



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

UfM III Regional Forum

8 October 2018 – Barcelona, Spain

Speech of the Secretary General Union for the Mediterranean

A renewed commitment for regional cooperation and prosperity

Dear Co-Presidents,
Distinguished Ministers and Heads of Delegations,
Dear Ambassadors,
Excellencies,

At the outset, I would like to thank the Spanish Government, and more specifically, His Excellency Josep Borrell, whose ‘resolute commitment to the mission and role of the UfM’ was indispensable for the success of our gathering today.

I would like to thank the ‘Co-Presidents of the UfM’, Her Excellency Federica Mogherini, and His Excellency Ayman El Safadi, along with their capable senior officials. Their tireless efforts have supported our activities, and guided our path towards more tangible achievements.

The Commission’s “European Neighbourhood Policy” was and will always be instrumental in sustaining our work, under the leadership of Commissioner Hahn, who honoured us by inaugurating our “Med4Jobs Stakeholders’ Dialogue” early this morning.

I am also grateful to the Member States for supporting the Secretariat through tireless efforts of their Line Ministers and Senior Officials.

This year, our Regional Forum co-incides with the “**10th Anniversary** of the Paris Agreement” that led to the creation of the “Union for the Mediterranean”.

This Forum shows our **collective commitment** to ‘regional dialogue’, ‘convergence’ and ‘integration’ in the ‘UfM area of action’. ‘The strategic link between Europe and the Mediterranean’, as well as ‘our Roadmap’, provide a ‘firm basis for progress’ in achieving our common goals.

The Forum gives us the perfect opportunity to take stock of our achievements, and to present a ‘forward-looking vision for crossing yet another threshold’.

The **UfM Roadmap for Action** is our ‘co-essential frame of reference’. And we, at the Secretariat, are fully committed to honour the mandate, in the Roadmap.

It gives us a “strengthened sense of orientation’, with a focus on enhancing political dialogue, ensuring the contribution of our activities to human and sustainable development”, consolidating ‘regional integration’, and on reinforcing the ‘UfM capacity for action’.

We are faced with a multitude of challenges **to**, and opportunities **for** sustainable development.

Challenges include ‘environmental degradation’, ‘climate change adaptation’, ‘elevated unemployment’, ‘socio-economic disparities’, and ‘extremism’. The list is long.

National policies alone, cannot deal with these challenges ‘timely and effectively’. We need a ‘coordinated regional approach’, that links the ‘global and national policy frameworks’ at the nexus of implementation.

Our ‘**unique institutional architecture** and working methodology’, allows us to deliver ‘concrete projects’, ‘programs’ and ‘initiatives’, with ‘tangible impact on the ground’.

So, it would not be an exaggeration to state that, if the UfM did not exist, it would have to be created, sooner or later.

‘With the ongoing support of the Co-Presidency and Member States’, new milestones are within our reach.

Taking Stock of Progress

We have made notable progress towards achieving the objectives of our Roadmap.

Firstly, we have “strengthened the emphasis on human development’, especially through the ‘empowerment of youth and women”.

To this end:

-We are convening ‘our flagship Women’s Conference in the Mediterranean’, in Lisbon, the day after tomorrow. It will be a showcase of effective implementation of ‘our Ministers’ renewed pledge’ to enhance the ‘role of women in Euro-Mediterranean societies’.

-We coordinated regional efforts within the “Med4Jobs Framework Initiative”. In fact, the first “Stakeholders’ Dialogue of this Initiative” is being held on the margins of our Forum, today.

-We extended the “Forming Responsible Citizens” project to new countries, following its success in other Member States;

-We launched a “Euro-Mediterranean network of experts” for the prevention of violent extremism.

Secondly, we "furthered regional economic integration and promoted the development of infrastructure networks and connectivity".

In this context:

-We convened the “Tenth UfM Trade Ministerial Meeting” last March, to promote trade and investment. Our Trade Ministers agreed to work on ‘modernizing rules of origin’, to enhance trade flows in the region. They also agreed to launch a “UfM Business Forum” in 2019;

-We organized the first “Energy and Climate Business Forum” last October, based on the recommendation of the participants in the forum, and we launched an initiative to establish the “Euro-Mediterranean Federation of energy-related business associations”;

-Last May, we convoked the “UfM Conference on Maritime Transport and Logistics” to support regional integration in the transport and logistics sector. We also finalized a study on the formulation of a ‘Euro-Mediterranean strategy for the connectivity of transport networks’.

