



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

4th Union for the Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on
Strengthening the Role of Women in Society

Monday 27 November 2017

10:00 – 10:40 | Opening Remarks

10:30 – 10:40 | **H.E. Fathallah Sijilmassi**, Secretary General, Union for the Mediterranean

Dear Co-Chairs,

Ministers,

Excellencies, Mme Elisabeth Guigou, President of ALF,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to start by expressing my most sincere condolences to Egypt after the horrifying terrorist attack, as well as my strongest condemnation and solidarity with Egypt. Beyond our condolences and condemnation, our presence here is the best sign of solidarity with Egypt.

Let me also express to you, Your Excellency Dr. Maya Morsy, my heartfelt gratitude and appreciation to the Government of Egypt for its warm hospitality and for hosting the fourth Ministerial Conference of the Union for the Mediterranean on Strengthening the Role of Women in Society today, in the wonderful city of Cairo.

I am very happy to witness **Egypt's strong involvement in the framework of the Union for the Mediterranean**, thereby illustrating the key position of the country in the region. By holding this important conference, but also through its multiple engagements in UfM activities, Egypt confirms its active and pivotal role in the enhancement of the partnership between the North and the South of the Mediterranean.

Egypt hosted earlier this year the Second UfM Ministerial Conference for Sustainable Urban Development, as well as the UfM Energy and Climate Business Forum, and holds since May 2017 the Presidency of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Union for the Mediterranean.

I was also honoured to attend just last week the election of Mr. Ahmed el Wakeel, President of the Federation of Egyptian Chambers of Commerce, for the Presidency of ASCAME (*Association of Mediterranean Chambers of Commerce and Industry*) during the 11th edition of the MEDAWEEK.

Allow me to particularly applaud, Dr. Maya Morsi, the National Council of Women for having made 2017 the year of the Egyptian Woman. **Your firm commitment and efforts to promote the courage and determination of Egyptian women and the extraordinary role they play in the Egyptian society remains an example for the whole Euro-Mediterranean region.**

I would also like to warmly commend the **outstanding leadership of the Union for the Mediterranean Co-Presidency**, represented by the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and the European Union, which has proven instrumental to advance the work of the UfM and enhance regional cooperation efforts.

As you know, under the impulse of the UfM Co-Presidency, over 15 Ministerial meetings have taken place in the course of the last years and several new ministerial meetings are already foreseen.

Enhancing regional cooperation and integration is indeed key to effectively address the challenges of peace, security, stability and development in the region, as it has been confirmed and highlighted

by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs during the II UfM Regional Forum and in the Roadmap that has been adopted.

We are gathered here today within the framework of the UfM because of our collective belief that **together we are stronger, and that regional challenges call for regional solutions.**

To that effect, we all know that women's equal rights and opportunities are an essential contribution to inclusive development and regional stability; and there is no doubt that the high-level participation today in this conference reflects the common political will and commitment to continue enhancing our concerted efforts in

addressing the pressing challenges we face the Euro-Mediterranean region.

Since the third UfM Ministerial Conference on *Strengthening the role of Women in Society*, held in Paris in 2013, the progress made and the achievements realized have been important, and I would like to underline the remarkable inclusiveness of the participatory process that led to the declaration submitted to you for adoption this morning.

I am very pleased that we are holding this Ministerial at a moment when the world is mobilized for fighting violence against women, and

I am also very pleased to note that combating violence against women is one of the four main priorities identified by UfM Member States.

Allow me to share with you the following:

1/ The Multi-Stakeholder Regional Dialogue Platform on Strengthening the Role of Women, launched in May 2015, brought together UfM Member States with key actors of the Euro-Mediterranean region, including local authorities, representatives of civil society organizations, donors and the private sector. Its objective was to follow up on the implementation of the commitments made by the Ministers in Paris, to identify good practices and to prepare the recommendations for this fourth Ministerial meeting.

I want to **pay tribute here to the excellent work carried by the four working groups of the platform** through their regular meetings, and their unique co-chairing system, held by a UfM Member State on the one hand and an international organization on the other hand.

