

Canadian NATO
Parliamentary Association



Association parlementaire
canadienne de l'OTAN

**Report of the Canadian Parliamentary Delegation respecting
its participation at the Joint Seminar of the Mediterranean
and Middle East Special Group (GSM) and Sub-Committee on
Transatlantic Economic Relations (ESCTER)**

Canadian NATO Parliamentary Association (NATO PA)

**Florence, Italy
November 26-28, 2015**

The Canadian NATO Parliamentary Association has the honour to present its report on the Joint Seminar of the Mediterranean and Middle East Special Group (GSM) and Sub-Committee on Transatlantic Economic Relations (ESCTER) meetings which were held in Florence, Italy from November 26-28, 2015. The Parliament of Canada was represented by Senator Raynell Andreychuk.

TOPICS

- developing a comprehensive strategy to defeat Daesh and other jihadist terrorist movements;
- the management of the refugee crisis; the search for stability in Libya; Iran's relations with the West;
- women and development; and
- recent energy sector developments

OVERVIEW

Two weeks after multiple terrorist attacks killed 130 people in Paris, legislators from NATO member countries and from the Mediterranean and Middle East met in Florence, Italy for the NATO PA's annual Mediterranean and Middle East Special Group (GSM) seminar. The lawmakers discussed a range of topics of concern for the Euro-Atlantic area and the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. The two-day high-level seminar hosted by the Italian Parliament brought together over 250 participants including some 100 legislators from 38 countries. Topics at the centre of the debates included developing a comprehensive strategy to defeat Daesh and other jihadist terrorist movements; the management of the refugee crisis; the search for stability in Libya; Iran's relations with the West; women and development; and recent energy sector developments. This seminar report will provide insights into these discussions among parliamentarians, government and military officials, experts, and civil society representatives.

Dario Nardella, the Mayor of Florence, bade the delegates welcome to a city where culture and global dialogue had played a central role throughout its history. Today's security challenges were radically different from the challenges that NATO faced during the Cold War, he told participants, as the key threat – terrorism – sought to exploit the elements and values of democracy, the Mayor underlined. The complexity of challenges could not be faced alone, they required coordination and cooperation with partners at all levels. Only weeks prior to the GSM seminar, Mayor Nardella had organised the Global Mayors Conference, where the mayors also discussed the way cities needed to deal with jihadist terrorist groups and terrorist attacks. Preserving and advancing art, culture, and identity were crucial in confronting the terrorist threat, he argued. These elements had been a major contribution of Florence to world of history.

Gilbert Le Bris, Chairperson of the GSM, stressed that legislators from both sides of the Mediterranean Sea – and beyond – were meeting in the spirit of seriousness, facing a common enemy whose victims they mourned. The meeting had several goals in his mind: to strengthen political engagement between all countries represented; to identify people that can make democratic change in the MENA region happen; and to provide a leading role in the dialogue between all sides.

Pietro Grasso, President of the Italian Senate, presented his view of the common challenges facing the Euro-Atlantic area and the MENA region, including institutional weakness, the fight against Daesh, terrorist financing, organised crime, migration, and tension between Turkey and Russia. All in the room shared responsibility for the failure to have come up with a coherent strategy and policies to prevent these challenges. It was, however, short-sighted to only focus on the negative aspects, he went on to say. Excellent opportunities existed for all people in the MENA region, and the Euro-Atlantic community needed to be clear-headed to build bridges – both physically and psychologically. Military tools could not suffice in the fight against Daesh and other jihadi terrorist groups, he underlined: institution and polity building was necessary; the logic of a ‘clash of civilisations’ needed to be rejected; and all legal and operational instruments to tackle transnational crime had to be in play. European states could not question the moral obligation of asylum, he argued. Terrorist infiltration needed to be prevented, but migrants should not automatically be equated with potential terrorists.

Vice Admiral Michael T. Franken, Deputy to the Commander for Military Operations (DCMO) at US Africa Command (AFRICOM) in Stuttgart, presented his view on combatting jihadist terrorist groups, which was one line of effort for AFRICOM. Vice Admiral Franken told participants that a burgeoning number of Daesh members were coming into Libya. This was not a new phenomenon, but an offshoot of Daesh’ general strategy. In Africa, the deadliest jihadist terrorist groups remained Boko Haram. Still, in Mali, Al Qaeda had perpetrated a deadly attack on a hotel merely days after the Paris attacks, illustrating that Al Qaeda still had operational capability and was engaged in an organisational struggle with Daesh.

The Vice Admiral argued that Daesh was very good at recruiting new fighters. Alienation in their home country was a key factor for recruitment. However, Daesh and other terrorist organisations needed failing/failed states to operate, areas with on-going civil wars or where the government had no control. These groups could not operate in free and stable societies. The international community could not work against these groups without working with locals. Thus, support of law enforcement, economic development, good governance, border controls, and anti-corruption and anti-organised crime efforts were some of the lines of effort for the international community. The fight against jihadist terrorist groups would be a long-term campaign that required patience, flexibility, and creativity, Vice Admiral Franken concluded.

During the discussion with Vice Admiral Franken, he asserted that the United States had reasonably good intelligence on Daesh in Libya. He conceded mistakes had been made; the difficulty now lays in the question of how to fix those mistakes.

Roberta Pinotti, Italy’s Minister of Defence, argued that the international community needed to think more profoundly about today’s security challenges. Emergencies needed to be managed, but they could not be the only issue the international community should tackle. Italy was highly committed to the fight against Daesh, but the military could only be one tool in the overall strategy. With regards to the security challenges in the MENA region, she argued that, while there had been a great opening at the beginning of the Arab Spring, now most countries looked more at the risks that had emerged as a result. She took the members on a ‘tour d’horizon’ of the current security challenges. The Minister argued that the West needed to tread very cautiously

in the MENA region, given the West's history in the region. She highlighted the role of social media in producing a counter-narrative against radical jihadists. Furthermore, she stressed the need to co-operate more on intelligence, as prevention and investigation of terrorism was of the essence. She concluded by saying that Daesh could be defeated as an organisation, but once removed, it did not mean the end of international terrorism.

Respectfully submitted,

Mr. Jean Rioux, M.P.

Chair of the Canadian NATO Parliamentary
Association (NATO PA)

Travel Costs

ASSOCIATION	Canadian NATO Parliamentary Association (NATO PA)
ACTIVITY	Joint Seminar of the Mediterranean and Middle East Special Group (GSM) and Sub-Committee on Transatlantic Economic Relations (ESCTER)
DESTINATION	Florence Italy
DATES	November 26-28, 2015
DELEGATION	
SENATE	Hon. Raynell Andreychuk, Senator
HOUSE OF COMMONS	
STAFF	
TRANSPORTATION	\$ 3,952.95
ACCOMMODATION	\$ 1,089.77
HOSPITALITY	\$ 0
PER DIEMS	\$ 392.26
OFFICIAL GIFTS	\$ 0
MISCELLANEOUS / REGISTRATION FEES	\$ 0
TOTAL	\$ 5,434.98