



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

Opening address by the UfM Secretary General

Mr. Nasser Kamel

The UfM Gas Platform Conference

The Role of LNG in the Mediterranean Gas Security

Paris, 13 June 2019

Esteemed representatives of the UfM Co-Presidency,

Chairman منصف حرابي,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning to you all,

It is a great pleasure to be here today among such a distinguished group of experts and policy makers concerned with energy policy in the Mediterranean.

As you know, the UfM Gas Platform was established as one of our three Energy Platforms under the UfM Ministerial Declaration on Energy of 1 December 2016, aiming to structure and focus our endeavors towards enhancing regional dialogue and cooperation on energy among our Member States and stakeholders, while minimizing duplication.

In this regard, the UfM Secretariat has sought to engage key partners and stakeholders in the Mediterranean. One of such key partners is the Observatoire Méditerranéen de l'Energie (OME), whose efforts were of great value to enhancing concerted and coordinated action in the field of natural gas by spearheading and hosting the UfM gas platform.

As such, I would like to express my gratitude for Chairman Moncef Harrabi, Vice-Chairman Lapo Pistelli, and General-Director Houda Allal for their great efforts.

Furthermore, I would like to pay a special tribute to our esteemed UfM Co-Presidency, Jordan from the South and the European Commission from the North, for their guidance and strong support to our work, namely Director-General Ristori (DG Energy), who honors us with his presence today.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This platform presents, in many ways, an opportunity to tackling many critical challenges and obstacles in our region.

As you are well aware, the Mediterranean region is home to an increasing population with growing energy demand.

Furthermore, rapid rates of industrialization and economic activity in several Mediterranean countries exert further pressure on energy resources.

Moreover, the Mediterranean region has been identified as one of the main climate change hotspots in the world where the lower threshold of average temperature rise of 1.5°C, as stipulated in the Paris Agreement, has already been exceeded.

Such developments dictate a strong regional transition towards sustainable energy systems in the Mediterranean without compromising energy security.

In this regard, natural gas serves as a bridge between energy security and sustainable governance of energy systems, not to mention a vehicle towards a clean energy future.

Gas-fired powerplants can enhance energy mix diversification and reduce CO₂ emissions, while effectively responding to fluctuations in demand and the intermittence of renewable energy sources in a cost-effective manner.

The discovery of substantial new reserves of natural gas in the Eastern Mediterranean has not only inspired optimism towards energy security on a national level, but also validated the feasibility of energy interdependence and regional cooperation in managing natural gas reserves.

The Cairo Declaration of the 14th of January 2019 establishing the East Mediterranean Gas Forum is a true testament to such strong regional will to foster multilateral cooperation.

Indeed, regional cooperation and dialogue have become indispensable to guaranteeing the translation of such newly discovered reserves into production capacity, especially in light of the particular nature of gas markets, not to mention the current geopolitical considerations.

There are challenges, however, that restrict cooperation in such pivotal field.

The lack of adequate energy interconnectivity infrastructure compromises the capacity of energy exchanges in the region, including natural gas exchanges and LNG.

And while the past few years have witnessed several positive developments in this regard, further work is needed.

Thus, building consensus and identifying relevant projects of common interest are currently of particular importance to the UfM energy platforms.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

There is no denying that the gas market is characterized by competition and geopolitical challenges.

But even the most competitive market requires cooperation, mutual understanding, and complementarity to avoid a "*Nash equilibrium*" that could potentially leave all market players worse off.

As such, fostering complementarity in gas production and transportation to markets, while identifying projects of common interest to the region can considerably lower infrastructure costs and harmonize ambitious, yet scattered, efforts.

I would not be exaggerating if I said that fostering tangible regional cooperation in the field of energy in general, and natural gas in particular, would not only generate a win-win situation for all parties concerned, but could also be key to unleashing a new phase of Euro-Mediterranean integration as a whole in line with what the Barcelona process had sought to achieve in 1995.

The UfM Secretariat will remain fully dedicated to working with the Co-Presidency, and its partners, particularly OME in its capacity as the supportive secretariat to the UfM Gas Platform, towards fostering concrete regional cooperation on energy to achieve a sustainable energy future and comprehensive economic development in a manner that corresponds to the aspirations of our peoples.

As such, we look forward to receiving your initiatives and conclusions as they constitute an important pillar to our regional cooperation endeavors.

Thank you for your attention and I wish you fruitful deliberations.