



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

12th edition of the MedaWeek

21 November 2018, Barcelona

Opening Remarks

UfM Secretary General, H.E. Mr. Nasser Kamel

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Respected Colleagues,

At the outset, please allow me to second my Colleagues in welcoming you to The 12th edition of the Mediterranean Week of Economic Leaders (MedaWeek Barcelona).

This exceptional event has become an annual milestone on the Mediterranean Agenda, and I can comfortably say that ASCAME is more than just a strategic partner for the UfM Secretariat; it is rather a reference for the Private Sector in the Mediterranean under the able leadership of President Mr. Ahmed El Wakil and Acting President Mr. Mohamed Choucair, and we clearly share the overarching goal of promoting economic integration in the region as a prerequisite of peace, stability and prosperity.

I would also like to praise the effort of ASCAME's General Coordinator, Mr. Anwar Zibaoui, and the whole Team, for the great effort invested in making this gathering possible.

The Private Sector holds a significant part of the answer to unleashing the huge potential in the region in terms of young human capital, natural resources and geostrategic prominence, and let me share some figures to help you see the bigger picture: The Private Sector accounts for 60% of the Gross Domestic Product, over 80% of capital flows and 90% of jobs in developing countries. All in all, around 80% of jobs in the Euro-Mediterranean region are created by MSMEs, and yet, the region remains to be one of the least economically integrated regions in the world, and unemployment rates on both shores of the Mediterranean, especially among youth, are alarming –to say the least.

The UfM Secretariat has adopted a positive, action-oriented agenda that draws on a multi-stakeholder' approach, which means that we are open to collaborating with everyone here present on a coordinated regional agenda that emphasizes private sector development and engagement in the achievement of the SDGs.

This year, as we mark the 10th Anniversary of the Union for the Mediterranean, we are fully aware that the job creation and business development challenges are of paramount importance to the inclusive and sustainable human development in the region.

During our Third UfM Regional Forum that brought together the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the UfM Member States, special emphasis was given to our

flagship initiative, Med4Jobs, which focuses on improving employability among youth and women, job intermediation and support to SMEs and to business incubators.

With over 13 labelled projects and over 100,000 beneficiaries, this Initiative forms part of our response to the region's challenges and our efforts to empower the young people and the women in our region.

Given the cross-sectoral and transversal nature of employment and business development, we often find ourselves discussing not only Digital Economy, Circular Economy and Knowledge Economy, but also Blue Growth, Innovation, Disruptive Technologies, and many other emerging trends and game-changers of our time, and this is why I trust that the discussions on a multitude of topics over the coming three days will give us all indications on to how to best proceed on the path of development cooperation and how to build meaningful synergies and complementarities toward achieving our common goals.

Thank you very much, and wishing you fruitful discussions.