

**Ministerial Declaration  
of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) Employment and Labour Ministers  
(2-3 April 2019, Cascais - Portugal)**

1. The Employment and Labour Ministers of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) gathered at their fourth Ministerial Conference at Cascais in Portugal on 2 and 3 April 2019. The Conference was hosted by Portugal and co-chaired by **H.E. Marianne Thyssen, European Union Commissioner in charge of Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility, and H.E. Mr. Samir Said Murad, Ministry of Labor of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan**, in the presence of **Mr Nasser Kamel**, Secretary General of the Union for the Mediterranean and hosted by **H.E. Mr José António Vieira da Silva**, Minister of Labour, Solidarity and Social Security of Portugal, in Cascais - Portugal.
2. The Ministerial Conference followed on from the Employment and Labour Ministerial Conferences held in Marrakesh in 2008, in Brussels in 2010, and at the Dead Sea in Jordan in 2016. These Conferences had set up and confirmed the UfM co-operation on employment and labour as a means to develop an effective, genuine and inclusive employment and social dimension within the UfM.
3. At the Cascais Conference, the Ministers acknowledged that the challenges and policy orientations discussed at their 2016 Conference remained pertinent, and that a major leap forward was necessary regarding the implementation, at both national and regional level, of the policy orientations on employment and labour agreed in 2016.
4. The Ministers called for making the best use of policies and mobilising all stakeholders through the development of synergies and multilevel approaches, and a thorough mainstreaming of employment and labour issues in all relevant policies. They reiterated the need for promoting social dialogue and collective bargaining, and welcomed the commitment of the Social Partners of the region to contribute to the UfM cooperation on employment and labour. They highlighted the crucial role, at all pertinent levels, of an effective and on-going social dialogue, both tripartite and bipartite, to help addressing the challenges of growth, democracy and social justice in the region.
5. The Ministers welcomed the outcome of the Ministerial Policy Conference held in Cascais on 2 April 2019 and the review of the employment and labour developments in the UfM partner countries, including the ensuing effects of the economic and financial crisis, the alarming levels of unemployment and underemployment in the Southern Mediterranean region, notably among youth, and the persisting challenges relating to refugees and irregular migration on both shores of the Mediterranean, but also the window of opportunity created by recent positive signs of economic recovery.
6. The Ministers highlighted that economic progress and social cohesion should go hand in hand. The European Ministers recalled the Declaration of Gothenburg, adopted in November 2017, as well as the principles set out in the European Pillar of Social Rights.

