

Press Release

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PACE President proposes tripartite Knesset - Palestinian Legislative Council - PACE Forum

Strasbourg, 23.08.2007 - At the end of his three-day visit to Israel (20-22 August), as part of his official visit to the Middle East, the President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), René van der Linden, stressed that PACE would remain committed to helping support the peace process. In his talks with President Shimon Peres, who has twice addressed PACE in the past (in 1986 and 2002), the latter expressed his respect for the Assembly, which he says "represents the views of all Europe" and welcomed its contribution to the Middle East peace process. According to the PACE President, Mr Peres remains optimistic about both political and economic perspectives.

René van der Linden also visited the Knesset, where he met the Speaker, Mrs Dalia Itzik, and other parliamentarians to discuss the Middle East situation and relations with PACE – including the 50th anniversary of the Knesset's Observer status. The President's proposal for a tripartite Knesset-Palestinian Legislative Council-PACE forum was received with great interest and will be further discussed in the near future when Mrs Itzik will address PACE in Strasbourg.

Among other highlights of the President's visit to Israel were his meetings with the Council of the Religious Institutions of the Holy Land and with the Chief Rabbis. Mr van der Linden strongly encouraged the work of the Council as a pioneering body promoting dialogue and mutual understanding as an essential element of the peace process, with the potential to overcome longstanding obstacles and generate new momentum. In turn, members of the Council expressed strong enthusiasm for closer collaboration with PACE, on the basis of shared commitment to common values.

The President fully agreed with the Chief Rabbis on the necessity to protect and respect religious sites in the Holy Land (and around the world), and to intensify the fight against anti-Semitism and the glorification of Nazism. They underlined the importance of education in this process and noted that these issues were part of the core activities of Council of Europe.

Following this, the President visited the Yad Vashem holocaust memorial, where he laid a wreath during a ceremony in the Remembrance Hall.

Before concluding his programme in Israel, René van der Linden met family members of abducted Israeli soldiers, on whose behalf he had previously made several interventions. He repeated his call on the captors to provide clear signs that the three were still alive and to allow the ICRC to have access to them.

Other meetings included Vice Prime Minister Haim Ramon, Quartet diplomats and representatives of civil society.

The President's visit to the region will continue in Ramallah and the West Bank.

[Link to press release announcing visit](#)

The Parliamentary Assembly brings together 318 members from the national parliaments of the 47 member states.

President: René van der Linden (Netherlands, EPP/CD); Secretary General of the Assembly: Mateo Sorinas.

Political Groups: SOC (Socialist Group); EPP/CD (Group of the European People's Party); ALDE (Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe); EDG (European Democratic Group); UEL (Group of the Unified European Left).

[Link to press release on official visit to Jordan](#)