

**The XIIth Interparliamentary Meeting between the  
Delegation of the National Assembly of Mauritania and  
the European Parliament Delegation for relations with the Maghreb countries  
Joint Declaration**

Nouakchott, 20 December 2023

The Contact Group of the National Assembly of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania and the Delegation of the European Parliament (EP) for relations with the Maghreb countries (DMAG) met in Nouakchott on 20 December 2023 for the XIIth Interparliamentary Meeting between the European Union (EU) and the Islamic Republic of Mauritania.

The aim of the meeting was to strengthen interparliamentary relations, building on the acquis of the XIth meeting held in Brussels in March 2018 and to give new impetus to relations between the EU and Mauritania.

This meeting, the first between the Maghreb Delegation of the European Parliament, in its new composition, following the 2019 European elections and the renewed members of the National Assembly of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania following the legislative elections of 2023, aims to bring two parties closer together and to increase understanding of the priorities of each assembly, with the aim of effective cooperation, with concrete results.

Delegations stressed that good relations between the European Union and Mauritania go back more than five decades and have evolved according to Mauritania's development priorities and the European Union's partnership policies, based on the Cotonou Agreement.

The parties welcomed the signing on 15 November 2023 of the Samoa Agreement, which will be the new legal framework and multilateral partnership agreement between the EU and ACP countries. The European delegation informed that the European Parliament should give its final consent to the agreement at the beginning of 2024.

Delegations appreciated the vision of the new agreement, on which relations between the EU and Mauritania will now be based, which aims to establish a genuine partnership of equals with the aim of going far beyond aid and trade and aimed at building capacity to jointly address global challenges. They stressed the importance of the priority areas of the agreement: human rights, democracy and governance; peace and security; human and social development; inclusive and sustainable economic growth and development; environmental sustainability and climate change; migration and mobility.

The parties recalled that the EU is Mauritania's largest trading partner and that the EU-Mauritania partnership is strong and understanding and that mutual expectations are high in the different areas of cooperation.

Delegations stressed the common interest in regional stability in West Africa and the Sahel and the important regional role of Mauritania, at the crossroads of the Arab Maghreb countries in North Africa and the Sahel region. MEPs stressed the importance of the EU-Mauritania strategic partnership in the Sahel, notably in the fight against terrorism, irregular migration and criminal networks as well as in the field of security, by supporting regional cooperation.

Debates between Members of Mauritanian and European parliamentary delegations covered a wide range of topics, including: recent developments, both within the European Union and in Mauritania, as well as in the Euro-Maghreb and Euro-African regional framework; regional cooperation, including in terms of security and development, addressing the issue of refugees and migration; bilateral relations, both political and diplomatic, economic and cooperation; social issues, including intercultural dialogue, human rights and the eradication of slavery, women's rights, youth training and inclusion.

In a constructive atmosphere of transparency and mutual trust, the following conclusions were drawn:

Delegations expressed appreciation for the political dialogue in Mauritania, which included political opposition, and expressed their confidence in the growing inclusion of Mauritians in the country's political and socio-economic life.

Delegations stressed the importance of the EU-supported Mauritanian Strategy for Accelerated Growth and Shared Prosperity (SCAPP), highlighting its objectives to promote accelerated, diversified and inclusive economic growth that reduces inequalities, within a framework of good governance, while integrating the 2030 Agenda and the African Union's Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2063.

The European Parliament delegation informed on the priority areas of EU support, under its current Multiannual Indicative Programme, focusing on strengthening human development in its health and formative dimensions (basic education and vocational training), the transition to a green and blue economy and strengthening good governance.

The parties recalled the visit of EU High Representative Josep Borrell to Mauritania in April 2021 and his message expressing the EU's willingness to strengthen relations with Mauritania as a pillar of regional security in the Sahel, as well as the EU's support for reforms aimed at strengthening social cohesion. Delegations also recalled the visit of the President of the European Council, Charles Michel to Mauritania in November 2022 and the visit of the Vice-President of the European Commission, Margiris Schinas in October 2023, who highlighted the common understanding of regional and global challenges and the stable and strong partnership with Mauritania in a difficult region as well as the EU's willingness to strengthen its support for the migration situation as part of a cooperative approach. The visit of the EUSR for the Sahel, Emanuela Del Re, to Nouakchott in June 2022, further strengthened relations, including in the fight against

terrorism, while at the same time underpinning the fact that the presence of Wagner's group of private foreign militias in the region remains an obstacle to further cooperation in the military field.

Delegations welcomed the participation of His Excellency President Mohamed Ould Ghazouani in the "Global Gateway Forum" in Brussels on 25 October 2023, which confirmed the constructive bilateral relations, the keen interest in the development of Global Gateway projects in Mauritania and the willingness to cooperate on migration as well as in the field of green hydrogen.

