



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

## **Speech of the UfM Secretary General Mr. Nasser Kamel**

### **UfM Ministerial Meeting on Employment and Labour**

*Cascais, 3 April 2019*

Dear Co-Presidents,  
Distinguished Ministers and Heads of Delegations,  
Excellencies,

First of all, I would like to welcome you to this Fourth UfM Ministerial Meeting on Employment.

We are honored today by the presence of H.E. Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa, the President of the Republic of Portugal, to whom I would like to express our gratitude for Portuguese hospitality and strong support for the Union for the Mediterranean.

This meeting comes to build on the milestones achieved in the previous three editions held in Marrakech, Brussels and the Dead Sea in Jordan respectively, and marks a continuation, not a culmination, of our efforts towards providing new and equal opportunities, modernizing labor markets, developing skills, and achieving sustainable economic growth in the Euro-Mediterranean region.

Today's meeting was organized to tackle one of the most important and chronic challenges in our region.

In this regard, I would like to thank the government of Portugal for hosting this meeting in beautiful Cascais and for the impeccable organization of this Conference under the auspices of H.E. Mr. José António Vieira da Silva, Minister of Labour, Solidarity and Social Security of Portugal.

I would also like to express my appreciation and gratitude for the continuous support we received from our Member States' Ministers and Co-presidency represented in this meeting by H.E. Marianne Thyssen, European Union Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility, and H.E. Mr. Samir Said Murad Minister of Labor of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. UfM Senior Officials have also been instrumental in supporting the Secretariat making this timely gathering possible.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As you are well aware, the UfM has dedicated a considerable number of activities and projects towards achieving socioeconomic and human development, with emphasis on youth and women.

Several ministerial meetings and conferences were held on employment and labour, digital economy, trade and industrial cooperation aiming to jointly develop ambitious regional agendas and innovative solutions.

To complement the ongoing political process with an action-oriented approach, the UfM has launched the flagship initiative Med4Jobs in 2013, which remains to be our foremost response to the dire need for job creation, matching and SMEs promotion in the Region.

Our dialogue platforms have also engaged a wide array of stakeholders in the fields of business development, vocational training, digital skills, and investments, among others. In this regard, I would like to recall the valuable and instrumental work realized by the UfM High-Level Working Group on Employment and Labour since its commencement.

It is also worth mentioning that, two days ago, we organized a side event aiming to bridge the gap between skills and labor markets in cooperation with (GIZ), the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), the Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia (FCT) and the International Center for Advanced Mediterranean Agronomic Studies (CIHEAM).

But despite our diligent efforts over the past decade, the enduring challenges of job creation and achieving sustainable, inclusive economic growth remain to be elusive and consuming.

Indeed, the broad-ranging and multifaceted nature of the employment challenge calls not only for coordinated efforts and apt policy reforms, but also for integrated approaches that emphasize youth employability, women socio-economic empowerment, social dialogue promotion, transition from informal to formal economy, as well as skill and job matching, just to name a few of the domains in which the UfM Secretariat has already been engaging fully.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It would not be an exaggeration to say that the current generation might be the last to see the Labour Market the way we know it.

The Fourth Industrial Revolution, whose currency is essentially digital, has been transforming the employment landscape irreversibly, and in ways that few visionaries could see coming a decade ago.

This comes at a time when the economic realities of the region are clearly taxed by long years of political conflict and the subsequent migratory pressures and refugee crises.

The structural nature of the unemployment challenge in the MENA Region and the alarmingly high rates of youth unemployment on both shores of the Mediterranean are among the most pronounced hindrances holding the UfM region back and impeding the realization of its full economic potential.

Whenever we cite ‘the root causes’ of radicalization, extremism, illegal migration and social unrest, the unemployment indicators take center stage.

Such developments dictate accelerating our efforts to mobilize the efforts of all actors and stakeholders towards the realization of the pertinent Sustainable Development Goals that include Decent Work and Economic Growth, Gender Equality, and Reduced Inequalities.

The endeavors undertaken by the United Nations and by the International Labour Organization are particularly inspiring in this sense, especially now, as we expect to witness the culmination of the "Future of Work" initiative during the 2019 International Labour Conference, with the possible adoption of a Centenary Declaration.

The trajectory of the UfM Secretariat over the past few years has been one of mapping change and harnessing opportunities, and despite the scale and scope of the challenges, we stand ready to honor the mandate entrusted to us by our Member States like we always did.

With your continued support and undeterred commitment to regional cooperation, you can count on the UfM Secretariat to steer Euro-Mediterranean cooperation towards a stable, peaceful, and prosperous Mediterranean in a manner that hopefully corresponds to your ambitions.

Thank you.

-----