



Welcoming Remarks (3 mins.)

WEBINAR: Youth Voluntary response to COVID-19

Date: 14 May 2020 Time: 12h – 13h30h (GMT +2)

Join this link: <https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/115004954946-Joining-and-participating-in-a-webinar-attendee->

- The SG welcomes the speakers and the participants for this first UfM webinar on tackling the social aspect of the pandemic from the youth perspective.

- Despite that the pandemic has disrupted our lives, our work and plans, the UfM Secretariat has succeeded to adapt its working modalities to address this unprecedented situation in the region by holding various online meetings on different topics that deal with the impact of the pandemic.

- In response to the COVID-19, the UfM Secretariat is proving to be an action-oriented organisation by holding different online sessions through our different sectors with themes focusing on the water supply and sanitation, emergency housing responses to the pandemic and economic opportunities and skills in the post-pandemic.

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- As we are all aware, the COVID 19 crisis has caused unprecedented situations in the Euro-Mediterranean region and all over the world.

Many believe that in addition to the tragedy of lost lives and the pain of lost livelihoods, a generation has missed its chance to contribute to our future.

With over 60% of its population under the age of 30, the Euro-Mediterranean is one of the youngest regions in the world.

This young generation is finding purpose in this moment of crisis while acting as catalysts to inspire others, to bring hope and to act through their voluntary work.

- We have all found ourselves into a new environment.

The pandemic has created new terms like social and physical distancing or self-isolation, and enveloped communities around the world in fear, stress and confusion.

But even as young people face unprecedented difficulties and uncharted paths, they are rising up to make a visible difference.



Young activists, youth organisations and volunteers across the globe are generating ideas, energy and empathy, saving countless lives.

Youth are a reassuring resource in such trying times.

At the UfM Secretariat, we believe that young people are a valuable resource and a network to rely on during public health crises and emergencies.

Youth are the vibrant social fibre that unify the cycles of our generations.

- Many are saddened by the negative impacts of COVID-19, but we remain hopeful when we learn of several initiatives with positive impacts led by youth.

As young innovators, many youths in the Euro-Mediterranean region played an instrumental role by reverting to social media and IT Apps to provide informal aid and be the “good neighbours” in their communities.

- From a broad perspective, youth voluntary work when co-ordinated with the health authorities and local government organisations, can truly



- prove to be effective in the implementation of national or regional policies especially in times of emergencies and crises like these.

Thus, the importance of investing in youth empowerment is the core of the UfM agenda.

Thanks to their voluntary work, young people are not only forming responsible citizens but they are helping to build better societies.

Voluntary work is the axis of the much-needed solidarity that is to be sustained in our Euro-Mediterranean region.

- COVID-19 has demonstrated that there is lack of regional or trans boundary co-operation and solidarity.

This is where the young generations have an important role to play to influence the policy makers and major stakeholders.



Through their voluntary work they will show that their initiatives and voices can make a difference in building a better society.

- Today's Webinar aims to highlight different experiences during the crisis in order to inspire our youth to better engage in volunteering.

We hope that it helps to encourage our Member States and partner organizations to value better youth voluntary work and further recognize its importance especially in times of crises.

- I wish you a fruitful discussion and we welcome your expertise, views, or proposals which we would take into consideration in our future actions and plans related to the youth agenda.