



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

MedCities Annual Conference

“Mediterranean Cities: Sustainable and Equitable for All!”

Barcelona, 4-5 October 2018

Closing Remarks of UfM Secretary General Nasser Kamel

Monsieur le Maire de Tétouan et Président de MedCités,

Mr. Alfred Bosch, Vice-President of MedCities and Vice-President of the Area of International Relations and Cooperation of the Metropolitan Area of Barcelona,

Mr. Xavier Tiana, General Secretary of MedCities,

Mayors, members of municipal councils,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honor to be here today participating in this MedCities Annual Conference among such distinguished audience in this magnificent *Saló de Cent* of the City Council of Barcelona.

I would like to thank Mrs. Ada Colau, Mayor of Barcelona, and MedCities for their cordial invitation. It is a great pleasure to take part in this Annual Conference for the first time since my appointment as Secretary General of the Union for the Mediterranean.

I stand among you today with genuine and keen interest in fostering cooperation on mutual areas of interest with your esteemed organization, a long-standing partner of the UfM. After all, both the UfM and MedCities share common values and ambitions to establish a more stable, peaceful and prosperous Euro-Mediterranean area. In fact, the theme of this conference is one of mutual interest to both organizations.

Making our cities more livable, sustainable and equitable for all is a matter of utmost importance to our citizens, and I cannot think of a city more suited to tackle such issues than the great city of Barcelona, which remains a shining example of inclusive and sustainable urbanization in the Mediterranean.

In fact, I would like to seize this opportunity to warmly commend Mayor Colau and all of her team for their continued and active engagement in the Euro-Mediterranean region. As you know, the Union for the Mediterranean Secretariat has its headquarters in one of the most beautiful and historical buildings of this city, and we are certainly grateful for it.

Ladies and Gentlemen, dear colleagues,

Promoting sustainable urban development has been a key concern for the UfM since its inception. It is not surprising: more than 60% of our populations - soon 80% - live in cities, and urban areas that have become central in the organization of our territories. Those cities, however, face serious challenges pertaining to rapid urbanization rates, adverse effects of climate change, and rising inequality.

At the UfM Secretariat, we are convinced of the growing need to address such global and regional challenges through local solutions. The motto “think globally” – or in our case “think regionally, - act locally” is becoming more credible and feasible than ever.

Therefore, we must continue our cooperation and dialogue with local authorities to develop a forward-looking, strategic and coherent framework for sustainable urban development that could both address challenges and seize opportunities for urban development.

In this sense, all 43 Member States of the UfM have recently committed to set an ambitious and comprehensive Urban Agenda for the Euro-Mediterranean region at the Ministerial Conference on Sustainable Urban Development of May 2017 in Cairo. In line with global and regional objectives, notably the Sustainable Development Goals, they have tasked the UfM to strengthen cities and stimulate inclusive growth, social progress, peace and stability through sustainable and equitable urban development.

Now, time has come for action. We need to pool our efforts to implement this ambitious agenda in a framework where cities are considered key partners for action.

To this end, the UfM has established the Regional Platform for Urban Development, which was first convened in November 2017. This platform aims to explore concrete steps for the development of our action plans on urban development with municipalities and their interactive network of stakeholders.

Moreover, and aiming to put such plans into concrete action for our citizens, we have recently launched the “*Smart City Innovation Centres*”, a regional project replicating the successful experience of the Nice Smart City Innovation Centre in other Mediterranean cities, such as Fes, Tunis and Alexandria. The project will benefit seven million inhabitants and may potentially pave the way for a *Network of Euro-Mediterranean Smart City Innovation Centres*, fostering further regional integration.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Cities remain a unique asset to our societies to achieve our common goals of stability, development and regional integration. Working with cities translates to empowering local communities and putting the citizens at the heart of our action, which gives us the opportunity to *work with the people for the people*, and ensure prosperity of all.

On such endeavors, MedCities remains a pioneering and successful model that guides innovative urban development in the Euro-Mediterranean area. It is a driving force of regional dialogue, and we are very happy to continue collaborating with you.

You can always count on the UfM along your side to jointly implement the ambitious Urban Agenda set by our Ministers for inclusive, sustainable and equitable cities for all.

Thank you very much.