7. At the 2016 Dead Sea Ministerial Conference, the Ministers had agreed on a comprehensive approach to the employment and labour challenges in the region and in particular the Southern Mediterranean countries. In Cascais, the Ministers confirmed the terms of the 2016 Dead Sea Ministerial Declaration and took stock of the work that has been done as a follow-up to the 2016 Ministerial Conference, in particular at regional level and within the framework of the Roadmap 2017-2019.
8. The Ministers notably welcomed, in this context, the outcome of the meetings and seminars organized in the run-up to the 4<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Conference. Indeed, the preparation of the 4<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Conference benefitted from the outcome of three High level Working Group meetings, which met respectively in Barcelona, Spain, on 28-29 March 2017, and in Brussels, Belgium, on 21-22 March 2018 and on 23-24 October 2018. It benefitted also from the discussions held on the occasion of the seminars organized back-to-back to the HLWG and focusing on the key topics of the 2016 Ministerial Declaration namely, job creation and entrepreneurship, youth employability, employment services and matching, the transition from the informal economy to formal employment and social dialogue, female participation in the Labour markets and the integration of refugees and regular migrants into the Labour market.
9. The Ministers recalled the importance of the strong political commitment taken at the second Regional Forum of the UfM, on 23-24 of January 2017 in Barcelona, with a view to consolidating the Euro Mediterranean regional cooperation by endorsing a roadmap for action under the theme of Mediterranean in Action: Youth for Stability and Development.
10. The Ministers reiterated their commitment to create the conditions for a gender mainstreaming approach to Employment and Labour. They welcomed the conclusions of the UfM Ministerial Conference on Strengthening the Role of Women in Society, held in Cairo on 27 November 2017, where the international legal and institutional commitments on women's rights were reaffirmed, and a commitment to strengthen regional co-operation was taken. They expressed their support to the agreed Action Plan, which includes as a key priority "Raising Women's Participation in economic life", and which takes into account education and vocational training as cross-cutting issues and for the full and equal enjoyment of their fundamental rights. In that context, they praised the work of the Women4Mediterranean platform to drive positive change towards gender equality and women's empowerment in the Euro-Mediterranean region and they welcomed the outcome of the 10-11 October 2018 Conference in Lisbon.
11. The Ministers took note of the Conclusions of the third UfM Social Dialogue Forum held in Brussels on 10-11 October 2017. They welcomed the "Charter to Promote Social Dialogue in the South Mediterranean: Jordan, Tunisia and Morocco", prepared in the context of a project prepared with EU support and its signature by [...] in the margins of the Cascais Ministerial Conference.
12. The Ministers thanked the UfM Secretariat for its initiatives on employment and labour, in particular on employability, business-enabling infrastructure and job intermediation. They highlighted the added value of the Med4Jobs initiative which labels and promotes projects of cooperation in the area of youth employability, SME development and inclusive growth. They welcomed in this respect the reviewed UfM mechanism for the selection and the labelling procedure of projects, endorsed on the occasion of the third UfM Regional Forum in Barcelona, Spain on 8 October 2018. The Ministers also took note of the first steps of development of the UfM Regional Index on Employment programs which aims to map ongoing cooperation projects on

employment and labour and to identify gaps and overlaps in regional labour market programs. They invited the UfM Secretariat to report regularly on its progress and its use.

13. The Ministers welcomed the achievement of the Global Initiative on innovative Employment Services for Youth (YouMatch I) and the launch of its second phase - YouMatch II. Within YouMatch II, experts and practitioners from public and private organizations, including social partners and other relevant stakeholders, can stimulate knowledge sharing and peer learning between countries in the field of employment services for youth.
14. The Ministers highlighted the need to address the challenges in line with the commitments by the UN and the ILO towards sustainable development and the promotion of employment and decent work, including the transition from the informal to the formal economy. They recalled their commitment to respond to global challenges and trends through the achievement of the 2030 Agenda, strengthening their efforts towards eradicating poverty, reducing vulnerabilities and addressing inequalities to ensure that no-one is left behind. They emphasized the role of the 2030 Agenda in contributing to the necessary balance between the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development, including the key issues of governance and peaceful and inclusive societies.
15. The Ministers highlighted the importance of the year 2019 for the International Labour Organization (ILO) as it celebrates its 100th anniversary. The Ministers welcomed the decision of ILO to place 2019 under the forward-looking topic of the “Future of Work”.
16. The Ministers welcomed the adoption by the General Conference of the International Labour Organization, at its 106th Session in 2017, of the conclusions which contain a framework for action for the effective and universal respect, promotion and realization of fundamental principles and rights at work. This framework for action is based on the obligation for all member States to respect, promote and realize fundamental principles and rights at work, consistent with the 1998 Declaration. They also welcomed the adoption of Recommendation No. 205 on Employment and Decent Work for Peace and Resilience, and in 2018 of resolutions on social dialogue and tripartism and the resolution concerning effective ILO development cooperation in support of the Sustainable Development Goals.
17. The Ministers took note of the follow-up given to the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, notably the adoption of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration by the Intergovernmental Conference which took place in Marrakech, Morocco on the 10th and 11th of December 2018, as well as the adoption of the Compact for Refugees by the UN General Assembly in December 2018.
18. The Ministers discussed how to implement better the agreed policy orientations and how to ensure in practice that public policies, initiatives and efforts by social partners and civil society result in significant progress in employment and labour, including in particular the social situation and employability of people.
19. While acknowledging the diversity of national situations, the Ministers recall the structural challenges faced in the region, in terms of regional stability, human development and regional integration. They highlight the high rates of informal employment and structural unemployment

