

**The Secretary General Speech before the
UNESCO Executive Board
(Paris-14 October 2015)**

Excellencies,

- I would like at the outset to express my **great appreciation to H.E. Dr. Mohamed Sameh Amrou Chairman of the Executive Board and H.E. Ms. Irina Bokova Director General of the UNESCO** for giving me the honour to address the distinguished Board of UNESCO.

I would like to seize this opportunity to congratulate both of you for the outstanding activities you are undertaking.

Immediately after this session, I will have the pleasure to hold a bilateral meeting and co-sign with Director General Bokova a **Partnership Agreement between the UNESCO and the Union for the Mediterranean** because I do believe that together we can build on the existing synergies and complementarities towards implementing joint actions and activities.

- Excellencies, the challenges the region is currently facing are of an **unprecedented scale**:
 - linked to **terrorism, extremism, radicalism** and **xenophobia**
 - and to the tragedy of the **refugee crisis** as well as **illegal migration** where tens of thousands of people are risking their lives to cross the Mediterranean.

At the same time, **the Mediterranean is a region with huge potential**:

You know, in this prestigious institution, the wealth of the cultural and educational heritage of the Mediterranean

- The GDP of Europe, the Mediterranean and Africa combined is as large as that of the Americas as well as that of Asia.
- The Euro-Mediterranean region has a very dynamic young population, which is a huge asset for the global competitiveness of the region.

While the challenges we are facing are of regional dimension and obviously call for **regional responses**, the level of **economic regional integration** and cooperation in the Mediterranean is still low. The Euro-Mediterranean region remains one of the least integrated economic zones in the world.

I am convinced that the level of sustainable growth and development will not be sufficient to meet the needs of youth employment in the Mediterranean without a deeper regional integration.

The Union for the Mediterranean is strongly engaged in a dynamic of action to strengthen, and structure, a more effective regional cooperation, involving the main stakeholders and cooperation actors: governments, institutions, civil society and economic actors.

I would like to mention here, as an example, the Euro Mediterranean University in Fez for which I hope that Unesco will be partnering with the Ufm for its promotion and support.

These actions have clearly shed light on:

- The **strategic need** of the development of the regional level of the cooperation in the Mediterranean
- The existence of an **important reservoir of opportunities**, too often neglected or underestimated
- The possibility to promote **concrete and effective actions** to the benefit of socio-economic development in the region.

We need to accelerate this course and **amplify its impact**.

To make this possible, **synergies, complementarities and impact-oriented coordination** amongst all the different institutional players in the region are instrumental to increase the tangibility and visibility of the impact of regional cooperation efforts.

As you well know through UNESCO's activities, the **full involvement of the various civil society stakeholders** and the **multi-partner approach** is of paramount importance. Altogether, institutions, universities, students, researchers, parliamentarians, local authorities, the private sector, NGOs, social actors and decentralized cooperation stakeholders contribute decisively to the effectiveness of regional cooperation and will benefit the overall objective of mutual understanding, intercultural dialogue, development, peace and stability.

▪ **Prosperity and stability in the Mediterranean** is a major contribution to world's security and order. It is therefore of paramount importance for all to address the root causes of tensions and insecurity and work on an integrated agenda.

For a long time, debates about the perspectives of the Euro-Mediterranean region have been centred on the region itself. It can no longer be the case in the future. Issues such as terrorism, migration, but also economic opportunities, indicate clearly that developments beyond the Mediterranean area, **in sub-Saharan Africa** for instance, are **central** for the Euro-Mediterranean agenda.

As the world is mobilized towards the **COP21 in Paris and the COP22 in Morocco**, and as the UN has just defined the 2030 Global Development Agenda, the Euro-Mediterranean countries have the opportunity to collectively address the **global challenges** for the region and implement solutions.

The Mediterranean region's contribution to the global agenda is essential, being **central for the challenges of intercultural and interreligious dialogue, youth unemployment and gender equality, food security, or urban development.**

- Excellencies, **the Partnership Agreement between UNESCO and the UfM** that we are going to sign this morning represents an important step forward towards further strengthening the institutional relations between our two Organisations.

It was agreed that this Partnership Agreement would focus on the following **10 priority areas**: promoting the cultural diversity; fighting against extremism; promoting mutual respect and understanding among the people of the Mediterranean; promoting a culture of peace; protecting cultural heritage,

including underwater cultural heritage; scientific cooperation; women's empowerment; youth empowerment; sustainable development; and climate change.

Beyond, our close cooperation will of course be extended to every effort aiming at addressing the root causes of the multi-faceted challenges the region is currently facing.

The long-term solutions clearly lie today in **intercultural dialogue, regional cooperation**, and above all **development and growth**: an **inclusive development** that supports the cohesion, both **within the countries and amongst them at the regional level**.

Beyond essential stability challenges, we shall collectively trust and invest in the vitality of Mediterranean societies that still needs to be much better harnessed. The human, social and economic potential of the Mediterranean region **–as it stretches into Africa–** represents a major asset for all.

As you may know, November 27-28 will be marking the 20th anniversary of the Barcelona Process that later became the Union for the Mediterranean in 2008. It will also coincide with the issuance of the final document on the ENP review. It is high time we put some prospective vision for the next 20 years and therefore give a concrete substance to the way forward through a consolidated Euro-Mediterranean common agenda.

Therefore, there is a crucial need to increase significantly the synergies and complementarities between all institutions working in the Mediterranean region and beyond for the very strategic and political objective of peace, stability, security and sustainable development.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, I would like to express again all my gratitude **to you, Mr Chairman** for giving me the honour to address the distinguished Board of UNESCO.

I would also like to extend to you all, Excellencies, my most sincere and warmest thanks for your welcome this morning and I look forward to welcoming you at the premises of the UfM Secretariat in Barcelona and to continuing our exchanges aiming at fostering our future cooperation.

Thank you for your attention.
