

Water



3rd Mediterranean Water Forum (Egypt)

The Mediterranean region is one of the most **water-scarce areas in the world**, with more than 180 million people living in circumstances where the water conditions are considered poor, and an additional 60 million facing water stress. Moreover, water quality is another factor posing major problems to water users and the sustainability of our ecosystems.

Developing initiatives to bolster water security in the Mediterranean through regional partnerships and sustainable cooperation mechanisms is needed to reverse this downward spiral. The adoption of **Integrated Water Resources Management** (IWRM) as a holistic approach is of **capital importance to achieve economic and social welfare**. The UfM is currently working on 23 sustainable development initiatives, 10 of which are specifically water related. Meanwhile, ministers from the UfM member states agreed in 2017 to develop a UfM Water Agenda to help countries implement sustainable and integrated water management policies.

the lowest in the world. Currently, over 95% of the water is undrinkable due to the over-pumping of a polluted coastal aquifer, the only source of freshwater in the region.

In March 2018, the European Commission and the Government of Palestine, in partnership with the UfM, hosted an international donor-pledging conference to consolidate political and financial support for the **construction of a large-scale desalination plant** and its associated water-supply infrastructure in the Gaza Strip. International donors pledged €456 million to this flagship UfM-labelled project (more than 80% of the total cost), which will make it possible to start Gaza's biggest ever infrastructure project.

This landmark operation – which will supply drinking water to 2 million Palestinians – consists of three integrated projects: the construction of a 55 million-m³ desalination seawater reverse osmosis (SWRO) plant, a north-south conveyance system and a non-revenue water reduction project, as well as an associated solar power plant.

All significant milestones in the preparatory stages have been completed, including governance, completion of

the required feasibility studies, as well as solutions for the energy supply and the financial mechanism for donor contributions.

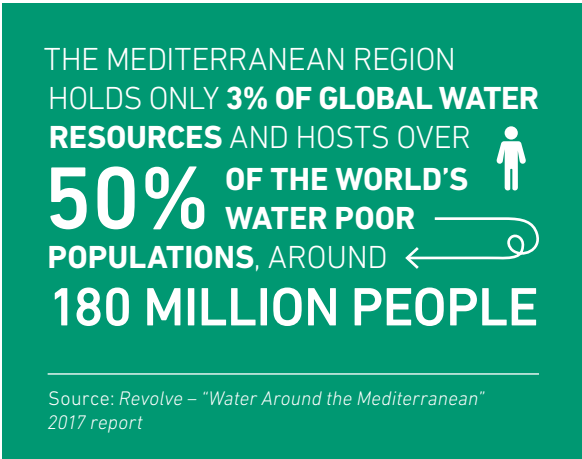


Improving water management, improving lives



The 2017 UfM Ministerial Declaration on Water called for a **UfM Water Agenda** to enhance regional cooperation towards sustainable, integrated water management in the region, as well as to steer efforts towards meeting the Sustainable Development Goals. Developed through the **UfM Water Expert Group**, this agenda is composed of two main elements: a work programme, which sets out a series of technical recommendations, and a financial strategy, which makes financial recommendations for leveraging investments and improving access to water in the region. Constant consultations with UfM member states and regional stakeholders have been held to ensure that the **agenda responds to the needs of all countries** and that the regional dimension complements national efforts.

Policies and investments that can help UfM countries achieve more water security and climate-resilient economies include: better planning for water resource allocation, adoption of incentives to increase water efficiency, and investment in infrastructure for more secure water supplies. Adopting a cross-sectoral approach has been a constant endeavour of the UfM, which explains the strong focus on a nexus approach, that includes connections with climate change adaptation and links with water-related employment policies.



“Water is a cross-cutting element that is critical in achieving sustainable development. Simply put: no water, no future. We need [therefore] to think differently about water and the way we manage it to ensure food security, conserve our delicate ecosystems, and end poverty by 2030.”

Hassan Aboelnga, *President of the Arab Youth Parliament for Water (Egypt)*

CONNECTING THE MEDITERRANEAN WITH THE GLOBAL AGENDA

In the framework of the UfM Water Agenda and with a view to enhancing cooperation with relevant partners in the region, the UfM actively participated in the 1st Palestine International Water Forum, held in June 2018 in Ramallah. The forum, held on the theme of Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM): Best Practices and Technology Transfer, provided the opportunity to discuss new IWRM tools to better prevent water crises, address water scarcity, enhance efficient water management and, ultimately, contribute to water security. The event gathered decision-makers, water management practitioners and international water experts as well as regional and international organisations to share experiences and explore innovative ideas.

Beyond the UfM Water Agenda, the UfM Secretariat, in cooperation with other regional stakeholders, took an active role in coordinating the Mediterranean countries' contribution to the 2018 World Water Forum, held in Brasilia. Acting as a mediator, the Secretariat convened, in Brasilia, the second consultation meeting for the partners of the Mediterranean regional process towards a coordinated input to the global water agenda.

ALSO ON THE AGENDA...

- The Mediterranean Water Knowledge Platform
- Governance and financing for the Mediterranean water sector
- Capacity-building programme on water integrity in the Middle East and North Africa

ufmsecretariat.org/what-we-do/



Towards the biggest infrastructure project in Gaza

The availability of fresh water in the **Gaza Strip**, one of the most densely populated areas on the planet, is among