



Third Maghreb Entrepreneurs Forum: UfM supports economic integration in the Southern Mediterranean region

The Third Maghreb Entrepreneurs Forum witnessed the official launching of the Maghreb Initiative on Trade and Investment (IMCI). This initiative was officially announced during the Economic Forum of the Western Mediterranean (Dialogue 5+5), held at the headquarters of the Union for the Mediterranean, in October 2013.

Marrakech, 19 February, 2014. The Secretariat of the Union for the Mediterranean participated as institutional partner in the Third Maghreb Entrepreneurs Forum, held in Marrakech on 17-18 February, 2014. The Maghreb Initiative on Trade and Investment (IMCI) was officially launched on this occasion with the aim to boost intra-Maghreb trade by providing a roadmap and action plan for the short, medium and long term. The official announcement of this initiative was made during the First Economic Forum of the Western Mediterranean (Dialogue 5+5), held at the headquarters of the Union for the Mediterranean in October 2013, with the aim to boost economic integration among the countries of the Dialogue 5+5, namely Algeria, France, Italy, Libya, Malta, Mauritania, Morocco, Portugal, Spain and Tunisia.

The Third Maghreb Entrepreneurs Forum was organised by the General Confederation of Entrepreneurs of Morocco (CGEM) on behalf of the Maghreb Employers Union (UME). The objective of the Forum was to strengthen economic integration in the Arab Maghreb Union (UMA) and promote intra-Maghreb exchanges. The Forum sessions paid particular attention to the important role of entrepreneurs and Small and Medium-sized (SMEs) enterprises to accomplish this objective in the region. In this regard, the Secretary General of the Union for the Mediterranean, Fathallah Sijilmassi stated: *“The UfM Secretariat is an operational platform centred on the promotion of regional cooperation projects designed to strengthen socio-economic integration in the Southern Mediterranean countries. We are here today because we are convinced of one thing: action is the key”*

In the framework of the Forum, Secretary General Sijilmassi held bilateral meetings with the President of The Tunisian Union for Industry, Commerce and Handicrafts (UTICA), Guided Bouchamaoui; the President of the Algerian Confederation of Employers, Boualem M'rakech; and the Senior Economist of the World Bank for the Middle East and North Africa, Jean-Pierre Chauffour. He also exchanged views with a delegation of young Maghreb Entrepreneurs based in Europe.

Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) are vectors for innovation and economic growth in the Mediterranean region, contributing approximately 35% to national gross domestic product (GDP) in the Southern Mediterranean countries and generating 80% of jobs. In this context, the UfM Secretariat works actively in the promotion of projects supporting job creation and development of MSMEs in the region.



Learn more about UfM projects and initiatives in the field:

- [Euro – Mediterranean Center for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises \(EMDC\)](#)
- [The Mediterranean Initiative for Jobs \(Med4Jobs\)](#)

About the UfM

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