



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

CIDOB Breakfast with Nasser Kamel
Secretary General of the Union for the Mediterranean
9 May 2019 - Barcelona

I would like to start by **thanking CIDOB for this invitation.**

I would particularly like to thank **President Antoni Segura** for the continuous and fruitful relation that CIDOB has always maintained with the Union for the Mediterranean and its Secretariat.

Today we **commemorate Europe Day**, which marks the anniversary of the historical '**Schuman declaration**' of **1950**, where Robert Schuman envisioned the creation of a European institution that would pool and manage coal and steel production, and that would make the idea of having an **armed conflict within EU borders**, as Schuman pointed out in his historic statement, "***not only unthinkable but materially impossible***".

Thereafter, whenever Europe debated security and stability, it was done from a purely European perspective - from a "**cold-war mentality**" **point of view**. At that time, in what relates to the Mediterranean region, there were a number of relevant events:

- *The rise of Arab socialism (Nasser 1952; UAR 1958);*
- *The beginning of the war for independence in Algeria in 1954;*
- *Or the Suez crisis in 1956.*

These all **set a greater distance between Europe and its southern neighbors.**

But after the **6 days' war of 1967**, European countries started to pay a closer attention to them, as the **internal security of Europe was being affected** by the development of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

- *Terrorism in Europe (PFLP-GC hijackings, bombing Swissair, OPEC 75 with Carlos/Black September Munich72/Abu Nidal bombing, PLF Achille Lauro 85)*
- *Bretton Woods Collapse*
- *Yom Kippur was just around the corner and soon the Lebanese civil war would be starting.*

Europe finally realized that it wasn't all about the cold-war, and that it **should find the right mechanisms to engage with its southern neighbors.**

The best way it knows how... by signing **commercial agreements.**

The first preferential agreements with Maghreb countries (Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia) came to light in 1969.

By 1972, the EEC drew up its **first Global Mediterranean Policy**, which was established on top of a series of bilateral trade and co-operation agreements with the Third Mediterranean countries (TMCs), which included, we should not forget, both our countries, Egypt and Spain.

The goal was to **stimulate economic growth and support infrastructural reform as means to promote stability.**

The linkage between stability in the two regions was clearly stressed in the important **Final Act of Helsinki of 1975**, that affirmed *that "security in Europe is to be considered in the broader context of world security and is closely linked with security in the Mediterranean area as a whole"*.

By 1990, after some of the TMCs, like Greece in 1981, and then Spain and Portugal in 1986, had gained access to the European Community, the European Commission launched its **Renovated Mediterranean Policy.**

A new era of optimism

With the cold war over and the Middle East Peace Process that had advanced in Oslo, both shores of the Mediterranean met in **Barcelona in 1995**.

The **establishment of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership** was celebrated as the beginning of a **new era of socio-economic prosperity, stability and peace**.

Looking back, it was maybe a bit farfetched to imagine that by 2010 we would have the creation of a Euro-Mediterranean free-trade economic zone.

But the **overall objectives that foresaw the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership were probably the most comprehensive and forward-looking foreign-policy initiative that the European Union ever had**.

Unfortunately, the **MMPP did not evolve in the positive way** we all desired. Throughout most of the 90's and 2000's, notably with the *crisis in the Balkans, the post-9/11, the invasion of Iraq and the enlargement processes towards the East*, Europe was too busy to care and the Mediterranean countries, quite frankly, were not that interested in the cooperation that the EU, through EuroMed, was offering them.

In 2005, we celebrated the **10th anniversary of the Barcelona Process**.

It was decided that it would be the **Year of the Mediterranean**, and it culminated in the very **first Euro-Mediterranean Summit, right here in Barcelona**.

But, even at the time, most people had understood that the *élan* was gone.

And thus, **the need to rethink the Barcelona Process led to the initiative of the Union for the Mediterranean**.

Many people associate the UfM immediately with President Sarkozy and his victory speech of 2007. I understand that point of view.

The way I see it, the **concept of the UfM developed from the proposals that were put forward by the report of a group of experts commissioned by President Romano Prodi in 2002**, co-led by Assia Alaoui Bensalah (Morocco) et Jean Daniel (France).

President Prodi commissioned this high-level advisory group a number of operational proposals to promote a neighborhood policy intended to create - and I quote - *“a zone of prosperity and a friendly neighborhood - a ring of friends - with whom the European Union enjoys close, peaceful and co-operative relations”*.

This report was of the utmost importance.

First, it identified **two interlocking and increasingly menacing risks**:

- that of domination by the North in an unbalanced relation with its southern neighbors;
- and that of an alternative that sees itself as revolutionary, inspired by cultures or forms of civilization that are alienated, deformed, reduced to pure ideologies (just look at the similarities with the situation today...).

One of the most important proposal for action was that of an equalitarian participation of North and South, of joint definition of priorities and joint setting of common agendas, of co-ownership of regional policies and cooperation strategies.

These were the values that were inscribed as the cornerstones of the Union for the Mediterranean.

For us, it's still clear that the Union for the Mediterranean is **the rightful heir to the Barcelona Process**.

As a matter of fact, the **Final Declaration of the Paris Summit of July 2008** refers to the new institution that was being established as the *“Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean”*.

The UfM should be seen as the **evolution of the process**, taking on board all of its acquis.

