

Message from the Secretary General

Nasser Kamel



This year's annual report is particularly special as it provides an overview of UfM activities during 2018; a year that marked the 10th anniversary of the Union for the Mediterranean. Indeed, ten years have passed since the 2008 Paris Declaration, which gave a new impetus to the 1995 Barcelona Process and further institutionalised the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, building on a shared vision of the region as one of peace and stability, while sending a message of hope to its people. Having been privileged to bear witness to the inception of the UfM during my tenure in Paris (2008-2012), I must say that seeing what the UfM has achieved today is both remarkable and inspiring. Such accomplishments would not have been possible without the pragmatic yet ambitious approach that the Co-Presidency and the Secretariat have maintained over the past few years. In this regard, I would like to express my appreciation and gratitude to my predecessor Ambassador Fathallah Sijilmassi for his assiduous efforts and devotion to Euro-Mediterranean cooperation.

The UfM Secretariat has been actively engaged in coordinating the efforts of its Member States and relevant actors in the Euro-Mediterranean region through a collective, multi-stakeholder approach to promote regional cooperation and integration. Such efforts were undertaken in a volatile regional context against a backdrop of environmental degradation, elevated unemployment rates, socio-economic disparities, irregular migration, extremism, and an unprecedented refugee crisis, among other adversities. Despite those challenges, the UfM was able to endure and move forward with its mission towards building consensus and enhancing regional cooperation.

While several regional challenges had stalled cooperation in the Mediterranean, several accomplishments have been achieved by the UfM owing to the Secretariat's firm belief in the importance of building consensus among

Member States and tackling the root causes of the challenges that we face. Our endeavours to build ambitious regional agendas continue as UfM cooperation reached new milestones during 2018, particularly regarding the agendas for water and for women. Regional cooperation on trade and on civil protection has also been recently resumed under the umbrella of the UfM. Moreover, the UfM's action-oriented approach has enabled us to achieve concrete results in socioeconomic development, transport, urban development, energy, climate action, water resource management and the environment. Such results continue to improve living conditions in a union of more than 800 million citizens.

While the developments highlighted in this report inspire optimism, we remain far from achieving the mission of the UfM in a way that corresponds to our ambitions. The path remains long and arduous and requires further diligent efforts, as well as a renewed commitment to cooperation and multilateralism. Unilateralism is no longer feasible in a globalised world that has grown more connected than ever, and a regional setting that is becoming increasingly characterised by cross-border challenges that far exceed the capacity of unilateral efforts.

Since I assumed office in July 2018, I have come to realise that the support that the UfM receives from its Co-Presidency and Member States highlights a continuation of a shared vision towards genuine and constructive cooperation in our region and inspires hope in what is yet to come. Only together can we reach our goals of a peaceful, stable and prosperous Mediterranean.

Nasser Kamel