

9th Euro-Arab Meeting, Algiers, Algeria

The meeting was held in Algiers from 24 to 28 May, with arrivals from 23 May and some departures on 29 May. In total there were 23 participants from the Arab Region: Algeria, Kuwait, Qatar, Mauritania, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Sudan, Palestine, Tunisia, Morocco, Lebanon, Jordan and from the Regional Committee, Working Groups and Office. From the European Region, there were 21 participants from Sweden, France, Denmark, Portugal, Finland, United Kingdom, Greece, Italy, Switzerland, Germany and the Regional Committee, Working Groups and Office. A total of 22 countries. The meeting was enhanced by a considerable number of supporters and observers from Scouts Musulmans Algériens who participated fully in sessions of the meeting.

24 May

A pre meeting session was held for integration and to update on the actions taken since the last meeting in Sweden. The two Regional Committees reported on the monitoring and encouragement they had provided including the participation in some events of the other region. The European Region reported on the establishment of a working group to support relations with other Regions. Various projects between associations would be featured later in the programme.

The meeting then moved to Sidi Faraj, the International Scout Centre, where participants took part or observed a 90 minute feature on Scouting.

25 May

Participants were welcomed in a Bedouin tent by the Minister of Development and by the Chairman of the Arab Scout Committee and World Committee member, Abdalla Alfahd, by the President of the Algerian Scouts and by both Regional Directors.

The first major session involved a sharing of the successes and challenges in Algeria in conjunction with a number of partners organisations:

- Department of Justice – on working with young offenders
- Ministry of the Interior – on drug awareness and rehabilitation
- British Council – on citizenship training
- American Embassy – on Inter-religious dialogue
- Red Cross and Red Crescent – on disaster preparedness
- French Embassy – on project funding

Participants shared information on various funding sources including the EU, through Youth in Action and Euro-Med activities, national governments including Tunisia and France and Arab Region Foundation funding.

There were 4 workshops on:

- Guidelines for Youth Exchanges
- Guidelines for observing Ramadan at the World Scout Jamboree
- Exchanges on training opportunities for Leaders
- World Jamboree participation including the Safe from Harm Training programme

The day closed with dinner in the Bedouin tent followed by the International Evening, when participants shared aspects of their cultural life, particularly food.

26 May

An early departure from the hotel enabled an escorted tour of Notre Dame d'Afrique and the Grand Mosque and dinner at the National Exhibitions area.

A visit was organised to a prison where Scouts are working with some of the young offenders. More than 200 have been rehabilitated through this programme. Participants saw occupational workshops, fitness training, and engaged with the inmates.

Back to the formal meeting and a late session till 23.20 enabled the programme to be achieved through exchanges of information on Regional Events, featuring Roverway 2012, the Cultural Gathering and other events.

Very interesting updates were provided on projects that had been realised, and special note is made of the Tunisian and Danish project and the Algerian and French Project.

27 May

National Scout day celebrations began with a parade to the grave of the founder of Scouts Musulmans Algériens, Mohamed Bouras. They met the family of the founder and laid a wreath at the grave.

The next event was a national rally at the Labour Union Auditorium where 3000 Scouts were waiting the arrival of the guests. After a recitation from the Holy Koran, the singing of the National Anthem a young Scout recited the Scout Promise and speeches were made to recall the presence of the founder's family, the highlights of Algerian Scouting and the importance of being an integral part of the worldwide family of Scouting, now more than 30 million strong.

Each participant had the opportunity to address the young people and all were given a rousing welcome.

Following a break for Friday prayers, the next session began with an overview of 4 programmes:

Scouts of the World

World Scout Environment Programme

Lands of Adventure

Sea Scouting

Workshops were held for each of these programmes.

The final session debated the Declaration (attached) which sought to capture the essence of the meeting and to ensure that everyone took seriously the commitments to promote relations between the two regions. The meeting also accepted a proposal for the next meeting to be held in 2013 in Italy.

The final dinner was taken at Sidi Faraj and after the presenting of certificates, attendance plaques and the exchange of gifts, all agreed the Scouts Musulmans Algériens had made a wonderful job of organising the event. Participants were especially grateful that a large number of young people had participated in the sessions and so the benefits were wider than just the meeting itself. The meeting recognised also the patronage of the President of Algeria, H.E. Abdelaziz Bouteflika.

The final act of hospitality was when everyone was invited to have ice cream at a local seaside village. A wonderful end to a wonderful event.

28 May/29 May

Participants departed on 28 and 29 May.