The groups were constituted according to four priorities identified by the participants themselves (*namely: (i) increasing the participation of women in economic life; (ii) improving women's access to decision-making positions and leadership positions; (iii) combat stereotypes through education and culture; and (iv) Combat violence and discrimination against women*), **proving once again the excellent ownership and inclusiveness of the process.**

2/ The organization of **three High-Level Conferences on Women Empowerment in the Mediterranean**, which mobilized over 300 participants each year. The Conferences have made visible the important role of women as major drivers of economic growth, development and stability in the region, and explored new strategic actions for operational recommendations to be implemented.

3/ Finally, *and this is the third level of the UfM working methodology, along with the Ministerial conferences and the regional dialogue platforms*, the **labelling by UfM Member States of 8 regional projects** that target more than 50,000 women and young women in the region.

The UfM Secretariat continuously works to ensure gender empowerment and mainstreaming in all its sectors of intervention, projects, partnerships and activities, especially under the Med4Jobs initiative.

These achievements have been made possible thanks **to key partnerships and important financial support of UfM Member States**, which I warmly thank for their firm commitment and continuous support to the work of the Secretariat. During the process that led us here today, we have also developed **strategic partnerships with key regional actors working to strengthen the role of women in society**, with the aim of pooling efforts to enhance the impacts on the

ground; and I am particularly happy to see that many of them will be present among us this afternoon during the two side-events of the Ministerial Conference dedicated to its follow up and implementation.

I hope to see all of you at the Fourth High-Level Conference on Women Empowerment that will take place in Portugal next year.

I would like to **pay tribute here to my dear colleague Laurence Païs, Deputy Secretary General in charge of Social and Civil Affairs, and her dedicated team** for their energy and efficiency in organising this conference and more generally for their continuous efforts in advancing the cause of women empowerment in the region.

I want to confirm the strong commitment of the UfM Secretariat to work with all of you to reach our common objectives.

(FR)

Excellences,

Mesdames et Messieurs,

Cette réunion ministérielle ne marque pas un aboutissement mais **une étape importante vers une mise en œuvre effective et concrète des engagements pris**. La déclaration ministérielle qui sera adoptée aujourd'hui contient des mesures et recommandations plus ciblés et

opérationnelles qui ouvrent la voie vers des actions concrètes, qui feront l'objet d'un suivi tout au long des trois prochaines années. **Un premier bilan sera fait en octobre 2018 à l'occasion de la 4^{ème} Conférence de haut niveau sur les femmes qui aura lieu à Lisbonne, au Portugal.**

Dans toutes les sociétés, les femmes ont toujours été considérées comme un catalyseur de changement, une source d'innovation, un moteur pour la croissance et un facteur majeur de stabilité et de cohésion sociale.

Si des progrès ont indéniablement été faits dans la région euro-méditerranéenne ces dernières années, **il reste encore beaucoup à faire.**

C'est pourquoi, *Excellences Mesdames et Messieurs*, **le renforcement de la coopération et du dialogue régional et la promotion d'un agenda commun fort sont aujourd'hui plus que jamais nécessaires**, afin d'exploiter l'énorme potentiel que représentent les femmes en Méditerranée, et de leur offrir les opportunités nécessaires pour remplir pleinement leur rôle en tant que moteur fondamental du changement et du développement dans nos sociétés.

Dans ce sens, les ministres des affaires étrangères de l'UpM ont adopté en Janvier 2017 lors du II Forum Régional de l'UpM à Barcelone une feuille de route, qui donne clairement une nouvelle impulsion politique aux efforts de développement de la coopération régionale en Méditerranée.

Nous devons faire en sorte que cette dynamique politique puisse continuer à se traduire en actions concrètes au profit de nos populations et du bien-être de la région.

Je veux ici vous assurer de l'engagement plein et entier du Secrétariat général de l'UpM pour continuer à travailler avec vous tous pour

atteindre nos objectifs communs, pour une région euro-méditerranéenne plus forte, plus intégrée et plus prospère pour tous.

Je vous remercie pour votre aimable attention.