



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

## **Welcome Remarks by the UfM Secretary General Mr. Nasser Kamel**

### **7<sup>th</sup> Climate Change Expert Group Meeting** *10 April 2019*

*Esteemed representatives of the UfM Co-presidency; Member States; and Partner Institutions,*

*Ladies and Gentlemen,*

First of all, allow me to welcome all of you to the 7th UfM Climate Change Expert Group Meeting.

I would also like to extend a warm welcome and a cordial greeting to our keynote speaker, Mr. Christian Danielson, Director General of DG NEAR at European Commission.

Director-General Danielson has always been an avid supporter of the UfM and a strong proponent of Euro-Mediterranean cooperation, and it is certainly a great honor to have him among us today.

Furthermore, I would like to express my gratitude for the support that we have received from our partners in organizing this meeting, particularly the financial support of the European Commission, as well as the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA).

As you know, the Climate Change Expert Group was established as a policy dialogue by the 1<sup>st</sup> UfM Ministerial Declaration on Environment and Climate Change of Athens in 2014, and remains to be our main platform for dialogue among stakeholders and concerned parties on one of the most pressing challenges of our time.

Realizing the complex nature of climate change, we have organized this meeting during the UfM Climate week aiming to provide an opportunity and to create an enabling environment for a comprehensive discourse among a wide range of actors on several multifaceted aspects of such major challenge.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Our Mediterranean is one of the major climate change hotspots in the world.

The lower threshold of temperature increase of 1.5 degrees established by the Paris Agreement has already been exceeded due to expanding anthropogenic impact.

Over the past few years, we have been increasingly witnessing a series of extreme weather conditions, floods, extended heatwaves, desertification, and rise in sea levels.

Such changes pose a stress factor on several natural resources, including fresh water.

Over the past decade, water scarcity and diminishing quality of water resources have become more pronounced around the Mediterranean, and given the strong dependence of many economic sectors, particularly in the MENA region, on water, economic growth is likely to stagnate, ushering social unrest, which could, in turn, aggravate existing cross-border challenges, including migration, jeopardizing regional stability in the process.

Moreover, we have been increasingly witnessing natural disasters, such as floods, unpredictable storm patterns, droughts, and forest fires.

The increasing frequency and growing magnitude of such disasters far exceed the capacity of unilateral efforts, dictating coordinated disaster response and crisis management in the Mediterranean.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The intricate multifaceted nature of climate change in general, and in our region in particular, constitutes a classic "tragedy of the commons"; one that dictates joint and concerted action towards effective adaptation and mitigation efforts. In this regard, our efforts are fully in line with the Paris Agreement and the UN SDG 13.

At the UfM Secretariat, we strongly believe in adopting a comprehensive approach to combatting climate change in our region; one that does not only seek to relieve the impacts of climate change, but also to prevent them.

Realizing the importance of the scientific aspect of climate change, the UfM supported the establishment of the Mediterranean Experts on Environment and Climate Change Network (MedECC), and in the next year, the first Mediterranean Assessment Report will be prepared and disseminated, in addition to a related summary for policy makers.

Moreover, the Secretariat will seek, under the guidance of the co-presidency, sustainable means to reinforce this network.

Given the potential security repercussions of climate change in our region, the UfM Secretariat seeks to identify the nature of such relationship, and map relevant hotspots in cooperation with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

The objective of such initiative is to enhance sustainable development endeavors and regional stability in the Mediterranean by providing a strategic policy framework towards a sustainable future, while enabling policy makers garner a more comprehensive understanding of the issues at stake.

This afternoon, you will be briefed on this initiative, which stands as the first aspect of material cooperation between the UfMS and OSCE following the signature of an MoU on institutional cooperation last year.

As climate change also poses a serious financial challenge in the UfM region, the Secretariat has endeavored to address such obstacle.

To this end, the first Climate Finance Study sought to provide an overview of the amount, flow, and type of climate financing delivered in the SEMed region with particular emphasis on international public climate funding.

As the Secretariat believes in the importance of blending different sources of climate finance, two further studies on Climate Finance are in the pipeline covering private, national and subnational sources of funding.

Such studies will ultimately seek to identify, mobilize, and facilitate access to finance to insure the materialization of adaptation and mitigation efforts in the region.

Moreover, the Secretariat was keen on addressing technical capacities in the region.

In this regard, I am pleased to inform you that the UfM Member States have labelled during the last Senior Officials Meeting in March the regional project Clima-Med, which is promoted by the European Commission, and seeks to assist 8 Southern Mediterranean Member States in implementing their national adaptation and mitigation efforts, not to mention supporting climate action at a local level.

Addressing the impact of climate change, particularly on social and economic activities in the region, has also been a priority to the UfM.

The Secretariat currently endeavors to identify the impact of climate change on tourism and agriculture.

Moreover, and in order to address the acute water shortage in our region, the Secretariat has been actively engaged in developing the UfM Water Agenda and its financial strategy, which were adopted last December, aiming to support the development of policies and investments that can help UfM countries to achieve water security and climate-resilient economies, as well as adopt better planning for water resource allocation, water efficiency, and to promote investments in infrastructure for a more reliable water supply.

Aiming to coordinate regional efforts on response to natural disasters associated with climate change, the Secretariat hosted and co-organized with the European Commission, last February, the third meeting of the directors-general for civil protection in the UfM region.

The said meeting constituted a breakthrough as it reinvigorated regional cooperation on such important thematic following a hiatus that lasted for nearly 10 years.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

While the UfM has been able to achieve several positive developments on climate change, the path towards low-carbon and climate resilient Mediterranean remains long and arduous, and requires further diligence, perseverance, and commitment to regional cooperation.

There are several factors, however, that inspire confidence in our ability to deliver such promise.

Such factors include Member State strong support to Secretariat activities driven by a strong shared political will to materialize regional cooperation on climate action.

Moreover, our solid partnership and strong relations with several active international and regional actors on climate change provides us with a strong impetus to fulfill the message of hope that the establishment of the UfM in 2008 had sent to our peoples.

In this regard, the EU has been leading global and regional efforts against climate change; not through words, but by example.

As such, and without further ado, I would like to give the floor to our keynote speaker, Director-General Danielson, so that he could share with us his views on climate action in the Euro-Mediterranean region, and update us on the state of play of the EU's efforts in this regard.

Thank you very much for your attention.