



Secretariat of the Union for the Mediterranean  
Secrétariat de l'Union pour la Méditerranée

**ARLEM Commission for Sustainable Development**

**Discussion of UfM Secretariat Role in Water Sector  
and  
SUDEV Draft Report on Water Management**

**Speech by**

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Gentlemen Co-Chairs of ARLEM

Ladies and Gentlemen Members of the Commission for Sustainable Development  
Distinguished Guests

It gives me great pleasure to meet with you today and to exchange views on the UfM, its planned activities with regards to the Water Sector, as well as your role in advancing its noble goal of achieving a safe, secure, cooperative and developed Euro-Med region that reflects positive dialogue and constructive discourse, rather than clash and conflict, of civilizations.

Ladies and Gentlemen

At UfM Secretariat, we believe that you at ARLEM have a very important role to play: If the Governments in our region cannot drive the sought-after goal of unity through diversity as quickly or as forcibly as we the people in the Euro-Med want, then it is up to organizations such as ARLEM to take the lead and move forward the process of regional sustainable development despite the political situation. There is much more that unites the Euro-Med peoples than separates them. Religious and cultural diversity should be seen as a Strength not a Weakness, as an Opportunity not a Threat. And we either fail and fall down together or succeed and win together.

We believe that the UfM represents an opportunity for a win-win situation and that North and South can cooperate, complement and coordinate their future together in this region, so that we repel the doom and gloom and the inevitability of the clash of civilizations in which racially-prejudiced and xenophobic people wants us to believe!

Rather than fighting on this rich planet like greedy children we want to be the caring human beings that we were created to be, embracing one another regardless of our differences in color, race, religion or cultural background.

Ladies and Gentlemen

The fact is that we human beings are created mainly from water. 90% of our cells, 85% of our blood and 80% of our brains is water! It is therefore essential to understand this special relationship between us and water, and act immediately and continuously to manage the ever decreasing water resources that we have.

Ladies and Gentlemen

The Mediterranean region faces serious environmental threats to its biodiversity, natural resources, habitable areas, health and food security. It also faces major challenges of water scarcity and droughts. The increased pressure on water resources resulting from global warming will be exacerbated by escalating demand from growing population levels, improved standard of living, and per capita water needs.

Since 1970, food production per capita has declined by at least 20% in Africa and parts of Asia, due to desertification and mismanagement of fresh water. Each year, an area of more than 200,000 sq km, larger than the size of Tunisia and as large as Greece and Portugal put together, is impoverished due to encroaching deserts. 80 of the 100 countries experiencing increased desertification are developing countries, mainly in Africa and Asia. In the past, wars were waged over land. In the not so distant future, wars will be fought over water.

Ladies and Gentlemen

One of the primary tasks of Environment and Water Division in the UfM Secretariat is to promote concrete projects, which contribute directly to the implementation of the Horizon 2020 Initiative to De-Pollute the Mediterranean through tackling, by 2020, the sources accounting for around 80% of pollution loading, which are mainly municipal solid and liquid waste and industrial emissions.

Another primary task is the promotion of the UfM Water agenda. Following decisions of the Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on Water (*Dead Sea, 2008*), the Strategy for Water in the Mediterranean was elaborated by a Water Expert Group. As you are aware, the Strategy tackles four main priorities namely: water governance; water and climate change adaptation; water demand management; and water financing. This Strategy shall be complemented by an Action Plan to be developed in 2011, which will match the agreed priorities for action with capacities and financial resources in the region.

The UfM Secretariat will promote the 3Rs of water management, REDUCE, REUSE and RECYCLE. Its projects and activities in 2011 and beyond will be truly based on this slogan.

The projects we want to concentrate on promoting in Water and Environment have to be innovative, cost-effective, piloting cutting-edge technology and using as much “green” energy as possible for water generation, reduction in utilization for domestic and agricultural purposes, as well as re-use and recycling, utilizing solar, wind, tidal and other forms of renewable energy.

Other tasks that will be pursued by the UfM Secretariat include securing wide and meaningful stakeholder participation, promoting private sector participation, enhancing operational synergies among contributing processes led and implemented by EU and non-EU partners, improving cooperation of Ministries and Authorities dealing with Environment, Water, Marine and Climate change issues with other sectoral Ministries and Institutions, on the national level, to maintain transparency, coordination and effectiveness etc.

In line with the above and in the context of the year 2011, the Secretariat will assist in:

- Approval of the Strategy for Water and development of its Action Plan;
- Follow up and promote well-defined projects; and,
- Work on funding issues in cooperation with the Division in charge of Funding Coordination.

In order to implement the overall strategy of the Division Another main objective, the Secretariat will work on strengthening and expansion of existing UfM formal and stakeholders' platforms such as ARLEM, establishing new platforms, including private-public partnerships, NGO etc., working with Governmental and Inter-governmental bodies interested in Water issues (GTZ, AFD, DIFD, EC, World Bank etc.) and collaborating with reputed water bodies (World Water Council, Med. Water Institute etc.). This, it is felt, will have particular and positive emphasis on the issues of water, environment and climate in the region.

Let me emphasize here that we, at the UfM, want to have a genuine, collaborative and transparent relationship with our partners. Together, we want to determine the real needs, brainstorm in depth through workshops and focus groups, research the market and niche, prepare the strategy and develop innovative project proposals, support in bringing the required funding, advice and give feedback during implementation, review and analyze the results and outputs and finally monitor and evaluate the outcome and impact. Only with such an in-depth process, both the UfM and its partners can succeed!

Let me quote the famous American basketball player, Michael Jordan, who said "Talent wins games, but teamwork and intelligence wins championships".

Ladies and Gentlemen

I have read with special interest, your "Draft Report on Local Water Management in the Mediterranean" and would like to praise ARLEM and the Commission for Sustainable Development on this great effort. The proposal for a pilot project to meet practical goals based on short- or medium-term goals set in the UfM Water Strategy in collaboration with ARLEM, and particularly in the areas of education/awareness raising, training and research and technology transfer, is an excellent idea.

I would also like to congratulate you on the Policy Recommendations outlined in the Draft Report, especially with regards to the pushing for the adoption of the Water Strategy and to involve local and regional authorities in its implementation. The establishment of “consultative committees” to improve effective governance, the production of a “financing Atlas” that includes breakdown of financing opportunities and synergies between different schemes and institutions, the drawing up of updated “list of national and sub-national legislation on water-related issues”, and coordination, participation and advice of Euro-Med and International centers of excellence that carry out research on water resource management and channeling them through UfM Euro-Med University in Slovenia (and in Fez, Morocco, in the future) are also important policy recommendations that are worthy of your discussions today.

Ladies and gentlemen

The Secretariat for the UfM is still being built, but we owe it to you that it becomes an effective, efficient, transparent and sustainable organization, that gives added value to the UfM and its formal bodies. But despite the difficulties, we have decided not to give up easily... Everything that is good in this life deserve to fight for... the UfM is an ambitious and grand scheme of things in this region and is definitely worth fighting for, from both sides, the governments and the people!

Finally, let me congratulate the City of Marseille and the World Water Council on holding the 6<sup>th</sup> World Water Forum in March 2012.

Thank you ladies and gentlemen!