



Union pour la Méditerranée
Union for the Mediterranean
الإتحاد من أجل المتوسط

Statement by Mr Fathallah Sijilmassi

UfM Secretary-General

9th UfM Ministerial Meeting on Industrial Cooperation

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Dear Co-Presidents,

Dear Commissioner Füle,

Ministers,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am delighted to be here today on the occasion of this 9th Ministerial Meeting dealing with industrial cooperation in the Euro-Mediterranean region.

It is indeed a timely opportunity to examine together the strategic and operational way forward to strengthen the region's global competitiveness in light of the so many challenges that lie ahead of us.



Allow me to take this opportunity to share with you some thoughts:

1/ The importance of giving industrial activities a new qualitative boost. We all know that industry is the true engine for growth and employment but at the same time it is a sector vulnerable to global competition. I ask you, colleagues: how many young people do you know who made recently an industrial investment?

It is a serious question in all our countries because the engines of growth have moved to other sectors of activity. Yet, it is an issue for employment and competitiveness because if we really want to address the volume of the socio economic challenges, the answer lies in the development of the industrial activity.

This is why the work conducted within the framework of the Euro-Mediterranean Charter for Enterprise is so important, thus promoting the appropriate environment for businesses and mainly for SME's.

I want here to praise the excellent work done by the Euro-Med working group on industrial cooperation and to DG enterprise for the continuous efforts to support private sector development and advance cooperation in promoting inclusive economic development. Let me here express my personal gratitude to Vice President Tajani for his commitment as well as commending the Jordan co presidency for its leadership.

The strength and competitiveness of our region in the global economy will come necessarily from a stronger industrial activity and a broader business friendly environment for SME's.



2/ The importance of regional integration. Many of the economic and social challenges of the Med region are directly linked to a very low level of regional integration.

I have just returned from Marrakech, where I attended the 3rd Maghreb Forum for Entrepreneurs. The good news is that I would like to report to you that the 5 countries of the Maghreb have adopted the IMCI (*Initiative Maghrébine pour le Commerce et l'Investissement*) which is an operational platform managed by the 5 business confederations in order to, precisely, promote trade and investment between private sector of the five countries. It is a very encouraging piece of news and I wanted to share it with you first hand. I am very happy about it as it came as an operational follow up of the 5+5 Business Forum, which took place last October at the premises of the Union for the Mediterranean, in Barcelona. During that Forum, the 5 from the South decided to take a specific initiative.

I am hoping that these initiatives will be enlarged to a larger number of Mediterranean countries. To that effect, the Agadir Agreement provides an appropriate framework.

Accelerating regional integration is key for the development of economic and industrial activity. Figures speak for themselves: 5 to 6 percent intra-regional trade in the Southern Mediterranean region; 19 percent in Mercosur; 23 percent in Asean. The correlation between industrial competitiveness and the level of intra-regional trade speaks for itself.

3/ The UfM Secretariat has been designed to promote, raise funds and coordinate the implementation of concrete regional projects and initiatives. This proves the strong willingness by Member states under the leadership of the two co presidencies to be proactive in



promoting this regional cooperation through an operational approach.

I am happy to report to you today that the Secretariat is fully dedicated to this task and is ready to work with you all in order to implement more regional projects for the benefit of the whole region. And I would like to pay a special tribute to my good friend Commissioner Füle for his support and vision as well as the whole team of DEVCO, who are our partners, allies and friends.

Allow me to give you some examples of projects we are currently working on with some of you here present today:

- Establishing a Euro-Mediterranean guarantee network: a project built in cooperation with all the credit guarantee agencies for SME's in the Southern Mediterranean countries and which aims at assessing the creation of a Euro-Med guarantee system to enhance access to finance through facilitating training, exchange of best practices, research and studies on tools and initiatives in this field.

- The Euro-Med Center for SME's. The project, labelled in December 2012, is promoted by Promos (Milan Chamber of commerce) and the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It aims at developing a number of business development units in the region that could offer technical assistance and support on human capital and access to finance.

- SME resource efficiency: The Secretariat is presently working on a project aiming at the promotion of sustainable consumption and production patterns in the Mediterranean region with a particular focus on resource efficiency. This project is being developed with three partners, UNIDO, EBRD and UNEP/MAP and will soon be presented for labelling.



- The Mediterranean Initiative for Jobs is a program developed by the UfM Secretariat aiming to promote and replicate a number of visible private sector job creation projects in the region. It covers both, the supply and the demand side of the labour market, by targeting three cross sectorial issues: employability, intermediation and business enabling infrastructure.

Colleagues,

Allow me to conclude by saying once more how important the regional dimension is. I am well aware of national priorities and bilateral priorities but long term sustainable growth and competitiveness lie undoubtedly in the capacity of the region to be one. UfM countries account for 800 million people. This is quite a market. Success stories exist. We must build on their success and continue identifying concrete steps and measures with Governments, private sectors and all the stakeholders in order to step up our regional cooperation. The UfM Secretariat stands by you in order to move forward operationally in this direction.