Delegations welcomed the new Fisheries Agreement between the EU and Mauritania, approved by the European Parliament on 8 June 2022. They stressed that this is the most important EU fisheries agreement with a third country. The Parties emphasised that they will closely monitor developments in the implementation of the Agreement and in particular its objectives of strengthening environmental, economic, social and scientific cooperation, as well as the distribution of 2 % of pelagic catches of EU fishermen to people in need and the assurance of Mauritanian authorities that these contributions ultimately benefit citizens.

Delegations expressed particular concern about the conflict in the Middle East and about conflicts and crisis situations in Africa and stressed the need for strengthened efforts to better manage and prevent conflicts and to avoid possible regional escalations.

During the discussions on regional issues, it was stressed the importance of a comprehensive and integrated vision of the Sahel and the need to take into account the cumulative effects of the devastating combination of conflicts, governance and security issues, as well as climate change.

The Parties stressed the importance of investing in education in order to combat violence and thus prevent terrorism, particularly in areas threatened by insecurity caused by terrorism, violent extremism and cross-border crime.

The European side welcomed Mauritania's strategic regional role and expressed confidence in the country's commitment to challenges such as the crisis in Libya in Mali and Niger.

The EP delegation briefed on the 2021 EU Strategy for the Sahel on its objectives and the willingness to step up the EU's efforts to support the people of the Sahel, on the basis of the principle of shared responsibility with the Sahel partner authorities. It was recalled that the Strategy emphasises the importance of a civil and political leap forward, focusing both on short-term stabilisation and on the long-term prospects for sustainable social, environmental and economic development beyond military engagement.

The promotion of respect for and protection of human rights remains at the heart of the EU's support in the Sahel, as well as efforts in the areas of governance and the rule of

law, the fight against corruption and the provision of basic public services to all people. The EU continues to support Sahel countries in the fight against armed terrorist groups as well as countries' efforts to reform the security sector. The EU continues to act to strengthen the multilateral system, with the UN at its centre, alongside regional organisations, including the African Union and ECOWAS.

Delegations stressed the need to strengthen the fight against impunity for perpetrators of human rights violations, corruption and good governance, stressing the importance of people being able to rely on the presence and effectiveness of States in creating conditions for a return to peace, stability and development.

Delegations highlighted the concrete progress made by Mauritania in the field of human rights in recent years, particularly with regard to freedom of the press. They supported legislation to harmonise national legislation with international instruments (social security system, amendment of the Nationality Code, Act on Associations, Foundations and Networks). They appreciated national strategies for humanitarian action and the promotion of civil society.

The European delegation welcomed Mauritanian developments in the field of human rights and stressed the importance of continuing strengthened efforts to: promotion and protection of women's rights; the promotion of non-discrimination and equality; improving governance on migration; promoting citizen participation; strengthening the rule of law and the proper administration of justice; strengthening economic and social rights; support for civil society and national human rights institutions; further progress in the practical implementation of laws; and the promotion of media independence and pluralism and the fight against disinformation.

The European side welcomed the effective establishment of the National Observatory for the Rights of Women and Girls and the establishment of multisectoral platforms to combat violence against women and girls in several wilayas across the country, while building on the importance of legislation in this area.

The European Parliament delegation welcomed the organisation by the National Human Rights Commission (CNDH) of awareness-raising caravans in the fight against the eradication of slavery, as well as the training of magistrates in this field, while reiterating the EU's commitment to supporting and supporting the government's efforts to respect the fundamental principles of human rights.

MEPs referred to the significant growth of the Mauritanian labour force expected in the coming decades, stressing the need to accompany it with educational progress and a reinvigoration of the formal labour market, as well as active measures to combat poverty. In this context, the transition to the green and blue economy was discussed and confidence was expressed that beyond environmental benefits, it will also foster inclusive and sustainable economic growth, job creation and support private investment for equitable and inclusive socio-economic development.

Delegations stressed that the migration issue is a common challenge, which calls for a solidarity response, addressing its root causes, including armed conflict, poverty, inequality, injustice, instability, insecurity and climate change. In this context, the management of irregular immigration must follow a comprehensive, balanced, integrated and inclusive approach. In this sense, MEPs supported the relaunch of the EU-Mauritania dialogue on migration management and the strengthening of cooperation for the control of irregular immigration and the fight against smuggling networks of migrants.

The two delegations welcomed the re-launch of the Permanent Parliamentary Contact Group, as the central body for cooperation between the two Parliaments, and undertook to continue their exchanges on a continuous and regular basis by the XIIIth EU-Mauritania Interparliamentary Meeting to be held in Brussels or Strasbourg during 2024.

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