



President Schulz and Secretary General Sijilmassi discuss strategic perspectives of the UfM in Strasbourg

In the margins of the Plenary Session, the President of the European Parliament, Martin Schulz, held a bilateral meeting with the Secretary General of the UfM, Fathallah Sijilmassi, to discuss challenges and opportunities of the region in the light of the current political and institutional debate.

Barcelona, 12 March, 2015. European Parliament President Schulz and UfM Secretary General Sijilmassi met yesterday in Strasbourg to discuss challenges and opportunities of the region in the light of the ongoing review process of the European Neighbourhood Policy, along with the celebration of the 20th anniversary of the Barcelona Process in 2015. They convened that these milestones provide an opportunity to further enhance the regional dimension of the Mediterranean cooperation.

In this framework, Sijilmassi presented the main UfM achievements of regional policy dialogue, and projects and initiatives. He highlighted the importance to seize the momentum of this strategic year for the Euro-Mediterranean relations to operationalise the political decisions into actions on the ground.

Sijilmassi stressed that *“the UfM is the platform for regional cooperation and dialogue in the Euro-Mediterranean region and its Secretariat serves as the operational institution empowering this regional dialogue between the UfM’s Member States and stakeholders, fostering synergies among them and promoting cooperation projects and initiatives with a direct impact on the lives of the populations”*.

They further discussed upcoming events in the region in strategic areas such as energy, climate change, urban development and women empowerment. UfM Secretary General shared with President Schulz the main projects and initiatives undertaken by the UfM Secretariat in these fields.

Finally, UfM Secretary General underlined the importance to further increase the support and involvement of EU parliamentarians to enrich UfM activities and to enhance the inclusiveness of the process. In this regard, Schulz and Sijilmassi agreed to continue the channel of consultations to achieve this common objective.

UfM Secretariat and European Parliamentarians to further reinforce the regional partnership

UfM Secretary General Fathallah Sijilmassi, European Parliament President Martin Schulz, EU Commissioner Johannes Hahn and European parliamentarians exchanged views on the role



of the UfM in the framework of the ongoing European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) review process.

Upon the invitation of the President of the European Parliament, Martin Schulz, the Secretary General of the Union for the Mediterranean, Fathallah Sijilmassi, and the EU Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations, Johannes Hahn, participated yesterday in a working Session of the EPs, and European Members of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Union for the Mediterranean (PA-UfM), held at the European Parliament seat in Strasbourg.

The meeting, which took place on the margin of the Plenary Session of the European Parliament, was dedicated, in light of the current political and institutional debate regarding the new ENP, to discuss with different political parliamentary groups the challenges and the opportunities of the region.

Sijilmassi presented to the members of the European Parliament UfM endeavors concerning the regional policy dialogue, projects and initiatives. He highlighted the importance to seize the political and institutional momentum to give a qualitative impetus to the regional partnership to reinforce the Euro-Mediterranean space of cooperation, dialogue and solidarity. *“2015 is a strategic year for the Euro-Mediterranean relations, a historical opportunity to connect the political strategy and action on the ground. We need to build a stronger regional cooperation in order to better face common challenges such as unemployment, security, climate change, energy and immigration”,* he said.

Commissioner Johannes Hahn recalled the EU continuous support to the UfM, and assured that it is a common European interest to build strong regional cooperation in high coordination with the UfM.

Eduard Kukan, rapporteur of the ENP, emphasized that the UfM has formal structures that allows effective and successful performance, therefore the EU, through the new ENP, should strengthen such format. In his intervention, EP Member of the Foreign Affairs Committee and Coordinator for the Socialists and Democrats Group, Richard Howitt, affirmed that challenges of the region, mainly security and migration, need to be addressed by strengthening political dialogue platforms, including the UfM.

MEPs expressed interest to strengthen the political and operational dimensions of the UfM and stressed the importance of the regional dimension in line with the ongoing debate on the review of the ENP. They agreed on the principle of regional inclusiveness in the review process and called for enhanced engagement in UfM activities.

The Secretariat, in conformity to its commitment to cement strategic partnerships with Parliaments, is to attend the second Summit of Speakers of Parliaments and the PA-UfM Plenary Session, set to take place on 11-12 May 2015 in Lisbon, Portugal.

Further information

- [HR Mogherini and SG Sijilmassi discuss the key role of the UfM in strengthening Euro-Mediterranean regional cooperation](#)



- [UfM Secretariat intensifies consultations with EU institutions to reinforce Euro-Mediterranean regional cooperation](#)
- [More than 100 Euro-Mediterranean parliamentarians met at the UfM Secretariat to discuss and exchange views on regional economic, social and security challenges and opportunities](#)

About the UfM

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

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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*The UfM Secretariat is
co-funded by the European Union*