Statement by

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to the United Nations

First Committee

Item 102
Strengthening of Security and Cooperation in the
Mediterranean Region

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(Please check against delivery)
Mr. Chairman,

I would like to extend my congratulations on your election as Chair of the First Committee and the exemplary manner that you are conducting our proceedings.

Malta is pleased to participate once again in this important annual general debate on "Regional Disarmament and Security". My intervention will focus on the Mediterranean dimension and on the efforts undertaken by countries like Malta which leave no stone unturned to enhance the region's security and cooperation as well in advancing economic and social development of their populations.

As a European country at the crossroads of the Mediterranean, it is only natural for Malta to place Euro-Mediterranean affairs at the heart of its foreign policy. Malta's geo-strategic location makes us intimately aware of the intrinsic relationship between the northern and southern shores of the Mediterranean. Our major strategic objective is to play a proactive role in the promotion of peace, stability and prosperity in the Mediterranean through different confidence and security building initiatives that further dialogue and understanding in our region. Malta's Membership of the European Union has increased our determination to work together with all Euro-Mediterranean countries on the search for peace, security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region and beyond.

Last week, Malta was the venue of the 2010 OSCE Mediterranean Conference. Coinciding with the 35th Anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act and its Mediterranean Chapter, the Conference in Malta provided the OSCE participating States and Partners for Cooperation with a valuable opportunity to discuss security matters from a Mediterranean perspective, to jointly address challenges facing the Mediterranean region, to identify new opportunities for cooperation and to take stock of the Partnership.

Here I would like to recall that the Participating States in Helsinki, in exercising considerable foresight, stated their conviction that "security in Europe is to be considered in the broader context of world security, and is closely linked with security in the Mediterranean area as a whole, and that accordingly the process of improving security should not be confined to Europe but should extend to other parts of the world, and in particular to the Mediterranean area". This endorsement has continued to be reflected in the resolutions of the General Assembly since it was introduced by Malta and other Mediterranean countries and which once again is reflected in this year's draft resolution which is under consideration by this Committee.

From 8 to 9 November 2010, Malta will be hosting the First Regional Conference for the Mediterranean of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations which is to adopt a Strategy Document and Action Plan. The primary aims of the Strategy are those of contributing to the general ongoing efforts to bring relevant cultural, economic, social and political stakeholders together from both sides of the Mediterranean, promote mutual understanding and improved perceptions of each other, defuse tensions and bridge divides, enhance security and human development, and foster good neighbourly relations among societies, institutions and individuals in the Mediterranean region.

In the first half of next year, the Government of Malta intends to host the Second Summit of the Western Mediterranean Forum also known as the 5+5 Dialogue. Malta looks forward to the successful outcome of the Summit as a concrete contribution to the further development within this Mediterranean framework.

Since October 2009, Malta also holds the seat of the European Commission-League of Arab States Liaison Office. Among its priorities, the Liaison Office identifies projects that contribute to ongoing confidence building measures, crisis response and early warning systems, as well as others that address economic and environmental security concerns. This Office is a concrete
recognition of the importance to have a platform for inter-regional engagement and dialogue on strategic issues of interest to both Organizations.

Malta also gives prominence to Parliamentary cooperation among the Mediterranean States. In this respect, Malta is honoured to be the host of the Headquarters of the Parliament Assembly of the Mediterranean (PAM), which brings together Parliaments of all countries bordering the Mediterranean. The PAM was established to bring together all the littoral States of the Mediterranean on an equal footing under a unique forum of their own, to examine questions and take decisions on issues of direct interest to the countries of the region. It was therefore a privilege for my delegation to have been the sponsor together with the delegation of France of the important resolution which was adopted by the Sixty-fourth Session of the General Assembly last December (2009) and which granted Observer Status to the PAM to participate in the sessions and the work of the General Assembly. The 5th Plenary Session of the PAM to be held in Rabat, Morocco from 28 to 30 October 2010, will be yet another occasion where Parliamentarians from the Mediterranean littoral will once again engage themselves in injecting initiatives, ideas, proposals and possible solutions aimed at using parliamentary diplomacy to enhance peace, security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region.

The strengthening of the inter-linkage which exists between security in Europe and security in the Mediterranean is the primordial motive behind Malta's support and endorsement of initiatives that provide the necessary impetus to the political, economic and social development dimensions in the Mediterranean. In this context, Malta continues to give particular attention to the situation in the Middle East and the phenomenon of irregular migration, among other issues.

It is a recognized fact that the political and security implications of the situation in the Middle East have a direct impact on developments in the Mediterranean region and beyond. It is Malta's hope that the recent resumption of direct negotiations between the Israelis and Palestinians will build confidence and trust on both sides and ultimately lead to the emergence of an independent, democratic and viable Palestinian State living side by side in peace and security with Israel.

A coordinated effort must also be made by all Mediterranean countries to tackle the emerging phenomenon of illegal immigration which continues to put at risk the lives of hundreds of immigrants on the threshold of Europe. Malta has become for some years now a country of destination attracting a disproportionate influx of illegal immigrants and asylum seekers. Malta's need for assistance in providing beneficiaries of international protection with a durable solution has been recognised by many. While Malta affirms its commitment to abide by its international obligations, at the same time we reiterate our calls to the international community to continue to assist us in the resettlement process of these unfortunate people.

Malta intends to continue to build, together with other UN Member States, including those of the Mediterranean littoral, on the achievements made so far by enhancing dialogue between and among countries in the Mediterranean region. Malta will also continue to participate actively in efforts by all stakeholders to strengthen the various Mediterranean and Euro-Mediterranean inter-governmental and parliamentary fora. By once again co-sponsoring the draft resolution on "Strengthening of security and cooperation in the Mediterranean", and urging all Member States to approve this resolution without a vote, Malta wants to reiterate its conviction that security in the Mediterranean is closely linked to European security as well as to international peace and security. In expressing our appreciation to the Delegation of Algeria for drafting this resolution, it is the fervent hope of my Delegation that the provisions contained in this resolution are fully implemented.

Thank you.