



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

## **Intervention of the Secretary General of the UfM at the European Parliament**

*5 July 2018 - Strasbourg*

Dear Mr. Antonio Tajani, President of the European Parliament,

Dear Mr. David-Maria Sassoli, Vice-President of the European Parliament,

Dear Members of the European Parliament, members of the Delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Union for the Mediterranean,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to start by expressing my heartfelt gratitude to President Tajani and Vice-President Sassoli for their invitation to the European Parliament, and for offering us the opportunity to have this in-depth discussion that aims at strengthening our mutual collaboration.

It gives me great honour to commence my mandate as Secretary General of the UfM by addressing the EP Delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Union for the Mediterranean; a testimony to the strong links forged with the UfM Secretariat as our *“legitimate parliamentary expression”*.

I am a firm believer in the Mediterranean, and in my previous responsibilities, I had the opportunity to participate in the establishment of the UfM and have followed its evolution since then.

I am thus very happy to hold this meeting at such a pivotal moment for the institution. 10 years after the Paris Declaration, our Mare Nostrum has never been more central in the political agenda of all our countries, with pressing security, socio-economic and environmental challenges.

It is more obvious than ever that unilateral or bilateral actions are insufficient in addressing these challenges. It is only through collective efforts that we can deliver long-standing responses to enhance peace, stability, security and socio-economic development in our region.

That is why our conversation this morning is fundamental: to make the case that our common destiny is built on regional cooperation as well as on our ability to give a new impulse to the Euro-Mediterranean partnership.

**In that spirit, I would like to share with you three preliminary observations before we begin our discussion:**

**1/ The UfM has a unique membership structure, bringing together the 28 European Union Member States that you represent, and the 15 countries from the Southern and Eastern shores of the Mediterranean, who decided to build a cooperation framework that promotes shared responsibility and brings answers to the challenges that the Euro-Mediterranean landscape has been facing for decades.**

It is indeed the only inter-governmental organisation in the region that brings the Northern and Southern countries to work on equal footing and representation.

Ten years after its launch, I must say that it works: the UfM action has proved its solidity, its efficiency and its added value in many fields.

The Ministers of our 43 governments meet regularly. Since 2013, we have organized 16 ministerial meetings. The Member States Senior Officials also meet four times a year to discuss and agree to cooperate on issues ranging from water, energy and urban development to employment, trade, women and youth empowerment.

I cannot fail to mention here the outstanding work that has been achieved by my predecessor, Fathallah Sijilmassi, which has brought the UfM to achieve the good results we see today.

Now, we need more than ever to further strengthen this cooperation.

**2/ Second:** The added value of the organisation also relies on the **effective links it creates between the policy dialogue and its translation into concrete projects and initiatives with tangible impact on the ground for our citizens.**

It is the essence of what we call “the 3 Ps” methodology: the first P is for Policy, the second P is for Platforms of dialogue; and the third is for Projects.

At the UfM Secretariat, we seek to implement the decisions taken by our Member States at the political level by identifying synergies and areas of cooperation in our sectorial platforms of dialogue, which also suggest and support the launch of regional initiatives to enhance regional cooperation, in areas tackling the needs of our people and addressing the root causes of the challenges we are facing today.

These initiatives cover a multitude of issues and sectors, such as:

- *The promotion of job creation and inclusive growth*, in an area where 1 in every 3 young people is Not in Education, Employment or Training;
- *The empowerment of women*, when the gender gaps in labour force participation rates in the Southern shore are over 50%.
- *Or the enhancement of research and innovation*, where, to be honest, the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean countries are still lagging behind their Northern partners.

Let me mention a few examples of the projects and initiatives that we are currently putting into action:

- These last months have marked major advancements for the **Gaza Desalination Facility** project: we have successfully co-organised a landmark Donor Conference that harnessed broad international support, with pledges of 456 million € in total (*so more than 80% of the total value of the project*), securing therefore the necessary financing for its kick-off.

The Desalination Facility will help address the water deficit in Gaza, and improve the livelihood of 2 million people living in dire conditions in that area; not to mention its contribution to the enhancement of the local economy and to job creation.

- **The Mediterranean Initiative for Jobs** (Med4Jobs), is another flagship initiative that has progressed significantly in the last few years: launched by the UfM Secretariat, Med4Jobs is an umbrella initiative comprised of 13 projects as of today, which aims at increasing the employability of youth and women, closing the gap between labour demand and supply, and fostering a culture of entrepreneurship and private sector development in the Euro-Mediterranean region.

The initiative has been praised and acclaimed by many of our Member States, notably from Germany which will support us in the next two years to scale up our efforts towards increased job creation and better long-term prospects for the people in the region.

- Finally, I cannot miss the opportunity to mention a remarkable initiative that we are supporting since 2014, namely **Forming responsible citizens**. This project, led by the Spanish NGO Idéaborn, aims to prevent youth violence and promote gender equality by enhancing citizenship skills for school students.

It does so by renewing civic education curricula, involving in this process national education institutions, schools, teachers, and also the civil society.

We have just held last week a regional seminar to discuss its outcomes: the project was successfully implemented in Morocco and Tunisia, and is since a few months also extended to Jordan and Lebanon, thanks to the generosity of Monaco and Norway.

I intend, with the support of all our Member States, to continue multiplying these initiatives and replicating them throughout the region, in view of achieving our common ambition to build an area of peace, development and shared prosperity in the Euro-Mediterranean region.

**3/ Finally, and this will be my third and last remark, deepening regional cooperation also means building a stronger Mediterranean community, with more efficient agencies and institutions working together for this common ambition.**

The UfM collaborates closely with the Mediterranean eco-system composed of many organisations, such of the *Anna Lindh Foundation*, the *Euro-Mediterranean Local and Regional Assembly*, the *EuroMed Economic and Social Councils*, and with actors of the private sector like *Ascamé (the Association of the Mediterranean Chambers of Commerce and Industry)* and *BusinessMed (the Union of Mediterranean Confederations of Enterprises)*.

All of these institutions strive to build a region-wide network that fosters synergies and reinforces our common action in the Mediterranean; a network where the Parliamentary Assembly, of course, holds a central role.

I am very keen and enthusiastic to further deepen our cooperation. The UfM Secretariat will be fully committed to your efforts of building a stronger PA-UfM, and remains available to continue engaging with the works of its Committees.

We have participated to many meetings of the Committees, and welcomed a number of them in our premises in Barcelona, in sectors like Energy and Women Empowerment.

We foresee to help organize others, like the meeting of the Committee on Culture or the Political Committee, chaired by Mr. Renato Soru, member of this Delegation, to whom I renewed the invitation for the Committee to meet at the UfM Secretariat. We are also looking forward to welcoming the President of the PA-UfM at the next UfM Regional Forum in Barcelona.

We have the strong belief the PA-UfM has a key role to play, and particularly the European Parliament Delegation.

Not only because it is holding the Co-Presidency in such an important moment for the Assembly, but also because there are surely more than 100 members in the different regional delegations of the European Parliament whose work is particularly devoted to the Euro-Mediterranean, reflecting the strong commitment of your institution to the region.

**We count therefore on you, on your mobilization and political support to push for a stronger Mediterranean agenda.**

Together, let us not be afraid of the challenges and difficulties ahead. Together, let us build on cooperation, dialogue and trust. Together, let us work to deliver more for the citizens of our region and their aspirations.

Thank you very much for your attention.