



Plenary meeting of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Union for the Mediterranean
Rome, 13 May 2017
Intervention by the Secretary-General of the UfM

Dear Mrs. Laura Boldrini, Mr. Pietro Grasso,

Presidents of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Union
for the Mediterranean,

Dear Presidents of Parliaments,

Dear High Representative and Vice President of the
European Commission Mrs Federica Mogherini

Dear Presidents of the Committees,

Dear Members of the PA,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen

I would like to start by expressing my heartfelt gratitude for the hospitality of the Italian Presidency and commend it on the holding of this plenary meeting in this beautiful and inspiring city of Rome. I would like to convey to Mrs. Boldrini and to Mr. Grasso how much it has been a pleasure, both at personal and at an institutional level, to have worked so closely, and in such a positive manner, with the Italian presidency throughout this year.

Congratulations to you and the bureau and we will, of course, continue working together.

We are meeting today at a very specific juncture.

In the roadmap for the strengthening of regional cooperation, adopted last January in the II Regional Forum of the UfM (and to which we were honoured with your active presence President Grasso and I thank you for that), the Governments of all our UfM countries, under the active leadership of the co presidency, acknowledged that there is no development without security and no security without development and that, therefore, it is more important than ever to strengthen **the security-development nexus**, in order to create the appropriate environment conducive to social economic development and to address, in a comprehensive and balanced manner, the challenges of the region.

Because the best way to address the root-causes of the many challenges that affect us, like migrations, extremism and terrorism; and the best way to promote stability, social development and economic growth is indeed by focusing on the promotion of **human development, by reinforcing regional integration and by supporting sustainable development in the Mediterranean.**

In this regard, I would also like to commend the Italian presidency for the timely choice for the debates of this Parliamentary Assembly: yesterday the Summit of

Speakers focused on "Employment, Inclusive Growth and Sustainable Development in the Euro-Mediterranean Region" and today, this plenary meeting, is devoted to "Sustainable Development and New Job Opportunities in the Mediterranean Area: Med4jobs and Agenda 2030". These themes are at the heart of the work developed by the Union for the Mediterranean.

I was fortunate to have the possibility to recently exchange views with President Laura Boldrini on the strategic centrality of these thematics and on the need to promote this global and integrated vision that should embrace also the African dimension **because of the everyday more obvious connections between the European dimension, the Mediterranean dimension and the African dimension.**

Let me at this stage share with you two facts and figure that, according to me, are at the essence of our common work and strategies:

- A UFM study shows that within the UFM region, 90% of the economic flows correspond to intra-European exchanges. That 9%, to the trade between Europe and its neighbours from the Mediterranean. And that a mere 1%, just 1%, is the value of the trade between the countries of the southern and eastern rims of the Mediterranean. Strengthening regional integration is clearly a top priority for all of us because in it lies the

true answers and solutions to our common challenges.

- Another study shows that the more young people study in university the higher the risk of being unemployed. How can that be!

I wanted to share with you these two facts and figures in particular because they are the underlying rationale behind everything we are doing to address effectively the challenges of the region.

This enables me to share with you today three main messages:

1/ **My first message** is that it is precisely bearing these facts and figures in mind that **the UfM Member States structured the identity, mandate and action of the organization around 3 main pillars:**

– **a political dimension**, of Ministerial and governmental representatives' meetings that define the priorities of our work through the adoption of a common agenda in key strategic areas;

- **a platform dimension**, structured around the establishment of regional dialogue mechanisms with multi-stakeholders involving civil society representatives, youth organizations, regional and international institutions, local authorities and of course

parliamentarians (I will develop this specific point a bit later);

- and the projects **dimension**, through the identification of regional cooperation projects that enhance partnerships and interactions in the region through the scaling up effect, exchange of best practices, exchange of information and development of innovative initiatives with the aim of effectively improving the living conditions and the perspectives of a better future of our citizens.

Within the framework of this methodology, I am happy to report to you the following results:

Regarding the political dimension of the UFM, 12 Ministerial have taken place since 2013 in several key areas for the region. And two more are foreseen this year: one on urban sustainable development in Cairo next week and one on women empowerment also in Cairo later this year. Many high level conferences also took place such as for example the one that is going to take place in Malta next week on Energy Efficiency.

