



**Speech by Mr. Fathallah Sijilmassi  
UfM Secretary-General  
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**OSCE Secretary General,  
High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations,  
Secretary General of KAICIID,  
Executive Director of the Anna Lindh Foundation,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

**Allow me to warmly thank Secretary General Lamberto Zannier** for his invitation to participate in this important meeting. Mr Secretary General, you have always been keen to involve the Union for the Mediterranean in the initiatives developed in the framework of the OSCE. I would like to thank you for this.

I want also to thank the OSCE for having brought us together today, through a **remarkable call** to gather and **join all the cooperation efforts likely to help tackle the phenomena of radicalisation**, to which these Security days are dedicated.

I am particularly happy to be here today, and to exchange views with the high representatives and friends present this afternoon.

Our meeting is convened in a particular context, this year 2015 being, in my view, and in my capacity as Secretary General of the Union for the Mediterranean, **a pivotal year in the history of Euro-Mediterranean relations.**

This context



a) is of course the one that we are discussing today : the **increasing importance of issues related to the fight against terrorism, radicalization, the rise of the phenomena of intolerance**, racism and xenophobia, fuelled by the persistence of crises, wars and hotspots of tension in the Mediterranean and beyond. This situation calls to **intensify the cultural dialogue** more than ever, and probably also to respond to the diverse **causes lying at the origin** of these phenomena.

b) the context is also the one of recent events that awaken our **collective conscience**: almost every week, and for many months, we have been witnessing a humanitarian tragedy in which hundreds of thousands of people risk their lives trying to reach the Northern coast of the Mediterranean.

This situation, as well, calls for **reinforced collective action** to respond to the current humanitarian tragedy, and probably calls also for a **comprehensive approach**, taking into account all the aspects at the core of these challenges, both from a security and a development viewpoint.

c) Finally, the context is also for us of **institutional** significance, 2015 being the **20th anniversary of the Barcelona Declaration** that launched the **Euro-Mediterranean Partnership** in 1995, renamed Union for the Mediterranean in 2008. It happens that it is also the **year when the European Union has decided to give a new direction to its Neighbourhood Policy**, which will define the framework for its relations with the Mediterranean countries in the coming years.

A few weeks ago, we hosted at the headquarters of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) in Barcelona, the meeting of the **Foreign Affairs Ministers of the EU countries and of the**



**Southern Mediterranean countries**, organised by the European Union and Spain, to discuss the future of the European Neighbourhood Policy.

Ten days ago, the **Presidents of the Parliaments** of the UfM countries also gathered in Lisbon, for their second summit ever (the first was held in 2013), this strong **parliamentary involvement** strengthening the political dimension of the UfM in the current context.

The **mounting multidimensional challenges in the Mediterranean** are, with no doubt, calling for a **new qualitative impetus** to the Euro-Mediterranean partnership. This is a first message I would like to deliver today.

A new impetus doesn't mean returning every ten or twenty years to "Year 0" of the Euro-Mediterranean cooperation, or constantly reasoning in terms of institutional reorganisation. It is, first and foremost, about **making the best use of existing tools, building on positive experiences, using the best synergies among the actors** and, importantly, more closely **combining political strategy with action on the ground**.

This year 2015 does provide, in our view, a real opportunity for the Euro-Mediterranean partnership to develop its capacity to tackle the main challenges facing our region, that are, or should be, at the very top of the Euro-Mediterranean agenda.

The phenomena of radicalisation are **one of these serious challenges** that all countries must tackle together. How can we act effectively, and collectively? How do we move from dialogue to action?



I am convinced that part of the answer lies in **joining efforts** (just like the OSCE is doing it through these security days) and in **developing a comprehensive global strategy**.

This applies to the areas of security, it applies to the field of cultural dialogue, and it applies as well to all areas of cooperation aiming to promote **regional integration and inclusive economic and social development in the Mediterranean**.

Beyond bilateral cooperation, we strongly believe in multilateral responses to today's challenges, including security ones, particularly through “**region building**”, this is to say a **stronger regional cooperation effort** to help achieving development and stability in the Mediterranean. The Euro-Mediterranean region is, as a matter of facts, the least integrated region in the world. A study that the UfM Secretariat conducted in 2014 shows that out of 100% exchanges in the area: 90% were within the EU, 9% between the North and the South and only 1% among Southern Mediterranean countries themselves.

This is a true paradox for a region facing so many **common** challenges, and where **none of these challenges can be treated and/or managed effectively by individual countries acting alone**. There are **no strictly national responses** to the challenges before us, and all sustainable responses have a **regional dimension**. As an example, the economic integration of the Maghreb is a condition for a sustainable consolidation of security farther South, in the **Sahel**.

As for the phenomena of radicalisation, **they are clearly**, you will forgive the expression, **one step ahead of us**. They feed on the



absence of an alternative positive **perspective** for the greater Mediterranean region, which is yet so rich in potential.

That is why we believe that the strengthening of regional integration in the Mediterranean must become a priority. It is a necessary means for **coping with the challenges**. It is also a necessary condition for our countries to **seize the very many opportunities** offered by the development of regional integration in the Euro-Mediterranean region, and even beyond, in Africa in particular. The **whole of this economic bloc** must organise itself to truly respond to the worldwide challenge to boost competitiveness, job creation, growth and new hope for our populations.

