



Speech by Mr. Fathallah Sijilmassi
UfM Secretary-General
11th Meeting of the Foreign Affairs Ministers of the 5+5 Dialogue
22 May, 2014

Dear Excellences,
Dear Colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I feel myself privileged to have the opportunity to address this distinguished audience twice today. But this time, I will be talking about low carbon and climate resilient and sustained development in the UfM region and the rationale governing the suggested climate change expert group meeting.

- Throughout the 21st century, climate-change impacts have accumulated on a dramatic manner to become, not only a challenge, but a major threat to the prosperity and wellbeing of human beings. Those impacts rendered economic growth, escalated difficulties to face poverty, and further eroding food security. The integrated actions balancing climate change mitigation, and crisis management would surely have a major influence on resilient and sustainable solutions.
- The risks inflicted by climate change; global warming, water scarcity, draughts, natural resource exhaustion and biodiversity are seriously aggravating. Those are the most



pressing issues of our time, which will loom as the largest challenges facing the planet within a generation, and probably, sooner than we anticipate.

- The negative implications of climate change recognize no boundaries, thus Climate change demands collective actions to find sustainable solutions. The price human beings are paying today for the negative collateral damage, caused by industrialization, growing economies, new patterns of consumption and production, transportation, electrification and power generation throughout the last century, are highly evident, and a major stimulus to urgently develop resilience to these challenges.
- The Mediterranean region has been identified as one of the main climate change hotspots. As a result of global warming, shores around much of the Mediterranean basin are endangered by the rising sea levels.
- The Southern shore of the Mediterranean is threatened by onset climatic events; desertification, which is likely to become irreversible, with tremendous economic and human costs.
- Water is the biggest challenge in the Mediterranean. Droughts and desertification are expected to cause pressures on current water resources and affect local communities. Scarce water resources can equally affect the sectors like agriculture and tourism, and especially in south Mediterranean countries, reduced



water supplies and droughts can equally accelerate socio-economic problems in the already densely populated urban centers. Droughts and Declining water availability would hit southern Mediterranean countries the hardest. In Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Malta, Egypt, Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon, water availability already falls below, or approaches the common benchmark for water scarcity.

- The world is anticipated to witness new type of migration caused by severe environmental changes, global warming and more extreme weather events. The numbers expected are enormous, around 250 million persons who will likely be displaced in the coming decades. Therefore, Climate change raises various concerns about the heightened vulnerability of people due to geography, poverty, gender, age and people with special needs, resulting in "an immediate threat to basic human rights".
- Climate Change is a “threat multiplier which exacerbates existing trends, tensions and instability¹” as stated by Javier Solana in 2008.

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¹ Climate Change and International Security. Paper from the High Representative and the European Commission to the European Council. Brussels.



Ladies and gentlemen,

Transformations in economic, social, technological and political decisions and actions can enable climate resilient strategies, which should be adopted in a comprehensive and integrated regional approach. Managing the risks of climate change requires a coordinated and cooperative dynamic strategy that would ensure the achievement of the common goals of sustainable development as already stated by other colleagues of this session.

Climate Change Working Group mission:

- The UfM stands today as an operational platform of coordinated efforts, fostering Synergies, Complementarities and cooperation in the region aiming at identifying and promoting concrete regional initiatives and projects.
- During the preparatory works for this Ministerial, the MS highlighted the need to take a proactive approach by setting up a working group on climate change, thus showing a real willingness to progress and advance collaboration.
- If approved by all of you, the UFMS will develop and inclusive and bottom-up approach aiming at developing a coherent and consistent strategy at the regional level to contribute development of an effective regional dialogue framework and platform for projects.



- According to countries' political will, the group can also open to key organizations active on climate change in the region.
- The UfM Secretariat would act as a technical secretariat for the group, in full coordination with the UfM co-presidencies. Therefore, the Secretariat would work toward the organization of the first Expert Group, to take place by September/October of this year.
- Based on feedback received during the preparatory works to this Ministerial Meeting, UfMS has observed inputs on common climate change issues of relevance.
- All this information will be reflected in background documents for the 1st meeting of the Climate Change Expert Group, so as to capitalize for further definition of the tasks of the group.
- The group will benefit of the experience of similar relevant UfM groups on water, energy, transport, to be used for the development of climate action in the region.
- It is foreseen that a first scoping exercise will be carried out in order to reach a first compilation of CC policy relevant actions/frameworks, as well as projects enabling tangible answers to the challenges we face in our region.
- In this junction, it is my pleasure to mention that the UfM project on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns, known as Med ReScp, labelled by UfM members during the last SOM in April, is - together with the complementary EU funded SWITCH MED programme - already an important



step to the overall transition to green and low emissions economy.

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Ladies and gentlemen,

As the previous speakers clearly underlined,

- Climate change should not be perceived only as a threat, but it can have within the seeds of opportunities for more investments, market expansion, job creation and promotion of economic local value chains.
- We must continue identifying concrete actions with Governments and stakeholders in order to step up our regional cooperation. As the Secretary General mentioned in his opening remarks, the UFM Secretariat stands by you in order to move forward operationally in this direction.

Thank you for your kind attention.