Regarding the platforms, more than 20.000 stakeholders have participated in our regional dialogues, including international organisations, NGOs, civil society organisations, international financial institutions, development agencies, the private sector, universities and think tanks.

And **regarding the projects, 47 projects labelled** by the UfM Member States, with a total cost of 5.3 billion euros, financed by international financing institutions, development banks, cooperation agencies, governments, and private sector institutions .

- **more than half of these 47 projects are already currently under implementation.**

These projects are developed within the two main pillars of action: human development and sustainable development.

In the **first pillar, Human Development,**

- **26 projects,** namely in youth employability, inclusive growth and women empowerment which we are very happy to note that they have a potential of benefiting to 200 000 people in our region.

- Let me just mention a few examples here:

- **the Euromed University in Fez, for which the EIB announced recently a funding of 70 Million Euros,**

- **EMUNI in Slovenia,**

- **the launch of Generation Entrepreneur promoted by the excellent Jordanian institution BDC**

We are also very happy to count in these projects on the active partnership with development and financial institutions such as the **GIZ in Germany, SIDA in Sweden, AECID in Spain** and others.

In the **second pillar of sustainable development**:

- **21 projects** that have an impact across the region, including on climate action, renewable energy, transport, urban development, food security, water and the Blue economy

- In the pillar of sustainable development, let me mention in particular that in 2016 the UfM launched emblematic projects such as

- the **depollution of Lake Bizerte**, under the EU's Horizon 2020 Initiative for a cleaner Mediterranean Sea, a project worth 91 Million Euros fully funded by the **EIB, the EBRD, the EC and the Tunisian Government**. This project was launched with The President of the Tunisian Government, High Representative F. Mogherini, the Jordanian co-presidency, your humble servant and all key stakeholders financial and local involved in the project. The Tunisian Parliamentarians of the Region were also there.

- the **SEMed Private Renewable Energy Framework (SPREF), developed by the EBRD** to encourage private investment in renewable energy in Egypt, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia. A project which total cost is close to 900 Million Euros. Within this framework a first concrete project was already implemented in Tangiers, Morocco.

In particular and considering the thematic of this plenary session, I would like to highlight **Med4Jobs** which is a

cross-sectorial initiative involving job creation, SME and private sector development, women and youth empowerment, university cooperation, research and innovation whilst also establishing strong links with what we are developing in the fields of Transport, urban development, water, environment, blue economy, energy and climate change. Because, as it was underlined by the Declaration of the Summit of Speakers, we have to “streamline the objectives for employment” to fast-growing sectors where the biggest number of new jobs will be created, like “blue economy’, energy, industrial cooperation, (or) research and innovation.”

Let me briefly share with you the concrete outcomes so far of Med4Jobs.

- **12 labelled projects**, within the three pillars of the Initiative : employability, intermediation and business enabling environment.
- **100.000 potential beneficiaries**, mostly youth and women
- **800 SMEs and start-ups enabled**

2/ My second message is regarding the link with Agenda 2030: Since the **UfM obtained the observer status** at the UN in December 2015, we have strived to connect all our activities to the **Sustainable Development Goals set up**

within the framework of the Agenda 2030. I don't have time to go through them one by one but you will find in the Activity Report all the references and the Roadmap highlights the contribution of the UfM activities to the SDG goals.

In particular, we were very happy to participate actively to the very successful COP22 in Marrakech last November.

I believe that there is a **Mediterranean Chapter** in the Global Agenda and everything we are developing is connected to these objectives.

3/ My third and last message concerns the need to further work together, increase synergies, complementarities and coordination of action. Our strongest will is to increase our interactions with key partners to enhance this action-driven agenda.

Let me say a few words in particular on our excellent relation with the Parliamentary Assembly of the UfM, that is hosting us.

It has been a great year in terms of cooperation between the UfM Secretariat and the Parliamentary Assembly.

Throughout this year, the Secretariat actively participated in the meetings of the Enlarged Bureau and the different Committees, including by organizing two meetings in our premises in Barcelona – the Woman Rights Committee in

October and the Economic Committee last April. And of course we were present in the Summit of Speakers and in this Plenary session.

