



Introductory Remarks by Mr. Nasser Kamel
UfM Secretary-General

25th Meeting of the UfM Regional Platform in Research and Innovation
8 June 2020, 10.00

**Dear Co-chairs – Ms. Cristina Russo, Director for International Cooperation
(DG RTD – European Commission),**

**Mr. Arafah Dia-Eddin (Secretary-General, Higher Council for Science &
Technology of the Kingdom of Jordan),**

Dear National Focal Points,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

- The last time we met in this format was during the 24th Meeting of the Euro-Mediterranean Group of Senior Officials in Research and Innovation (EU-MED GSO), held physically at the UfM Headquarters on 25 November 2019.

It was a very different world from the reality we are seeing today, and a different Mediterranean, with some of our Countries among the most impacted in the world by COVID-19.

- Lockdowns hit us in an unexpected way, but given the crucial need for research and innovation during this time, I was pleased to see the adaptability of this platform, which managed to meet for a e-brainstorming session on COVID-19 research approaches on 6 April.

It was actually the very first virtual meeting that the UfM hosted in reaction to this new and unexpected crisis.

- Today, after this forced hiatus, we all acknowledge the importance of regional cooperation in research and innovation in moving out from the double economic and health crises.



Our Member States and our Co-Presidencies have been particularly active in advancing recovery plans, fundraising initiatives for researching vaccines, and increasing resilience in our heavily affected Euro-Mediterranean region.

- During this challenging time, we acknowledge the 25th Anniversary since the Declaration of the Barcelona Process, which launched a spirit of multilateral cooperation between the North and the South of the Mediterranean.

The Union for the Mediterranean embodies this cooperation with a new and effective format, more action oriented.

We are called to rekindle this spirit that has been passed to us from the past, and to use it for charting our path to the future.

- With this background in mind, today I am informed that you will be having a Strategic Discussion on future thematic priorities for Research & Innovation cooperation between the EU and Mediterranean.

It is a key moment for advancing regional solutions to our common challenges, and I believe that this health crisis has made it more visible than ever that we can only prosper collectively, on the basis of common regional goods such as knowledge and health.

- I take note of the proposal to approve today the updated guidelines for this Platform, which include the denomination as UfM Regional Platform for Research and Innovation.

This following an in-depth review process and discussions between Copresidency, Members of this platform, and the Secretariat of the UfM.

This new proposal also integrates the recent efforts to rationalize naming conventions for our dialogue platforms.



A new step in the established and respected history of one of the oldest platforms for dialogue in the Mediterranean, as it shows the fact that it is convening for the 25th time.

- Finally, I would like to thank the participants of this platform for their precious input during the Steering Committees for the UfM initiative, supported by the German Development Cooperation, “Reinforcing the Innovation-Employability Nexus in the Mediterranean” on 5 and 19 May. In the recovery phase, our region will need to fully exploit the potential of research and innovation as drivers of economic development.
- Thank you very much, and I look forward to listening to the rich discussion ahead.