These are just a few examples of what has been done, to translate the UfM Roadmap into actions on the ground.

Today, we would also like to present a vision, that emphasizes three, key pathways for ‘a more actively-engaged’ and ‘impact-oriented’ Secretariat.

The ‘proposed pathways’ are, the ‘**Enhanced Value Proposition**’, ‘**Enhanced Outreach**’, and the ‘**Enhanced Learning Capacity**’.

Please allow me to elaborate on this.

First> Enhanced Value Proposition

The Secretariat delivers on its mandate, and **co-creates value** with other constituent parties of its ‘extended ecosystem’.

It works with ‘global and regional organizations’, ‘Governments’, ‘International Financial Institutions’, ‘Private and Public Sectors’, ‘Civil Society Organizations’, and ‘Academia’.

It functions as a ‘facilitator of regional cooperation on the **global value chain**’, adding value on many levels.

The “regional integration indicators study”, which is already underway, testifies to this role.

This study will help quantify the ‘opportunity-cost of the untapped potential’ for economic integration in the Euro-Mediterranean region.

In addition, the Secretariat plays a crucial role in brokering pragmatic solutions within complex political contexts. The success of the “Donors’ Conference for the Gaza Desalination Facility”, held last March, is a case in point.

The ‘action-driven UfM Working Methodology’ emphasizes the importance of **‘political forums’, ‘regional policy platforms** for consensus-building’, and **‘projects** with regional impact’.

We also need a new ‘conceptual layer’, to guide the ‘operational compass of the Secretariat’.

This layer comprises a ‘holistic approach’, which emphasizes ‘connecting the dots between our thematic priorities’.

The “Water-Energy-Food nexus” is a classic example. But, so are many of the ‘relatively new cross-sectorial areas’, like the ‘Blue Economy’.

We engage and liaise with ‘key cooperation actors’ within our ‘extended ecosystem’, including the ‘League of Arab States’, the ‘5+5 Dialogue’ and the ‘Agadir Agreement trade framework’, just to name a few.

In addition to ‘interaction at global and regional levels’, the Secretariat has been active on **‘South-to-South’ and Triangular Cooperation modalities**.

As such, the UfM is indeed a ‘regional chapter’ on the **Global Agenda**.

Second> Enhanced Outreach

As the UfM builds its credibility as an ‘action-oriented organization’, the Secretariat forges **key alliances and partnerships**, such as with the ‘BMZ in Germany’, ‘S.I.D.A. in Sweden’, and also with ‘Norway’, in addition to the **valuable conventional contributions of the European Commission and the Member States**.

I believe, we all need to showcase those activities.

We should reach out to potential beneficiaries and ultimate stakeholders of our work, - that is to say ‘our citizens at large’.

I would appeal to the Member States to support the Secretariat in its ‘outreach and external communication activities’.

The UfM is still young. But, it has a story to tell, - a story that will be expanding and enriching.

This story deserves to be ‘spread, celebrated and scaled-up’, in order to inspire and promote positive change.

Last but not least, the third pathway is> Enhanced Learning Capacity

The Union for the Mediterranean is still evolving towards maturity, but it is definitely getting there, as it **moves up the ‘learning curve’**.

The UfM pursues ‘optimal capacity-utilization’, while revamping its ‘project-labelling concept’, streamlining its operations, and amplifying its ecosystem.

The Secretariat’s ‘cognitive capacity’ also warrants attention, as new technologies are progressively changing the ‘working landscape’.

This calls for a ‘**learning organization model**’ that fosters talent, while cultivating new skills, as the organization improves its performance.

‘Change-management’, ‘resilience’ and ‘complex-problem-solving’ are basic skills needed, for both the present, and the future.

‘Equipping our human capital with these skills’ is an ‘impact-oriented investment’ in our major asset.

This vision is meant to deliver on our Roadmap’s call for ‘Strengthening the UfM Capacity for Action’.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Finally, I would like to reiterate my full dedication and resolute commitment to the goals of the UfM, as well as to its cause, which perfectly capture and reflect the common vision of its Member States.

A better future is possible for the Euro-Mediterranean region.

We shall all assume our responsibility towards this end, ‘today’, and ‘every other day’.

Thank you, Excellencies.