



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

**Opening speech of the UfM Secretary General  
Mr. Nasser Kamel**

**7<sup>th</sup> Beirut Water Week**

**"Mediterranean Contribution to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable  
Development"**

*8 - 10 April 2019*

**Her Excellency Ms. Nada Boustani**, Minister of Energy and Water of the Lebanese Republic,

**Dr. Fadi Georges Comair**, Director General of Hydraulic and Electric Resources and President of MEDurable,

**Mr. Loïc Fauchon**, President of the World Water Council,

**Esteemed panelists,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

First of all, it gives me a great pleasure to be among you today participating in this 7<sup>th</sup> edition of the Beirut Water Week focusing on Mediterranean Contribution to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

In this regard, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the Lebanese government, particularly Minister Boustani and Dr. Comair, for this cordial invitation as well as the customary hospitality.

This event aims to address several pressing issues in our region pertaining to water over the course of three days through an ambitious agenda that includes, but is not limited to, sessions on water diplomacy; sustainable governance in river basins; water-energy-food-ecosystem nexus; water, culture and gender mainstreaming; and the role of Public Private Partnership in the water sector development.

Being familiar with Lebanese activity and engagement at the UfM on such topics, among others, I must say that it is not surprising to see such diligent and determined undertakings

by Lebanon towards fostering solid partnerships, as well as pushing forward ambitious regional agendas towards sustainable socioeconomic development.

Not only is Lebanon an active Member State of the UfM in terms of its participation in our political and dialogue platforms, it is also a beneficiary of more than 7 projects.

Moreover, Lebanon plays a major role in the development and implementation of the UfM Water Agenda and its financial strategy, not to mention the deliberations of our relevant working groups and task forces, including the Water-Energy-Food-Ecosystem Nexus Task force, in which Dr. Comair played an instrumental role under Lebanese chairmanship.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Water has always been an instrument of development, prosperity and security in the Mediterranean.

As such, the current water-related issues that we face today constitute one of the major cross border challenges in our region.

The concomitant stress factors of climate change, economic development, urbanization, and growing population pose a serious threat to both the quality and availability of water resources in our region.

Furthermore, the strong dependence of several economic sectors on diminishing water resources jeopardizes economic growth and could potentially usher social unrest, which could, in turn, aggravate existing regional difficulties that we face, including migration.

Indeed, the acute water shortage, not to mention the deteriorating quality of water resources that our region suffers from pose many challenges.

Such challenges dictate concerted efforts and joint action towards promoting cooperation in integrated water resource management in our region by sharing best practices on water saving techniques, improving the development of human resources, institutional capacity building, and bridging the investment gap in the water sector.

Bringing together all actors and stakeholders from both shores of the Mediterranean is also imperative for our endeavors to succeed.

As such, this conference provides a great opportunity to join forces against a common challenge that jeopardizes our region.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As you know, the UfM was established in 2008 to promote regional cooperation aiming to establish an area of stability, prosperity, and security in the Mediterranean.

Environmental protection and sustainable water management have always occupied paramount importance in UfM activities and line of work.

Since its inception, the UfM Secretariat has adopted a holistic approach that seeks to address water resource management challenges in a multifaceted manner through a unique action-driven methodology.

Indeed, the *modus operandi* of the UfM is based on creating effective links between decisions taken by Member States on a political level and their operational translation into region-wide cooperation projects.

The importance that the UfM Secretariat attaches to water and environment can be seen in our activities and projects that we dedicate to address such issues through a holistic multifaceted approach.

Out of 55 UfM labelled projects, 15 projects focus on Water, climate change, blue economy, and combatting marine litter.

Examples of such projects include the Lake Bizerte Protection Program in Tunisia, the Gaza Desalination Facility, as well as other UfM technical projects titled "Towards a Mediterranean Water Knowledge Platform", and "Governance & Financing for the Mediterranean Water Sector".

The latter project has seven beneficiary countries, including Lebanon, and happens to be one of the topics addressed in this conference.

More recently, our endeavors took a more structured approach through the UfM Policy Framework of Action 2030 "Water Agenda", which illustrates our methodology and constitutes a continuation of our endeavors to advance ambitious yet pragmatic regional agendas.

In April 2017, the Valetta UfM Ministerial Declaration on Water called for *"a Union for the Mediterranean Water Agenda to enhance regional cooperation towards sustainable and integrated water management in the UfM region"*.

As such, the Secretariat engaged with Member States, stakeholders and partners aiming to develop such ambitious framework of cooperation in a way that corresponds to the aspirations of our countries.

Consultations with UfM member states have been continuous to ensure joint ownership, and that the adopted Agenda addresses the needs of all countries and to complement national efforts with a regional dimension.

To guarantee the materialization of such ambitious framework of regional cooperation, a financial strategy was also developed to promote the financial sustainability of the Mediterranean water sector in order to insure social, economic and environmental benefits from the implementation of the UfM Water Agenda.

Both documents were adopted by the UfM Senior Officials in December 2018. Currently, the Secretariat is working on implementation aspects and we welcome all initiatives and partnerships with regional and international institutions and stakeholders towards achieving concrete results for the benefit of our peoples.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The UfM Secretariat strongly believes that the regional challenges that we face today far exceed the capacity of unilateral efforts.

Only through cooperation and joint action can we help Mediterranean countries achieve their goals towards water security, universal access to water resources, establishing climate-resilient economies, integrating better planning for water resource allocation, and mobilize investments for a more reliable water supply.

Adopting a cross-sectoral approach has always been part of the UfM's DNA, particularly on water-related issues given the intertwined complex nature of their associated challenges.

Therefore, I wish you a series of fruitful discussions, and I personally look forward to receiving your suggestions and recommendations.

Both the support and contributions that we receive from our Member States, partner institutions, and stakeholders will continue to guide our efforts at the UfM Secretariat towards safeguarding water resources in the Mediterranean, as one of our most valuable sources of natural capital, whilst ensuring universal access to safe drinking water as a fundamental human right, particularly for the most vulnerable.

Thank you.