Meeting this objective implies that all cooperation efforts are dedicated to it, that they are made more inclusive, more operational, and achieve a greater impact.

Today the **30 projects labelled by the Union for the Mediterranean** (the label meaning that they have the support by the 43 countries of the UfM) **represent almost 5 billion euros**.

But Above all, these projects are prioritized for their capacity to illustrate and implement the instrumental **link between overall political strategy and concrete action on the ground**.

I would like to mention 3 examples:

### ➤ **On Youth**

Regional cooperation must address the priority needs for the youth in our countries, which is employment. The UfM countries approved the “Med4Jobs” Initiative, and labelled a series of projects and programmes promoting entrepreneurship, the



development of SMES, or, hand in hand with the private sector, the social and professional integration of young people currently excluded from the job market, namely students who dropped out of school and unemployed graduates. The projects are developed in a growing number countries of the southern rim.

I also want to mention the new Euro-Mediterranean University of Fez in Morocco, another UfM labelled project, that will provide higher-education in human sciences, and engineering, and research programmes covering priority fields for the Mediterranean. This ambitious project, whose first courses have already begun in 2014, aims to welcome nearly 5,000 students countries.

In all countries of the Mediterranean, our capacity to improve economic prospects for job creation and youth employment, will be instrumental. **Herald Tribune Cartoon - A terrorist finds a job offer on the door of a shop: "I came to blow up the place but I am interested by the job offer"**.

- on the **strengthening of the role of women in society**. We all know that women play a key role to help face present challenges, including the one of radicalization. This week in Barcelona, the UfM brought together 250 leading institutional and civil society actors of women empowerment in the Mediterranean, including governments, development agencies, financial institutions and the private sector to exchange on the most effective ways to promote policies and concrete regional initiatives supporting participation of women in economic life.

These efforts dedicated to women empowerment have a strong leverage effect on our societies, in all our countries, in the South



and in the North. They shall be strongly encouraged and supported.

- On **urban development**, which is a central challenge for the Mediterranean given the accelerated urbanisation of the coastal cities, with all its related implications, we are developing, along with the European Investment Bank (EIB) the French Development Agency (AFD), and the German Development Bank (KfW), the **Urban Projects Finance Initiative (UPFI)**, aimed to operationalize the Euro-Mediterranean **Sustainable Urban Development Strategy**. In close interaction with countries and partner institutions, we identify sustainable urban development projects that can be funded and implemented in the short term. The projects are large-scale, like the **first two to be implemented**: the Imababa urban modernisation project (Egypt) and the Taparura project to rehabilitate the Northern coasts of the city of Sfax (Tunisia).

I could mention as well, in the area of environmental depollution, the example of the depollution project of Lake Bizerte in Tunisia. **Does all this seem to be a bit far from our topic today?** I don't think it is.

Through the implementation of these projects, **the living conditions for millions of citizens will be improved** (half a million people for the sole Lake Bizerte project), **and their perspectives for a better future**. Many other areas of cooperation on which the Union for the Mediterranean and its member countries are actively involved -food security, access to water, transport connexions, etc.- have this same strong potential.



Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, the Union for the Mediterranean is the intergovernmental platform where Northern and Southern Mediterranean countries are working to define a **common agenda** based on their **common interests**.

**This is the rationale behind the co-presidency of the UfM, by the European Union for the North side, and the Kingdom of Jordan, for the South side.**

**I want to seize the opportunity of my presence here at the headquarters at the OSCE, to pay tribute to the exceptional role played by our co-presidents** in support of greater regional cooperation in the Mediterranean and in active implementation of the values of dialogue and cooperation embodied by the OSCE.

Matters of cultural dialogue are actively addressed

- by the Anna Lindh Foundation and its networks within the Euro-Mediterranean framework
- and by the other organisations represented here this afternoon. They are doing a fantastic work.

**All efforts go in the same direction and serve the same goals.** Our common agenda must respond to the most pressing issues and must do so through the effective implementation of a common strategy and through concrete action.

**This is what led the Spanish Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, Mr. José Manuel García-Margallo, to propose on 20<sup>th</sup> February 2015 in Paris, at the meeting of ministers of Foreign Affairs of Mediterranean European countries, that a High-level meeting on Intercultural and Interreligious Dialogue**





would be held in Barcelona at the Headquarters of the Union for the Mediterranean at the end of July.

This meeting will involve the same organizations present this afternoon, the Anna Lindh Foundation (ALF), the Alliance of Civilizations (AoC) and the King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz International Center for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue (KAICIID) as organizing institutions, and will involve broadly the organizations and personalities committed on intercultural dialogue and regional cooperation.

In the areas related to cultural dialogue, as well as for the broader areas of cooperation developed within the framework of the Union for the Mediterranean, **joining forces, complementarities and synergies** is a necessary and powerful response likely to meet the mounting challenges, and to seize the existing numerous opportunities to ensure greater stability in the Mediterranean.

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I would like to thank you once again, Mr Secretary General, for having brought us together today. The OSCE is once again playing an instrumental role to foster peace and cooperation, and to address present challenges. The countries and the Secretariat of the Union for the Mediterranean are actively committed to join efforts to meet our common objectives.

Thank you for your attention.