and underemployment, the impediments which prevent promising small enterprises from growing and limit job creation by the formal private sector, the mismatch between supply and demand in terms of skills, the weakness of the school-to-work transition, the low investment in vocational education and training (VET) which hinders social cohesion and economic competitiveness, the insufficient role given to skill development processes both for youth and adults, the high exposure of potentially vulnerable groups, such as young people and women, to unemployment, precariousness and social discontent, and the persisting negative effects on labour markets of the informal economy/undeclared work. Furthermore, the Ministers note that several countries of the region are continuously facing important flows of refugees and migrants, which may reveal, generate or increase economic, geographic, and social tensions or unbalances.

20. The Ministers acknowledge that international migration creates both challenges and opportunities for countries of origin, transit and destination. They call for more efficient and coordinated responses in a spirit of solidarity, partnership and shared responsibility involving all actors and fighting against irregular migration. While highlighting that these responses go far beyond employment and labour issues, they stress the need for progress on identifying labour market needs as appropriate.
21. Against this background, the Ministers confirm their determination to implement at national level the policy orientations defined in their 2016 Ministerial Declaration, in relation to employment and social dialogue, as well as to foster the cooperation on employment and labour within the UfM with concrete steps.
22. In particular, the Ministers recall the overarching principles along which they recommend to national authorities to develop comprehensive strategies adapted to their needs, towards employment, employability, and decent work:
  - a. A holistic and integrated policy approach to labour demand, supply and matching, to ensure coherence and enable the mobilization of all relevant institutions and partners (public and private), including the fostering of a sustainable environment which facilitates the growth of companies, in particular micro, small and medium sized enterprises;
  - b. The promotion of a well-functioning social dialogue, at all pertinent levels, both tripartite and bipartite, including the involvement of social partners in the design, implementation and monitoring of economic and social policies;
  - c. The development of evidence-based policies thanks to the promotion of transparency and of reliable and available labour market information as well as the promotion of a culture of evaluation and monitoring;
  - d. The importance of ensuring a user-friendly access to labour market information, given its relevance to facing the unemployment challenge in the region.
  - e. The focus on delivery and implementation, with outcome-oriented policies;
  - f. The emphasis on the objectives of inclusion and non-discrimination with a particular focus on young people, women and other potentially vulnerable groups;
  - g. The importance of investment in education, higher education and training systems, including vocational education and training (VET)] as well as on lifelong reskill and upskill of workers to prepare them to constant changes in the world of work.
23. The Ministers underline the role that skills development plays to boost employability, competitiveness and growth and to address better the challenges of technological change and digitalization of the economy in the region. They acknowledge the New Skills Agenda for Europe as

a useful reference to promote actions to equip people with skills in line with upcoming labour market needs.

24. The Ministers highlight that one of the key conditions of success of strategies for smart, inclusive and sustainable growth is the quality, continuity and regularity of social concertation between the government authorities and the social partner organisations. The Ministers also acknowledge the importance of the concertation between the government authorities and civil society organisations and in particular, the role the Economic and Social Councils and similar national institutions can play in public-private dialogue and in contributing to finding sustainable solutions to the challenges of the future of work.
25. The Ministers consider that Social and Solidarity Economy is not only an alternative way of delivering economic, social and environmental value, but also a smart way of unlocking resources, creating sustainable employment, and generating inclusive economic growth in the region. They call for promoting Social Innovation and creating an enabling environment for Social Enterprises to unleash the full potential of Social and Solidarity Economy. They acknowledge the role it will play in the context of the work program on UfM Industrial Cooperation and SMEs development.
26. Building on the above-mentioned achievements and taking due account of the debate during the Cascais Policy Conference, the Ministers stress the need to focus further their efforts in future on four concrete priorities for action:
  - a. Supporting decent job creation and entrepreneurship;
  - b. Mobilising public and private stakeholders to create partnerships and synergies;
  - c. Building inclusive Labour markets to integrate potentially vulnerable and disadvantaged groups;
  - d. Investing in quality education systems and training, skills and employability in a changing world of work.
27. Due to the structural nature of the employment challenges in the Southern Mediterranean countries and acknowledging that there is no 'one-size-fits-all' policy response, the Ministers highlight the need to continue developing policies and reforms aimed at structural and sustainable changes in these countries, while paying particular attention to monitoring of processes in the field of employment and labour as well as to the quantitative and qualitative evaluation of the impact of actions undertaken.
28. The Ministers stress the importance of well-functioning national monitoring processes with a view to:
  - a. ascertaining ex-ante the needs for action, on the basis of reliable, available, sustainable and comparable indicators and data;
  - b. reviewing the progress in translating the Ministerial Declaration recommendations into the national regulatory and policy frameworks, in delivering on these recommendations and in measuring effective impacts;
  - c. rationalising the recourse to financial assistance from different national or international donors to enhance the impact of employment and labour dedicated programs;
  - d. sharing national reports on a regular and voluntary basis with the UfM Secretariat to help mapping regional trends, taking into account the outcome of consultations with social partners and civil society organisations.