An evolution, because the UfM introduced some **new and fundamentally different factors to Euro-Mediterranean relations**:

- **The principle of co-ownership**: By establishing a geographically balanced Secretariat.
- **The principle of variable geography** – that allows for an agile and dynamic adaptation of our agenda to the interests and engagement of our 43 Member-States.
- **The pragmatism of the work that we develop**, through the implementation of concrete projects that will simultaneously feed on the advancements of that regional policy dialogue and be a driver to the enhancement of that regional policy dialogue.

The modus operandi of the UfM is indeed based on creating effective links between decisions taken by Member States on a political level and their operational translation into region-wide cooperation projects, which in return, contribute to the definition of relevant policies.

As such, the UfM Secretariat focuses its work on three main pillars; political fora, platforms of dialogue, and projects with regional impact (3Ps).

This methodology fosters **complementarity, dialogue and synergies** among several stakeholders from governmental institutions, regional and international organizations, local authorities, civil society, universities, private sector, and financial institutions.

Next year marks the 25th anniversary of the Barcelona Process and the 10th anniversary of the establishment of the UfM Secretariat, back in 2010.

As the UfM Secretariat was being established, winds were changing direction on both shores of the Mediterranean.

- In **Europe**, the **effects of the financial crisis** that came from the US had a strong impact, namely in some countries, like Spain, Italy, Greece and Portugal, that are traditionally engaged with the Mediterranean region.
- And in the **South**, we had the onset of the **Arab Spring** in 2011, driven by the aspirations towards a democratic and prosperous Mediterranean. It finally triggered **major turbulences in our region**, as long and uncertain transitions in those countries were ushered.

Although some countries were able to recover, others fell into conflicts prolonged conflicts which resulted in important spillovers in the Mediterranean, with a **serious humanitarian situation** and an **unprecedented wave of migration** since the Second World War.

These developments have, to a large extent, **distracted cooperation efforts in the region by redirecting priorities from long-term development and regional integration goals towards dealing with rapidly emerging security challenges.**

The magnitude and impact of the refugee crisis has also sparked fear of escalating economic and social pressures which led to calls for an isolationist approach and fueled a sense of Euroscepticism.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Even while these challenges appeared to stall cooperation in the Mediterranean, the **UfM was able to endure and move forward** with its mission to enhance regional cooperation.

The UfM was able to **successfully build and reinforce its unique platform of dialogue**, where Member-States and different stakeholders build **ambitious agendas in different areas of cooperation.**

Since 2013, **15 Ministerial** and **5 high-level meetings** were held focusing on strategic issues ranging from *water, energy, and urban development to employment, trade, women and youth empowerment.*

- The **UfM Women agenda** constitutes a good example in this regard. Ministerial meetings launched the process, while working groups identified priority areas. To complement such agenda with practical application aspects, UfM Member States labelled 8 regional projects targeting more than 50,000 women in the region.

Furthermore, a **monitoring system** is currently being developed by the Secretariat, with concrete indicators to follow up on the implementation of the commitments made under this agenda.

- Another example is the **Mediterranean Initiative for Jobs (MED4Jobs)**, which focuses on youth, and demonstrates the UfM keen interest in **socioeconomic and human development**.

The initiative is an ensemble of 13 projects that aim to enhance the **employability of young men and women** closing the gap between labor market supply and demand, and fostering a culture of entrepreneurship.

- An ambitious **UfM Water Agenda, as well as its financial strategy**, were developed by the Secretariat and adopted by Member States last November aiming to enhance their regional cooperation towards **sustainable and integrated water management** in the UfM Region.
- We have also launched a series of **studies on Climate Finance in the Southern Neighborhood countries** to identify the flow of climate finance, and **assist them accessing such finance for adaptation and mitigation efforts**.

In 9 years since the establishment of the Secretariat, Member States have labelled **53 projects, worth over 5 billion** euros and varying from soft capacity-building projects to important infrastructure projects in the region.

- These include the **Lake Bizerte Protection Program** in Tunisia, which brings an integrated model of industrial **depollution** and inclusive sustainable development in **a region populated by nearly half a million people**.
- Other examples of projects are the **Gaza Desalination Facility**, aiming to deliver an essential response to the needs of **2 million inhabitants**, and the **Imbaba Urban Upgrading Project**, which aims to improve the living conditions in **one of the most densely populated neighborhoods in Greater Cairo**.

In the last two years, we have seen a **renewed interest and commitment** from our Member-States.

And this led to a more activities, more initiatives, and more ambition.

Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the UfM met in the Palau de Pedralbes in November 2015, for the first time since Marseille in 2008, and charged the UfM Secretariat with the task of presenting a new **“Roadmap for Action”** – that was endorsed in the 2nd Regional Forum in January 2017 and that gives us a **clear impetus and a mandate to proceed our mission through the implementation of a positive agenda that leverages the region’s great capabilities and development potential**, by focusing our efforts on *enhancing human development, regional integration and sustainable development*.

Our key objective at the UfM remains **translating into action the political will of our Member States through concrete regional cooperation projects and initiatives**.

We need for that to **engage with other stakeholders**, from UN agencies to NGOs, international institutions, the private sector, financial institutions, and academia and think tanks.

In this regard, we are **counting on the invaluable support and contribution of you all**, whose engagement is key in these efforts of pushing forward an agenda of cooperation in the Mediterranean.

Only together can we reach our goals towards a stable, prosperous Euro-Mediterranean region.

Thank you very much, I will be open to your questions, comments and suggestions.