Water - Side event 1
2nd UfM Ministerial Declaration on Water : Operationalizing the Rome Initiative on Water

Date and time: Nov. 19, 2026, 10:00am to 11:00am
Location: UfM pavilion
Organizers: UfM
COP31 PRIORITY ALIGNMENT: PRIORITY 5: POWERING CLIMATE ACTION

Background:
The Mediterranean basin is warming approximately 20% faster than the global average, facing increasing water scarcity, droughts, climate-related disasters and pressures on water infrastructure. Despite expanding financing opportunities, investment remains constrained by limited institutional capacities, insufficient project preparation and a shortage of bankable projects.

The Second UfM Ministerial Declaration on Water, adopted by the 43 UfM member states in Rome on 28 September 2026, provides renewed political impetus to strengthen water resilience, regional cooperation and sustainable financing. It calls for fully funded water management and investment plans, stronger institutional capacities and broader partnerships to translate commitments into concrete actions.

These priorities align with the European Water Resilience Strategy, the Pact for the Mediterranean and the Water Resilience Initiative launched by the European Commission's DG MENA, offering opportunities to strengthen EU–Mediterranean cooperation, climate adaptation and coordinated investment.

The Rome Initiative on Water, recognised in the Ministerial Declaration (paragraph 21), represents a practical expression of the collective commitment of UfM member states to work together towards their common water goals and address the region's critical water challenges. Building on the Pact for the Mediterranean, it advances these commitments through two complementary objectives: strengthening technical capacities for comprehensive water management and investment planning, and facilitating the design, financing and management of sustainable water projects. The Ministerial Declaration mandates the UfM Secretariat to lead the further development of the Initiative and the UfM Regional Platform on Water to oversee its development and implementation. The Initiative aims to strengthen regional cooperation, mobilise partnerships and deliver concrete improvements in water management and resilience across the Mediterranean basin.

This side event will focus on operationalising the Rome Initiative on Water, translating ministerial commitments into coordinated actions, capacity development and investment opportunities. Priorities include strengthening institutional capacities,

improving project preparation and bankability, developing investment pipelines and mobilising public, private and blended finance.

It will also broaden consultations and partnerships with UfM member states, European and international institutions, national and local authorities, water utilities, academia, civil society, youth and women's networks, the private sector, development banks, climate funds and technical partners, fostering inclusive participation, local ownership and long-term cooperation.

Taking place during COP31 in November 2026, the activity will help position the Rome Initiative on Water as an inclusive regional cooperation framework for water and climate resilience, strengthening synergies with European and Mediterranean initiatives and promoting coordinated action, sustainable investments and lasting partnerships.

Objectives:

- Present the 2026 UfM Ministerial Declaration on Water and the Rome Initiative on Water, highlighting their strategic priorities, political mandate and operational implications for strengthening regional water resilience, institutional capacities, sustainable investments and multi-stakeholder cooperation.
- Advance the operationalisation of the Rome Initiative on Water, identifying priority areas of intervention, potential implementation modalities, institutional arrangements and opportunities for coordinated regional actions, while strengthening synergies with the European Water Resilience Strategy, the Pact for the Mediterranean and the DG MENA Water Resilience Initiative.
- Promote the identification and preparation of priority water and climate resilience investment projects, with particular attention to strengthening project preparation capacities, improving bankability and developing sustainable investment pipelines across Mediterranean countries, while encouraging integrated, innovative and locally adapted solutions.
- Identify opportunities for technical assistance, institutional capacity development, knowledge exchange and project preparation support that can help UfM member states, local authorities, utilities, research institutions and other stakeholders translate water resilience priorities into concrete, financially viable and implementable actions and projects.
- Broaden consultations and strengthen inclusive, multi-stakeholder partnerships involving governments, local and regional authorities, academia, research institutions, civil society, youth and women's organisations, private-sector actors, MDBs, IFIs, climate funds and development partners, fostering shared ownership, coordinated implementation, innovation and sustainable financing under the Rome Initiative on Water.

Outputs:

- A shared understanding of the Rome Initiative on Water's operational priorities and implementation pathways, including potential institutional arrangements, capacity development activities, project preparation mechanisms, multi-

stakeholder engagement and opportunities for regional cooperation, in line with the 2026 UfM Ministerial Declaration and complementary European and Mediterranean water resilience initiatives.

- Identification of priority areas for regional action and investment, including opportunities for developing a pipeline of bankable water and climate resilience projects addressing sustainable management of non-conventional water resources, the WEFE Nexus, Nature-based Solutions, water digitalisation, climate-resilient infrastructure and other innovative approaches, while fostering synergies with existing regional programmes and financing mechanisms.
- An expanded and more inclusive partnership framework for the Rome Initiative on Water, bringing together national and local authorities, international and regional organisations, academia, research institutions, civil society, youth and women's networks, the private sector, technical partners and financial institutions to support continued consultations, coordinated capacity building, knowledge exchange, project preparation, investment mobilisation and the progressive operationalisation of the Initiative.

Draft agenda:

Time	Session	Speakers and format (to be confirmed)
10:00-10:05	**Opening**	• DSG Joan Borrell, Stability and Resilience, UfM

Time	Session	Speakers and format (to be confirmed)
10:05-10:55	**Panel**	• Moderators: Frederic de Dinechin, Sr Policy advisor, UfM • Counsellor of Embassy Federico Ciattaglia, Head of the Unit for Multilateral Economic, Financial, Energy and Environmental Cooperation of the Directorate General for Sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America, Asia and Oceania • Ms. Huriye İncecik Ceylan (Section Manager, Water Policy and Law, General Directorate of Water Management, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Republic of Türkiye • Ms. Tatjana Hema, Coordinator, United Nations Environment Programme / Mediterranean Action Plan (UNEP/MAP) (TBC) • Ms. Rula Khadra, Science Coordinator, International Centre for Advanced Mediterranean Agronomic Studies (CIHEAM Bari) • Amgad Elmahdi, Head of Middle East Region GCF (TBC)
10:55-11:00	**Closing**	• Frederic de Dinechin, Sr Policy advisor, UfM