



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

**Opening remarks by the Secretary General of the Union for the Mediterranean,  
Ambassador Nasser Kamel**

**Programme Eleventh plenary session of the Euro-Mediterranean Regional and  
Local Assembly (ARLEM)**

**Palau de Pedralbes, Barcelona**

**23 January 2020**

Dear Co-Chair of ARLEM and President of the Committee of Regions,

My good friend Karl-Heinz Lambertz,

Dear Mayor of Al Hociema,

Mr. Mohamed Boudra,

Dear Conseller for Foreign Action, Institutional Relations and Transparency,

Mr. Alfred Bosch

Dear Alcadesa de Barcelona,

Mrs. Ada Colau,

Dear Secretary-General of the Committee of Regions,

Mr. Petr Blížkovský,

Dear Members of the Euro-Mediterranean Regional and Local Assembly, ARLEM

I would like, first of all, to join my voice to those that preceded me in **welcoming you to Barcelona**.

This wonderful Mediterranean city where the **UfM Secretariat** has its magnificent **headquarters** in the Palau de Pedralbes.



Barcelona, where **25 years ago**, the states of the European Union and its neighbours from the Eastern and Southern Mediterranean came together to launch a structured and comprehensive **Euro-Mediterranean Partnership** to construct a common area of peace and co-prosperity around the Mediterranean Sea.

We will be celebrating this important anniversary throughout this year, in close cooperation with our partner, notably with the City of Barcelona.

And it was also here in Barcelona, **in 2010, that the Euro-Mediterranean Regional and Local Assembly (ARLEM) was established** (as the territorial dimension of the Union for the Mediterranean.) So, in a way, you're coming back home.

As we say in Spanish: "Mi casa es su casa".

This "territorial dimension" is of the greatest importance for the implementation of our objectives of promoting dialogue, cooperation and development in the Mediterranean.

**Local and Regional authorities are at the forefront** of our efforts, our collective efforts, to promote socio-economic development, peace and stability in the region.

The list of common objectives is too extensive to enumerate (Urban development, water and waste management, energy transition, smart cities, and so many other).

Still, none is more important than **climate action**.

**Climate is at the forefront of our priorities**, and the UfM is now mainstreaming climate action in all its activities.

Why?

Our region is at risk, more than any other in the World.

**Temperatures in the Mediterranean region are rising 20% faster** than the global average.

These are data from an important **MedEcc report** that the UfM commissioned about the effects of climate change in the Mediterranean.



MedEcc is a network of more than 600 Mediterranean Experts and Scientists from various countries from North and South of the Mediterranean.

The preliminary findings are extremely alarming. **By 2050**, if we don't increase current adaptation measures, cities in the Mediterranean will account for **half of the 20 global cities with the highest increase of damages by flooding**.

15 Mega Cities in the Mediterranean are at risk from flooding due to sea level rise.

We are facing a **Climate Emergency**. And it's easy to understand that you are at the forefront when addressing the effects of climate change.

Because cities and regions are the **first line of defense**.

The success of effective measures to mitigate and adapt to the negative effects of climate change depends, to a great extent, on the regulatory measures that you enforce, on the policies that you adopt and the projects that you implement.

The **UfM stands ready to support** those efforts and help local and regional authorities face this common challenge.

We must exert more **pressure on decision makers** to push forward an ambitious agenda in favor of climate action, and we must **mobilize the necessary financial tools** to help us implement the essential mitigation and adaptation projects.

International Financing Institutions, development banks, private sector entities, and many other stakeholders are increasingly aware of the need to develop comprehensive strategies.

The EU has just launched a European Green Deal that will be very important in supporting your efforts, in Europe and in the Southern neighborhood.

Climate action is a huge responsibility for decision makers, be it at local, regional, national and even at international level.

The effects of climate change can be very negative and disruptive to our socio-economic models.

But it can also be an **opportunity to adapt to a new model of development**, and this is the transition that we have to promote together.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

**ARLEM is an essential partner** in the developing and consolidation of the Union for the Mediterranean.

Local and Regional cooperation is a fundamental dimension of the UfM that we are building.

And some of my colleagues will be intervening in this Plenary session to explain what we have been doing in areas like **Regional Integration, Blue Economy or Climate Action**.

And also on **Cross-border cooperation**, where regions can come to play a leading role.

The 43 member-states of the UfM have recently unanimously supported and approved the labeling of the ENI CBC-Med initiative of the European Commission.

This important programme brings together the coastal territories of 14 EU and East and Southern Mediterranean partners in view of fostering fair, equitable and sustainable development on both sides of the Mediterranean.

We congratulate ourselves for being able to contribute to this initiative, that can be very relevant to the development of your cooperation initiatives, namely within this important ARLEM framework.

We are also active partners in the **Young local entrepreneurship in the Mediterranean Award** that will have its second edition this year.

And we also cooperated in the preparation of **ARLEM reports** on “Regional integration in the Mediterranean”, prepared by Mr. Jihad Khair, Mayor of Beit Sahour in Palestine, and on “Blue Economy”, prepared by Mr. Vincenzo Bianco, member of the Catania City Council in Italy.

I was told that this year ARLEM would be focusing on **Digital Economy** and on **food-security on climate-vulnerable areas**.

**The UfM is working in both domains and will be available to support the work of the rapporteurs.**

**Especially since**, as you might be aware, the **UfM is an active stakeholder of the PRIMA initiative**, the largest Euro-Mediterranean initiative on research that is based right here in Barcelona, and whose main objective is to improve water availability and sustainable agriculture production in our region, that is one of the most heavily distressed by climate change, urbanization and population growth in the entire World.

Dear members of ARLEM,

My message to you today is very simple – **we need to continue working together**.

We need to deepen our ongoing cooperation and identify, clearly, **how we can help you promote sustainable socio-economic development** in your cities and regions; and we are confident that you will **contribute decisively, at the local and regional level, to the development of our initiatives and our objectives**.

Thank you very much.