



PRESS RELEASE

Mediterranean Economic Conference: Union for the Mediterranean promotes employment opportunities and territorial development in the Mediterranean region

- The Head of the Tunisian Government, Ali Larayedh, gave a keynote speech during the inaugural session of the Mediterranean Economic Conference. The event was co-organised by the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) and the Tunisian Government with the aim to address the unemployment and territorial development challenges in the Southern Mediterranean region.
- The Mediterranean Initiative for Jobs (Med4Jobs), a programme developed by the UfM Secretariat to contribute towards job creation and business development in the region, was launched at the conference.

Tunis, 18 September, 2013. Today, the Mediterranean Economic Conference on “Employment and Territorial Development”, which is taking place on 17-18 September in Tunis, brought together more than 300 participants from 25 member countries of the Union for the Mediterranean. The event counted on the participation of the Ministers of Employment of Morocco, Jordan, Tunisia, Libya and Palestine, and the EU Special Representative for the Southern Mediterranean Region. It also gathered influential practitioners in the area of local development and job creation, as well as European institutions, intergovernmental organisations, international financial institutions and business leaders from the private sector.

Conceived as a platform for reflection, exchange of experiences and definition of actions to address the unemployment challenge in the region, the conference witnessed the launch of the ***Mediterranean Initiative for Jobs (Med4Jobs)***. Med4Jobs is a *flagship* regional programme developed by the UfM Secretariat to help increase the employability of youth and women in the Eastern and Southern Mediterranean region, leverage job creation and foster a culture of entrepreneurship and private sector development. The programme will identify and disseminate existing best practices, and will promote the implementation of concrete projects aimed to bridge the gap between job supply and demand.

Tomorrow, in the framework of the conference two agreements will be signed between different partners, namely the financing agreement between *Shekra Crowd Fund* and *Injaz Al Arab*, with the aim to offer financing opportunities to start-ups and innovative business ideas from Southern Mediterranean young entrepreneurs; and the Memorandum of Understanding between *Business Med* and the *Union for the Mediterranean*, with the aim to strengthen the support provided to SMEs in the Mediterranean countries, thus contributing to private sector development and job creation in the Mediterranean region.



With an average unemployment rate of 25%, it is estimated that the Southern Mediterranean countries will need to create 22 million jobs by the year 2020 to cater for the new generations of youth and women entering the labour market. This conference, together with other projects and initiatives promoted by the Union for the Mediterranean seek to address the pressing need to take action in the field of job creation and business development to overcome such important challenge for the future of the region.

Statement by Ali Larayedh, Head of the Tunisian Government

“The destiny of the region is closely linked to the development programmes implemented by the Governments. Addressing the current regional challenges of the region is a shared responsibility. We need to enhance regional cooperation among all the Mediterranean countries to overcome our common challenges. The organization of this conference and the launch of the Med4Jobs initiative by the Union for the Mediterranean is a clear example of concrete regional cooperation actions seeking to address the common issues of unemployment and economic development. These actions and programmes effectively meet the concrete needs of the populations, having a direct impact on their lives and contributing towards security and balanced regional development.”

Statement by Fathallah Sijilmassi, Secretary General of the Union for the Mediterranean

“The social and economic needs of the younger generations require concrete answers and solutions. It is in this spirit that the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) has developed the Mediterranean Initiative for Jobs (Med4Jobs) as an umbrella initiative for the implementation of concrete cooperation projects in the field of job creation and business development.”

About the UfM

The Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) is a unique Mediterranean institution bringing together 43 countries (28 EU member states and 15 Southern and Eastern Mediterranean countries). It constitutes a platform for political dialogue, coordination and consensus building.

The Secretariat of the Union for the Mediterranean, established in Barcelona in 2010, focuses on implementing regional cooperation projects and initiatives in areas such as energy, environment, education, transport, business development and social affairs. The Secretariat works in close collaboration with governments and with an active network of Euro-Mediterranean partners to assist project promoters throughout the entire project cycle: from technical assistance to project implementation, including financial planning and fundraising.

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