

## **Speech delivered by the Secretary General of the Union for the Mediterranean**

Meeting of Ministers of the UfM,

November 26, 2015, Barcelona

**Dear Copresidents,**

**Distinguished Ministers and Heads of delegations,**

**Dear Ambassadors,**

**Excellency,**

**Dear colleagues,**

I would like to start by sharing with you my great satisfaction for the holding of such an important meeting today at such an important juncture in the region.

I would like to express my gratitude and appreciation to you personally Co-chairs of the UfM, **Ms. Federica Mogherini** and **Mr. Nasser Judeh** for your commitment and political support.

I would also like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to you personally **Minister Garcia-Margallo** and to the whole staff of your Ministry, not only for hosting us today and for hosting the Secretariat, but also for being an active key player in the activities of the UfM.

Allow me to pay a special tribute to **Ambassador Yousef Bataineh** and **Patrice Bergamini** for their personal and permanent support. Whatever achievements we have been able to reach, we owe it greatly to them.

In particular, I would like to praise the efficiency of the Jordanian diplomacy which took the lead, with the support of all, in order to ensure the status of observer for the UFM at the United Nations. This is indeed an important step.

Excellencies, dear colleagues,

I think that Ministers set clearly the challenges and opportunities in the region.

I would like to join the Copresidency and Minister García-Margallo in expressing our solidarity with the victims of the appalling terrorist attacks being inflicted upon our populations putting at risk innocent lives.

As our collective values are being challenged, we stand together more than ever united against terrorism, extremism and violence.

This can only reinforce our collective willingness to work together and to reinforce our regional cooperation.

Excellencies,

As continuity to the Barcelona process, the UfM provides two major innovations and added values:

- **The principle of Co-ownership** embodied by the Copresidencies
- **The Establishment of the Secretariat** that has a specific mandate to operationalize the decisions taken collectively by Member States.

I would like to report here on the activities of the Secretariat as they have been increasingly developing over the last 3 years thanks to the support of the Copresidencies and all member states.

**1/ At the policy level** : UfM Ministerial Conferences have been held to contribute towards building a common Mediterranean development agenda, by establishing strategic objectives and sector specific lines of action. **Since 2012, seven Ministerial Conferences** have been held in key sectors for the future of the region: industrial cooperation, transport, energy, strengthening the role of women in society, digital economy, environment and climate change, and blue economy. Tomorrow in our **26<sup>th</sup> SOM** we will be discussing perspectives to hold another 4 or 5 Ministerial Meetings in strategic areas such as, Energy, Labour and employment, urban development and Women empowerment.

These Ministerials provide regional policy framework, road maps, action plans on which the secretariat ensures the follow-up. On the base of these regional policy frameworks, the Secretariat acts as a platform for dialogue and partnership.

**2/ The regional dialogue** is developed through a multi-partners approach for promoting the exchange of views, ideas and best practices on common regional challenges between relevant partners and stakeholders, as well as developing regional and sub-regional networks. Increasingly structured regional dialogues have taken place under the UfM framework in the different sectors of water, energy, urban development, transport, environment and climate change.

This dialogue is a priority task for the UfMS in particular in a context of an unfortunately very low level of regional integration. UfM organized **11 high level conferences** and more

than a hundred expert meetings, allowing exchanges within a network of cooperation of over **5000 stakeholders** around the Mediterranean, including specialized organizations, Parliamentarians, NGOs and other civil society representatives, international financial institutions, promoters of projects, developments agencies, and private sector representatives

I would like here to praise the excellent collaboration that we have in this regard with the colleagues from the European Commission (Michael Koehler).

**3/ The Operational dimension : the projects.** Building on the strategic priorities defined by the governments within the framework of the ministerial conferences and framed through the regional dialogues, the Secretariat has been developing concrete regional projects with tangible impact on the ground. These projects, with a clear regional focus and an impact-oriented approach, range from big infrastructure investment projects to technical assistance, capacity building and training programmes, developing innovative methodologies with a view to build on best practices and replicate success stories. So far UfM has labelled 33 regional projects worth around 5 billion Euros, financed from mixed sources, including: governments, financial institutions, development agencies, private sector.

These projects are concentrated around three priority themes, directly related to the challenges in the region:

- 1) Inclusive growth & youth employability**
- 2) Sustainable development**
- 3) Women empowerment**

#### **1) Inclusive growth & youth employability**

So far, the UfMS has labeled **13 projects** directly addressing the challenges of youth employability and inclusive growth. Framed by the political mandate (in particular the mandate of the Ministerial conferences on industrial cooperation and digital economy) and nourished by the priorities expressed in the regional dialogues, these projects target approximately **200.000 beneficiaries, mostly young people**, and involve more than **1.000 small and medium private enterprises**. After an extensive consultation process with

various stakeholders, the UfMS launched in 2013 a dedicated framework regional initiative (Med4Jobs) which defines priorities of intervention in terms of employability, intermediary services and job creation for the region, under which specific projects continue to be developed.

## **2) Sustainable development**

In the framework of its policy mandate provided by the respective Ministerial Conferences, the UfM strategic objectives will continue to focus on: advancing the Euro-Mediterranean sustainable urban development strategy; facilitating transport over land and sea contributing to build a strong trans-Mediterranean network; contributing to de-pollution efforts in the region and improving access to water management; promoting renewable energy and energy efficiency; contributing to addressing the challenge of climate change in the region, while tapping the potential of the blue economy. **So far, 14 projects have been already labeled** by the 43 UfM countries with direct impact on the population of the areas involved.

## **3) Women empowerment**

Within the political framework defined in the Ministerial Declaration on Strengthening the Role of Women in Society held in 2013, the UfMS has worked on key strategic objectives such as advancing the regional agenda on gender equality, developing Euro-Mediterranean women's empowerment initiatives and enhancing women's access to the labour market and entrepreneurial networks. Under the achievements so far, 15 thematic workshops, seminars and conferences with more than 2000 participants and **6 projects labeled by the 43 UfM countries, with a target of 50,000 beneficiaries.**

I am happy to report that more than half of the 33 labelled projects are today under implementation. You have on the table the activity report of the secretariat where you can find all the details but of course we are in regular contacts and consultations with your teams regarding the development of these projects and those that are still in the pipeline and that we hope we will be able to develop in 2016 and beyond.

Allow me to express at this stage my deep appreciation to the Senior Officials that you have each appointed for the UfM and who are truly daily partners of our institution.

My appreciation goes also to the EIB Vice President, Mr. Román Escolano, and to the President of the Anna Lindh Foundation, Ms. Elisabeth Guigou, for a very forward looking and action oriented collaboration.

**Excellencies, Dear Colleagues,**

Today as we are facing increasing challenges, those of terrorism, of extremism, of illegal migration and others, I would like to assure you of the determination of the Secretariat to accelerate and amplify our work in order to reach a wider impact on the level of regional cooperation and integration.

Your meeting today with your political support, the strong and positive reference in the ENP joint Communication of last week as well as the existence of large number of active stakeholders in all your countries, as you will see some of them this afternoon in the Conference, must lead us to give new impetus to the UfM activities in 2016 and beyond.

The Secretariat stands ready to be empowered further to meet our collective objectives and for the way forward stemming from our meeting today. I would like at this stage to pay tribute in front of all of you to the professionalism and dedication of the staff of the Secretariat coming from a large number of your countries and I thank you all for that.