



EU-UfM Water Governance & Business Forum

Cairo, 20-21 October 2019

Official High-Level Opening

Intervention by the UfM Secretary General, Mr. Nasser Kamel

Excellencies,

Dear partners,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me warmly welcome you to the first EU-UfM Water Governance and Business Forum.

It is indeed a great pleasure to be able to address such a distinguished audience coming from all over the Euro-Mediterranean around such an important issue for the region: water.

A key challenge at the heart of our endeavours to achieve sustainable development and inclusive growth in our Mare Nostrum.

Allow me to express my most sincere regards to our member states and partners for honouring us with their presence.

This high-level participation is yet another testimony of your strong devotion to the objectives of cooperation and regional dialogue.



I would like to particularly thank the Government of Egypt for giving us the opportunity to hold our event in the framework of the prestigious Cairo Water Week.

Dear Minister Abdelaaty [*Minister of Water Resources and Irrigation of the Arab Republic of Egypt*], Egypt plays a significant leading role in advancing the UfM Water Agenda, and its active engagement has continuously provided us with the necessary support and guidance.

A word of thanks to our partner in this endeavour, the European Commission.

Our very fruitful cooperation throughout the organisation of this event, dear Deputy Director General Maciej [Matchié] Popowski [*Deputy Director General for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiation*], is just further evidence of the continuous support of the European Commission for the Ufm.

Particular gratitude to Amb. Ivan Surkos, Head of the EU Delegation in Egypt.

Needless to say that without the solid engagement and relentless efforts of our partners at the Global Water Partnership, the financial support of the Swedish Government, as well as the commitment of the League of Arab States, the organisation of this key event would not have been possible.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Less than two weeks ago, we have presented, in the presence of the 43 UfM Ministers of Foreign Affairs, the ground-breaking findings of the first-ever scientific



assessment report on climate and environmental change in the Mediterranean Basin. And the results are alarming.

Indeed, the preliminary findings show us that our Mare Nostrum is one of the main climate change hotspots in the world, where the minimum threshold of average temperature increase of 1.5 degrees has already been exceeded.

Not to be pessimistic, but some of the facts that I found most alarming in the report confirm that without significantly enhanced global mitigation policies, over 250 million people are projected in our region, the Mediterranean, to fall under the water poverty line within 20 years, compared to the current 180 million.

Furthermore, the Mediterranean holds only 3% of global water resources, and with the impacts of climate and environmental change, freshwater availability is likely to decrease by up to 15% in coming decades, causing severe constraints on food production and security, hindering economic growth and potentially enhancing conflicts and mass migration.

Developing initiatives to bolster water security in the Mediterranean is therefore more than ever needed to reverse this downward spiral.

As such, *Ladies and Gentlemen*, UfM Ministers called in 2017 for an ambitious cross-sectoral agenda to help countries identify their needs in the water sector and implement sustainable and integrated water management policies, in view of steering efforts towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.



Adopting a strong nexus approach has been a constant endeavor of the UfM since, ensuring connections with climate change adaptation and links with water-related employment policies.

In this framework, we have recently collaborated with the Stockholm International Water Institute and GWP-Med during the last World Water Week in August to address the issue of water-employment-migration in the Mediterranean.

We have also actively contributed to the 1st Palestine International Water Forum, held in June 2018 in Ramallah, to explore innovative Integrated Water Resources Management tools to better prevent water crises and address water scarcity.

We have also supported, through our label, an initiative of “*L’Institut Méditerranéen de l’Eau*”, aiming to develop a Mediterranean Water Knowledge Platform that enhances planning processes through improved data infrastructure.

However, despite progress in the identification of priorities in our countries’, implementation faces tremendous financial challenges.

Indeed, there is a significant funding gap for water management. According to the World Bank, 1 trillion \$ per year is needed for meeting the SDGs, with 15-30% of this amount needed in the water sector.

That is why UfM Ministers requested that the UfM Water Agenda be accompanied by a financial strategy, to promote the financial sustainability of the Mediterranean water sector.



Its main message is that UfM member states need to approach water financing in a strategic way, and combine making the best use of existing financial resources while mobilizing additional domestic and international financial resources.

Through this ambitious roadmap, the UfM promotes the financing and investment in the water sector through several regional and national projects and activities.

We have notably developed a programme of National Workshops on Water Financing.

Upon the request of our member states, we facilitate trainings to government officials on the UfM Water Agenda and its Financial Strategy, and help them identify a set of key actions to enhance the financial sustainability of their water sector.

After a first successful experience with the Ministry of Water and Irrigation of Jordan, we will hold a second Workshop in Albania at the end of this month.

The UfM Secretariat is also joining hands with the GWP-Med to explore ways of accelerating access to Green Climate Fund as a tool of finance for climate resilient water projects in the Mediterranean.

Furthermore, in our holistic approach, we are determined that the private sector represents a cornerstone of our action.

We have been promoting the role of the private sector in many areas on our work, such as job creation, climate action, energy or urban development.

And we look very much forward to start paving the way for a stronger role of the private sector in the water area as well.

In this sense, we are convinced that the Public Private Partnerships are crucial in achieving water financial sustainability in the Mediterranean region.



We are very glad to have with us around the table key private companies and actors, such as SUEZ, Veolia, and many others.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As you can see, the UfM Secretariat actively supports collective regional action for water security, and we are very happy to count on as many different and diverse partners as possible in this quest.

I know many of you are already delivering on bold commitments. But we need to keep collaborating, innovating and raising ambition together, in a collective multi-stakeholders approach.

We look very much forward to receive your key recommendations, on the way to our first Annual Water Investment Forum, to be held in Rome next 5 December in the framework of the 2019 MEDialogues.

Thank you very much for your attention, and I wish you a very fruitful Forum.