



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

**General Assembly of the Alliance of Mediterranean News Agencies
5 July 2017 – Agadir, Morocco**

Intervention by the Secretary General of the Union for the Mediterranean
Represented by Ms. Isabel Pardillos, Communication and Press Officer

I am speaking on behalf of the Secretary General of the Union for the Mediterranean, Mr Fathallah Sijilmassi, who regrets not being able to attend. An official meeting at the UfM premises did not allow him to be here among you today.

Secretary General Sijilmassi asked me to share with you this message he would like to address AMAN's General Assembly, sending all of you his warmest regards.

“Dear President Hachimi Idrissi, My dear friend,

Dear Secretary General George Penintaex,

Dear Members of AMAN,

Dear participants, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me start by expressing my heartfelt gratitude for the hospitality of AMAN and the Maghreb Arab Press (MAP), and in particular to its General Director, Mr Khalil Hachimi Idrissi, for his kind invitation to participate in this important meeting, here in the beautiful city of Agadir. I

warmly commend the MAP on the organization of this General Assembly meeting and congratulate them for the upcoming holding of AMAN's Presidency.

The Union for the Mediterranean is very happy to collaborate and strengthen ties with AMAN, whose dynamism contributes to the broader UfM objective for the enhancement of regional cooperation and dialogue. Active and positive agendas such as AMAN's are today essential in the Mediterranean, especially given the fundamental role that media can and do play in the current developments of the region.

With the increasing challenges faced in the Mediterranean, but also its numerous assets, opportunities and success stories, implementing a positive agenda for the region is more than ever imperative. The Mediterranean context calls today to build synergies and multiply concrete and positive actions in order to capitalize on its immense untapped potential.

It is indeed unfair to continue limiting the Mediterranean only to the negative dimensions. It would be an injustice done to the millions of Mediterranean people, particularly youth, whose daily achievements are remarkable. These are the very people, in the South and in the North, who represent the best assets and success stories of the region, and who are the ambassadors of the shared values we want to defend and promote. They must be at the center of our action; and this action must be collective and concerted.

We are more than ever before in need to join forces and foster the exchange of ideas, experiences and best practices between professionals from both shores of the Mediterranean, as you have been actively doing for

many years now. Our strongest will at the UfM is to continue increasing our interactions with key and engaged actors such as AMAN, and further work together to enhance this positive agenda for the Mediterranean.

This should be done bearing in mind the importance of a global strategic vision including Europe, the Mediterranean region and Africa. And it is very emblematic to mention this strategic vision here in Morocco.

The Union for the Mediterranean has intensively developed in the last years a growing activity and a specific methodology, giving new momentum to the regional cooperation and yielding concrete and encouraging results in the region.

Under the active leadership of the its Co-Presidency -held by the European Union and Jordan- and with the active involvement of its Member-States (all the AMAN countries are members of the UfM), these last years have marked a turning point for the institution at the political and operational levels. The UfM is today a strategic platform that adequately addresses the three key interrelated priorities in the Mediterranean, regional stability, human development and integration, through a strong interrelation between the policy dimension and its operational translation into concrete projects on the ground.

As of today, the concrete and tangible results have been encouraging:

- Political Forum/Ministerial meetings: 15 Ministerial Conferences and high-level meetings took place these last years;
- Regional Policy Platforms: Increasingly structured regional dialogues have involved a network of cooperation of over 20.000 stakeholders around the Mediterranean, including international

organisations, parliamentarians, civil society representatives, international financial institutions, private sector entities, universities and think-tanks;

– Projects with regional impact: the UfM adds up to 47 projects today with a budget of €5.3 billion, tackling the root causes of the pressing challenges in the Mediterranean and aiming at SME development, job creation, women's empowerment, renewable energy and depollution, infrastructure development and education.

In particular, and considering the thematic of this meeting, the communication dimension of our activities has been heavily amplified. We set-up our Communication department in 2013 and since then, we have achieved important results, reaching a significant audience through our social networks, mailing channels and events, identifying the most relevant human-interest stories from the many regional cooperation projects we are developing and reaching important collaborations and partnerships with key media outlets and journalists across the region.

As an international organization we also deal with a number of communication challenges, among which, the multilingual dimension and the issue of being able to communicate on a timely manner in several languages and with the highest quality standards of translations. In this regard, we would like to communicate more in Arabic, the official language of many of our Member-states and mother-tongue of millions of the region's citizens, and we are actively and continuously working to accomplish it. In this regard, the collaboration with your organization is very important.

Today, the Mediterranean region does not need a romantic vision of the glorious past of the Mare Nostrum, nor defeatist discourses about its

current state or never ending theories about the future of the region. It needs concrete actions that strengthen ties between populations and provide tangible answers to their expectations. We need to act now on making our institutions collectively stronger than challenges, providing counter-narratives to the pressing issues of the region.

Considering the key role of media in this sense, the UfM Secretariat, as a multi-stakeholder platform for regional dialogue and cooperation, stands by you to jointly move forward in this direction, further reinforcing our ties. We hosted in Barcelona a visit of journalists from AMAN news agencies in April 2015 and have been actively involved in the creation of the Network of environmental journalists from news agencies and institutions working in this field in the Mediterranean, participating in the meetings of 2015, in Malaga, and 2016, in Marrakech back to back with the COP22. Building on this long history of collaboration, I would like to invite AMAN to hold one of its next meetings, seminars or press trips at the UfM premises in Barcelona.

I would like to conclude by paying tribute once again to AMAN for its major achievements and extend my words of support and commitment to the members of the General Assembly and to all the colleagues that work every day to make quality real-time information in our region a reality.

The UfM Secretariat will remain fully dedicated to support you in this regard and to continue strengthening the partnership between our two institutions and with all the Mediterranean news agencies.

Thank you very much.