



**Speech by Mr. Fathallah Sijilmassi, Secretary General of the
Union for the Mediterranean, at the 8th Plenary Session of the
Parliamentary Assembly of the Union for the Mediterranean
(25th March 2012)**

English version

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentleman,

Allow me to elaborate on the role of the UFM in the present context. It is a fact that the global environment has changed substantially since the Paris Summit of 2008, both in the North and in the South:

In the North, the EU is facing an important economic challenge with the increasing international competition of other dynamic regions in the world. It is also under a pressure of the economic crisis precisely since 2008. And let us not underestimate the institutional evolutions that inevitably accompanied the enlargements, its set of new realities, priorities and challenges.

In the South, the so called Arab spring created a new political reality in little over a year that brought the fresh winds of democracy, freedom and hope but requires urgently the management of the transition and quick responses to the needs of the population.

I would like to highlight here two numbers:

- 80 Millions: the total number of young people in southern Mediterranean.
- 40 Millions: the number of jobs that we need to provide in the fifteen coming years in order to keep the level of unemployment at its actual rate.

All these structural evolutions require a new vision and action. I am glad to note that both in the North and in the South, there is a unanimity that the methodology of the Euro Mediterranean partnership need to be amended and adapted. And indeed, important decisions and steps have been taken in that direction.

The UFM is, more than ever, an appropriate tool for the new Euro Mediterranean partnership. I want to give you three reasons for that:



- Co-ownership
- Management of concrete and tangible projects and initiatives and the funding raising
- Effective and efficient coherence of actions with other regional frameworks

1. Co-ownership.

For the first time in the history of the Mediterranean, 43 countries from Europe and Southern Mediterranean decided to establish a common framework and operational body with the objective of implementing priority projects in the economic and social fields.

That partnership represents the first shared and co-chaired structure between the northern and southern rims of the Mediterranean. This balanced structure symbolizes for the first time the principles of « co-responsibility », « co-ownership » and « co-decision » between all the partners. The parliamentary Assembly of the UfM itself best embodies this spirit of shared responsibility.

Nowadays, all key actors of the Mediterranean region should benefit from this opportunity to reinforce the coordination and coherence of the actions that have an impact in the life of the citizens. Today's context gives us a unique opportunity for the southern and northern countries and for the institutional partners to succeed in our objective of creating an area of stability, peace and prosperity in the Mediterranean.

2. Management of concrete and tangible projects and initiatives and the funding raising.

As you know, the Secretariat of the UfM has been mandated to work on six main priorities: energy, water and environment, transport, civil and social affairs, Higher Education and Research, Business Development and SMEs. We are working currently on 8 labeled projects and it will be my utmost priority to continue working on significant projects (significant in positive impact on the populations and the regional cooperation). The Secretariat of the UfM is also mandated to raise the necessary funds for the implementation of these projects. That requires intensive interactions with International Financial Institutions as well as other potential bilateral and private sector partners.

3. Effective and efficient coherence of action with other regional frameworks.



As a key institutional bridge between the north and the south, the UfM should now play an important role accompanying and promoting innovative regional actions that could give an answer to the needs of the populations in the Mediterranean countries.

It is of utmost importance to underline that this work is developed together with the different partners and already existing processes, enhancing cooperation and interaction with the bilateral and regional existing frameworks.

In this context, the recent decision of the EU to assume the co presidency of the UPM for the North is an opportunity to continue to look for efficient synergies and complementarities within the existing frames of the Mediterranean partnership such as the European neighbourhood policy.

I would also like to point out the importance of some particular frameworks such as the 5+5 group that allowed us to reach a certain number of positive results, such as the launch of the Trans-Maghreb Motorway Axis. This project will be developed in cooperation with the group of transport of the 5+5. This underlines the importance of greater regional and sub-regional integration. The UMA is to that effect, as Minister Amrani said, of paramount strategic importance.

Allow me to kindly invite you to visit our premises in Barcelona in order to present to you the current projects and explore the different possibilities to strengthen the cooperation and coordination between the AP-UfM and the Secretariat, with a special focus on the coordination of our divisions and your working groups.

The political support of the parliamentarians is essential to boost dynamism in the region and contribute to promote concrete actions of the UfM, particularly in the context of the discussions on the future European neighbourhood policy and the financial perspectives of 2014- 2020.

In this regard, the last resolution of the European Parliament on the review of the European neighbourhood policy which was adopted on the 13th December 2011 highlights the need to reinforce the regional dimension of the partnership and stresses on the necessary synergies and complementarities between the UfM and the EU neighbourhood policy.

In Conclusion, our presence here today in Rabat gives a strong political signal of the will of all involved actors (Euro Mediterranean countries, governments, parliamentarians, local representatives and regions, civil society) to mobilize all their support and their efforts to transform the UfM into a driven force of the socioeconomic development in the region.



We need to take into consideration the new economic realities in Europe and for the world economy. Europe must realize that the strengthened competitiveness it needs in the international economy probably lies, to a very large extent, within a stronger partnership with its Mediterranean neighbours.

Evolutions in the South inevitably will influence many aspects of the Euro-Mediterranean region and will have a direct impact on the relations between the two sides. In this new context we are given a unique opportunity to strengthen the Euro-Mediterranean cooperation. We can now work to transform these evolutions into an effective partnership, sub-regional economic integration, economic development and job creation.

The UfM framework is of course only one of the tools, but growingly a useful tool to implement such closer cooperation. It must operate as a catalyst to bring states, International Financial Institutions and the private sector together around concrete economic projects of strategic importance to generate jobs, innovation and growth throughout the region.

Thank you for your attention.