29. The Ministers ask the UfM Secretariat to coordinate, with the contribution of volunteering countries, the setting up of a framework for national monitoring processes, notably by organising meetings, providing relevant information, contact making and networking, and cooperating with countries stakeholders and international organisations. The Ministers invite the European Commission and the relevant EU agencies, in particular the European Training Foundation, to provide relevant expertise to this work.
30. Such a framework should:
- a. take benefit of experiences, best practices, lessons learned and innovative approaches at national and international level;
  - b. aim to identify and gather reliable disaggregated data and statistics as well as to work on relevant indicators encouraging their harmonisation;
  - c. identify innovative and strategic operational programmes and initiatives which will contribute to countries efforts;
  - d. contribute to improving national capacities for monitoring policies related to the labour market;
  - e. contribute to monitoring the impact on labour market of other policies and co-operation initiatives in areas such as industrial co-operation, trade and investment, blue economy, the transition to a low-carbon and circular economy migration, education and gender equality;
  - f. identify financing sources to support the dissemination of best practices and the effective integration of monitoring of impact in actions directed to employment and labour market, including from the private sector or from public/private partnerships;
  - g. ensure the sharing of information and experiences;
  - h. incentivize countries to share their national report on a regular and voluntary basis on the main national trends in the field of Employment and Labour with the UfM Secretariat.
31. The Ministers ask the UfM Secretariat to report to the High Level Working Group on Employment and Labour (HLWG) on the outcome of this process within the year 2019. The Ministers ask the High Level Working Group on Employment and Labour to work on the basis of this outcome with a view to proposing a framework to the UfM Senior Officials' Meeting, before the end of 2020. The Ministers also ask the UfM Secretariat to promote the implementation of that framework at national level and to report to the UfM Senior Officials' Meeting.
32. In order to make progress on the cooperation on employment and labour within the UfM and with a view to promoting peer-to-peer exchange as well as knowledge and experience-sharing within the region, the Ministers task the UfM Secretariat to work with volunteering countries and stakeholders, with a view to launching a Community of Practice, covering the four priorities for action mentioned in paragraph 26 above. The Community of Practice should allow bringing together experts and practitioners from public authorities, social partners and civil society organisations, agreeing to work over a three-year period to collect, discuss, assess and disseminate experience and good practices. It would benefit from the technical support of the UfM Secretariat, and where appropriate of the know-how of relevant EU institutions and agencies, and/or relevant international organisations. The Ministers recommend increasing synergies on employment and labour between the relevant international and regional frameworks in order to foster complementarities and maximise the impact.
33. The Ministers invite the UfM Secretariat to broaden and intensify its action on employment and labour. They confirm the role of the UfM Secretariat to accompany and broker finance for

labelled projects as well as to ensure appropriate co-ordination with, and provide assistance to, the various stakeholders.

34. The Ministers highlight the quality of the preparation for the fourth UfM Ministerial Conference and express their gratitude to the Government of Portugal for hosting the fourth Ministerial Conference on Employment and Labour. They agree to convene the fifth Ministerial Conference in 2022.

