

IV Regional Forum of the Union for the Mediterranean

Barcelona, 10 October 2019

Co-Presidency Statement

The Fourth Regional Forum gathered Foreign Ministers of the Mediterranean region to reaffirm their strong commitment to promote regional dialogue and cooperation within the UfM, a unique framework for cooperation in the Euro-Mediterranean space and an effective mechanism to focus on common interests and opportunities, overcoming political obstacles.

The Roadmap for Action adopted in 2017 is the comprehensive strategic framework of the organization and sets the agenda for the future of the UfM. Efforts achieved in the past years to implement the Roadmap have led to significant progress, and in particular enhanced political dialogue, actions contributing to human development and the successful development of platforms for policy coordination to strengthen regional integration.

The UfM's model of governance, favouring an inclusive process based on consensus, has created a sense of shared responsibility. Its action-driven approach is a key asset, placing the people of the region at the center of the cooperation.

There is now a need to further prioritize the actions of the UfM which in the coming year are expected to focus particularly on environment and climate change, trade, investment promotion, job creation, economic cooperation, including digital economy, research and innovation, infrastructure connectivity, energy, civil protection and tourism. Further efforts will be taken to provide a tool for the monitoring of the state-of-play of regional economic integration.

Civil society actors, including women and youth, are at the heart of the UfM's action and their active participation is crucial to the success of ongoing projects, initiatives and dialogue platforms.

The UfM can, and should, greatly contribute to peace and stability in the Euro-Mediterranean region by creating, through dialogue and cooperation, a political environment which is conducive to the solution, in relevant fora, of conflicts affecting members of the UfM.

The UfM should continue to endeavor to contribute to political solutions to regional crises, including the Israeli-Palestinian issue and the situations in Libya and Syria.

In this context, it was stressed during the meeting that there is an urgent need to achieve a just, lasting and comprehensive peace between Israelis and Palestinians that guarantees the establishment of an independent Palestinian state on 4 June 1967 lines, living side by side with a secure Israel, on the basis of the two-state solution and in accordance with relevant international law and relevant UN resolutions. The meeting recalled the special significance of the holy sites in Jerusalem, in line with previous understandings and with respect to the Hashemite Custodianship. The important role of UNRWA and the need to support it politically and financially in order to allow it to continue fulfilling its UN mandate was also reaffirmed.

Migration-related issues pose common challenges to all countries whether they are of origin, transit, or final destination. It is crucial to better address root causes of these phenomena and the consequent high level of human mobility. Protection of and support to refugees, in accordance with international law, upholding of all aspects of international human rights law, strengthening the fight against irregular migration, enhancing returns, scaling up efforts in preventing and fighting migrants' smuggling were reiterated in several interventions. The tremendous efforts of host communities towards accommodating refugees, along the lines of upheld international principles of burden sharing were acknowledged.

Attention should also be paid to the challenges posed by unequal growth rates of population among Southern and Northern countries. Youth employability, job creation, education, women's socioeconomic empowerment and the territorial dimension remain at the heart of the UfM agenda.

Intercultural and interreligious dialogue has been a defining feature of the Euro-Mediterranean region throughout history, therefore it is important to firmly support multilateral efforts in favor of enhancing a culture of peace through promoting intercultural and interreligious dialogue and combating all manifestations of incitement and hate speech as well as racial and religious discrimination.

UfM's role as the main catalyst of efforts and initiatives aiming at Euro-Mediterranean cooperation and integration should be reinforced, increasing synergies with regional and sub-regional initiatives and continuing to develop

partnerships with multilateral organizations involved in the regional implementation of the 2030 United Nations Agenda for Sustainable Development.

It will be important for the effectiveness of the UfM to enhance the credibility and financial viability of the labelling process and to guarantee to the UfM Secretariat a more balanced and predictable contribution to its budget.

Ministers will continue to meet in the same format for a Fifth UfM Regional Forum.