



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

**Speech by Mr Fathallah Sijilmassi**  
**UfM Secretary-General**  
***9<sup>th</sup> UfM Ministerial on Industrial Cooperation***  
**19 February 2014, Brussels**

Co-Presidents:

Mr. Antonio Tajani, Vice President of the European Commission,

*Dr Hatem Al-Halawani, Minister of Industry, Trade & Supply, Jordan*

Mr. Stefan Füle Commissioner for Enlargement and Neighborhood Policy

Honorable Ministers, Ambassadors, Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure for me to participate, for the first time, to your esteemed meeting on the development of industrial cooperation in the Euro-Mediterranean region, since I took office as UfM Secretary General in 2012.

## Acknowledgments

The 9<sup>th</sup> UfM Ministerial on industrial cooperation is being held today after a series of successful meetings to which the UfM was associated over the past years that contributed to the development of the future of the industrial cooperation in the region. A well-deserved praise to the work coordinated by Euro-Med working group on industrial cooperation and to DG Enterprise for the continuous efforts to support private sector development and advance cooperation in promoting inclusive economic development.

Furthermore, the Secretariat highly appreciates the efforts exerted by

MPCs towards the implementation of Euro-Mediterranean Charter for Enterprise and the convergence towards the Small Business Act for Europe.

## Context and framework of industrial cooperation

The assessment of the Euro-Med charter implementation carried out by OECD and ETF shed light on the progress achieved by many countries to improve the business climate, support SMEs and promote entrepreneurship. Other assessed dimensions witnessed modest improvement such as entrepreneurial learning. This put us all under a great responsibility to continue the ongoing endeavors to further strengthen and effectively support the private sector growth and innovation.

We are all aware that regional and industrial cooperation in the

Mediterranean faces great challenges. After a long freeze in the north a slow thaw is underway. The political transformations in the South are developing new political and economic dynamics that will for sure have a great influence on how the region will develop in the coming years.

### Delivering concrete results: The UfM response to challenges

Many of the economic and social challenges of the Mediterranean region are directly linked to a very low level of regional integration. In this context, the action of the Secretariat is centred on the promotion of regional cooperation projects designed to strengthen integration in the region and thus, opportunities for growth and competitiveness.

In order to stimulate growth and employment, the Secretariat focuses on developing initiatives and concrete projects in favour of SMEs and job creation, as a response to the current socio economic context in

the Mediterranean region and the needs expressed by the Southern countries.

**Facilitate access to Finance:**

The Secretariat is working on the establishment of a Euro-Mediterranean Guarantee Network (EMGN): a project built in cooperation with all the credit guarantee Agencies for MSMEs in the South Mediterranean countries, and which aims at assessing the creation of a Euro-med Guarantee system to enhance access to finance (equity/debt) for MSMEs in the Mediterranean, through facilitating training, exchange of best practices, research and studies among the existing domestic guarantee agencies on the feasibility to advance Counter-Guarantee Funds to support MSMEs. The extended Business Plan towards the implementation of EMGN, under discussion, is intended to provide a background document that provides a good understanding of the political and economic rationale of this timely

initiative, the foreseen activities, outputs, governance, budget and funding to allow the region's schemes overcoming their deficiencies and reach their full potential.

### **Build an efficient networking infrastructure:**

The Secretariat follows up, through the monitoring process, the establishment of the Euro-Mediterranean Development Center for SMEs (EMDC). The project, labeled in December 2012, is promoted by PROMOS - Milan Chamber of Commerce - and the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It aims at deploying a number of business development centers in the Mediterranean countries that offer technical assistance to MSMEs and products on human capital development and access to finance. The assistance will be provided through a strengthened and improved current network of public and private agencies and institutions supporting MSMEs through the provision of services to improve the access to market and finance and the human capital

development.

**SMEs resource efficiency:**

Furthermore the Secretariat is preparing a Project which will promote the adoption of sustainable consumption and production patterns in the Mediterranean region, with a particular resource efficiency focus. There will be two main components; one focusing on developing access to finance for companies which adopt sustainable production practices, and the other on enabling and demonstration activities for green industries, businesses and local stakeholders. The project benefits from having three promoters who have extensive experience on such practices, namely UNIDO, the EBRD, and the Regional Activity Centre for the Sustainable Consumption and Production of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP/MAP-SCPRAC). This Project is a direct follow up to the Rio + 20 Summit. It is expected that this Project will be presented to the SOM in April as a candidate to be

labelled.

**Ensure a better employment environment:**

The Mediterranean Initiative for Jobs (Med4Jobs) is a program developed by the UfM Secretariat aiming to promote and replicate a number of visible private sector job creation projects in the South and Eastern Mediterranean. It is conceived as a cross-sectorial, project-based initiative in line with the UfM mandate. It covers both the supply and demand side of the labour market by targeting three core issues: Employability, Job intermediation and Business enabling infrastructure.

Med4Jobs received the endorsement by all UfM Member Countries in December 2012, and its launch took place this year at the Mediterranean Economic conference: Employment and territorial development in Tunis 17-18 September 2013 under the auspices of the Tunisian Prime Minister.



The first project under the initiative, namely “Generation Entrepreneur”, has received the UfM label in October 2013. By supporting and developing an entrepreneurial eco-system at multiple levels, from grassroots business education in primary and secondary schools to hands-on training on business creation, and finally to private sector mentorship and seed funding for real enterprises. The project aims to contribute to employment and job creation in the region, and approximately 79,000 school and university students from the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean countries involved in the project are to become the expected beneficiaries.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Our goal is to create favourable conditions for a collective and effective mobilization that will help the region meet the challenges of sustainable growth and decent living conditions for the local populations. This will be essential for the future of the Mediterranean and the future of Europe.