But we also saw a growing number of members of this Parliamentary Assembly participating in our events and initiatives.

Of course, I will start by highlighting again the honor of receiving President Mr. Pietro Grasso, to represent this Assembly in our Regional Forum. For us, it was very important that the PA-UfM would be present in this occasion, both in the meeting with the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the UfM as in the Conference that followed, that was devoted to “Youth for stability and development”.

We were also very happy to have the Chair of the Women Rights Committee, our friend Mrs Leila Chettaoui, and other members of that Committee in our UfM Regional Dialogue on Women’s Empowerment, as well as on the UfM third High-level Conference: “Women for the Mediterranean, driving force for development and stability”, held in Barcelona in October.

And we were pleased to count with the presence of the Chair of the Committee on Energy, Environment and Water, our friend Senator Samir Murat, in 2 side-events organized by the UfM during the COP22 in Marrakesh.

And even in Quito, in Ecuador, on the margin of UN Habitat III, we had the presence of our friend Ernest Maragall, member of the PA-UfM from the European Parliament, during a Networking event UfM – UNPFI “Towards a New Urban Agenda for the Mediterranean Region”.

I would also like to highlight, because it is so closely related to the thematic of this meeting, that we now have the Chair of the Committee on Economic and Financial Affairs, Social Affairs and Education, currently our friend Mrs. Margarida Mano, as a new permanent member of the Advisory Board of Med4Jobs. From our perspective, the presence of the Economic Committee in this Advisory Board, which is the cockpit of the Med4Jobs initiative, will allow for a closer and meaningful participation of this Parliamentary Assembly in the follow-up, in the definition and the orientation of this important initiative and is a clear example of the way forward in terms of cooperation between this Parliamentary Assembly and the UfM.

We also witnessed a closer interaction of PA-UfM with UfM labelled projects and their promoters. I am happy that the Minister of Water of Palestine participated to the meeting of the Political Committee in order to give an update on project “Desalination Facility for the Gaza Strip”. Just as the Rector of the “Euro-Mediterranean University of Fes” participated in the Economic and Education Committee. We had the promoters of the project “WoRTH

- Women's right to Health" in the Women's Committee, and the promoters of "Generation Entrepreneur" in the Economic Committee. And we also had the opportunity to explain to that Committee the Med4Jobs initiative and its objectives in more detail.

We also had a field visit by the Chair of the Economic and Education Committee to the University of Fes, which we believe was a very rewarding experience – and it led to the signature of a Memorandum of Understanding between the Euro-Mediterranean University and the reputed University of Coimbra in Portugal.

And next week we'll have another "field-visit", but this time the other way around, when the young beneficiaries of one of our supported projects, "Women of the Mediterranean - Next generation of Leaders" will visit Strasbourg for meetings with PA-UfM members from the European Parliament.

I would also like to acknowledge the active work of the Culture Committee and I pay special tribute to my friend Khalid Chawki from Italy.

This is in addition to the regular contacts that we have with many of you on issues of mutual interest and the continuous visits of many Parliamentarians to the Secretariat in Barcelona in order to strengthen our exchange of information and identify actions and initiatives we take together.

Yes, this was an intense year indeed. But I believe we can do more. And I would like to reiterate to this Plenary my strong determination to further deepen the cooperation between the Secretariat and the Parliamentary Assembly. Within our respective mandates, we must pursue our efforts to work together, for our common good. And I seize this opportunity to invite all of you to visit us in Barcelona in order to go more in depth on issues you may want to raise and activities you may want to develop with us. Just as my team and I stand ready to visit your countries and region in order to do field missions in your constituencies and interact with stakeholders with the aim of identifying concrete actions to implement.

This is the message of commitment that I would like to convey to the upcoming presidency of the House of Parliament of Egypt. My dear President Ali Abdel Aal to whom I am extending my warmest congratulation and wishes of success. We will be fully mobilized by your side and I am looking forward to visiting you soon in Cairo.

I would like once more to congratulate the Italian Presidency for its major achievements and extend my words of support and commitment to the bureau and to all of you.

The Secretariat of the UfM and me will remain fully dedicated to the strengthening of the ties between our two institutions.

Thank you very much