PAM and its Secretariat can play a role in achieving desired results in the region. PAM is able to:

(a) Channel to the United Nations the views of the Mediterranean people, in all their diversity, as expressed in parliamentary debates and discussions of PAM;

(b) Promote parliamentary awareness and encourage action in support of — and the implementation of — international agreements of the United Nations by promoting activities by parliaments and their members to mobilize public opinion and forge national support for international action;

(c) Prepare analyses and reports on parliamentary activities relevant to the work of the United Nations, particularly in areas of common interest for the Mediterranean region, such as, but not limited to: the Middle East, terrorism, organized crime, energy, environment, trade, resources management, small and medium enterprises, disaster management, dialogue among cultures and religions, gender and migration;

(d) Provide support for parliaments with the aim of increasing their capacity to carry out, at the national level, their legislative and oversight functions with regard to matters that are of concern to international cooperation and thus to the United Nations.

30. In order to guarantee the full exploitation of the strengthened cooperation between the two organizations, PAM proposes to work with the Secretary-General and the States Members of the United Nations to jointly identify the most relevant priorities for the establishment of a programme of work for PAM which would promote debate and action. PAM further suggests that the United Nations be granted the possibility to propose items for consideration by parliamentarians and other participants at meetings of PAM.

31. The implementation of a comprehensive cooperation agreement/the above-mentioned measures would facilitate a more systematic provision of a platform for the United Nations to interact directly with parliaments and members from the Mediterranean region. In concrete terms, the cooperation would be observed at the various parliamentary meetings convened by PAM and by systematically organizing such meetings in connection with special sessions of the General Assembly of the United Nations and other United Nations conferences and meetings.

32. In addition to political support of the activities of the United Nations, it is also envisaged that PAM be able to provide operational support to the work of the United Nations departments, programmes and agencies. With respect to the promotion of peace and security, PAM may, through its standing committees and special task forces, be in a position to channel support from national parliaments towards the

building and strengthening of democratic structures and further support the parliaments themselves in certain areas of peacebuilding or peacekeeping operations. PAM has developed expertise on regional issues such as terrorism, organized crime, energy, environment, trade, resource management, small and medium enterprises, disaster management, dialogue among cultures and religions, gender and migration. Cooperation with the United Nations on these matters could be progressively expanded, and thus dealt with more thoroughly. In this respect, the provision of statistical data and technical assistance to Mediterranean States would be particularly welcomed.

33. Noting with satisfaction that the Secretary-General of the United Nations, in his meeting with the Bureau of PAM on 30 September 2009, supported cooperation with PAM as a means to strengthen the parliamentary dimension of the work of the United Nations, recalling the unique character of PAM as an inter-State organization representing national parliaments of a particular region, and recalling also General Assembly resolution 57/32 granting observer status to IPU, we make the following proposal:

(a) The United Nations General Assembly may wish to grant PAM a standing invitation to participate, as appropriate, in the sessions and work of the Assembly and its subsidiary organs and in the international conferences convened under the auspices of the United Nations;

(b) In addition, the General Assembly may wish to consider a decision concerning permission for PAM to circulate its documents in the Assembly;

(c) The General Assembly may also wish to consider inviting the specialized agencies of the United Nations system to adopt similar modalities for cooperation with PAM.

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Secretary-General, Dr. Sergio Piazzi

Annex II

Draft resolution

Observer status for the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean in the General Assembly

The General Assembly,

Wishing to promote cooperation between the United Nations and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean,

1. *Decides* to invite the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean to participate in the sessions and the work of the General Assembly in the capacity of observer;
 2. *Requests* the Secretary-General to take the necessary action to implement the present resolution.
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