

The 2021 EU-UfM Water Investment Policy Forum

Hybrid format (Cairo, Egypt and on-line), 25th October 2021

CONCEPT NOTE

Background

In 2019, the European Union (EU) and the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) joined forces to promote sustainable water investments in the Southern Mediterranean. The UfM had just launched in January 2019 the UfM Water Agenda and UfM Financial Strategy for Water, and the EU Delegation in Egypt identified an opportunity to organise a joint event in the framework of Cairo Water Week 2019.

The first EU-UfM Water Governance and Business Forum took place on 20-21 October 2019 including a high-level segment and four technical sessions that discussed: capacity development and institutional strengthening; water and climate; financial sustainability (with a focus on public-private partnerships); and coordination of development partners.

In 2020, the EU and UfM agreed to continue their collaboration and jointly organised the second edition of the EU-UfM Water Governance and Business Forum in the framework of Cairo Water Week 2020. The event took place on 19th October 2020 in a hybrid format and included a high-level segment and two technical sessions that discussed: sustainable water financing and investments; and the water-energy-food-environment (WEFE) nexus.

In 2021, the EU and the UfM have re-committed to jointly organise an annual regional forum to discuss water investment issues in the Southern Mediterranean in the framework of Cairo Water Week on 25th October 2021. For future editions the event has been re-labelled as the EU UfM Water Investment Policy Forum.

Objectives

The overall objective of the EU-UfM Water Investment Policy Forum is to support progress towards achieving water security in the Southern Mediterranean by providing an annual platform for policymakers and stakeholders to discuss how to further improve water investment policies in Southern Mediterranean countries.

The specific objectives of the 2021 EU-UfM Water Investment Policy Forum are:

1. To identify ways to enhance the integration of water investments in post-COVID19 recovery packages and development support programmes¹.
2. To share lessons learned in the development and implementation of large water investment plans in the context of climate change, with a focus on desalination investments.
3. To start developing a regional roadmap for improving water investment policies by discussing regional priorities and how different stakeholders can contribute to achieving them.

¹ Such as the new EU's Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) under the new EU Agenda for the Mediterranean.

Target audience

The EU-UfM Water Investment Policy Forum is targeted towards high level officials from Southern Mediterranean countries in charge of water-related investment and financing policies, as well as representatives from national, regional and international stakeholders including: public agencies responsible for water-related investments; public and private operators of water infrastructure; local and international financiers; water users; research centres; and regional bodies with an interest in water security issues; and other development partners.

Structure

The event will be organised around five sessions:

1. *Setting the stage.* The meeting co-organisers will welcome participants and present the background, objectives and agenda of the meeting.
2. *High Level Panel: Investing in Water Security post-Covid19.* A panel of five high-level representatives will explore the following questions:
 - a. How has the Covid-19 pandemic affected investments in water security in the Southern Mediterranean?
 - b. To what extent do post-Covid19 recovery packages integrate water security investments?
 - c. What could the water policy community do to enhance the integration of water investments in economic recovery and green growth packages?
3. *Special Focus Session: Investing in Desalination.* A panel of five senior speakers representing national authorities and international financial institutions will explore the following questions:
 - a. How have desalination investments contributed to water security in Southern Mediterranean countries in the last decade?
 - b. What is the expected future role of desalination in the face of climate change?
 - c. What have we learned about the development and implementation of desalination investment plans and programmes?
 - d. What could the water policy community do to enhance the financial sustainability of desalination investments?
4. *Multi-stakeholder Roundtable: Elements of a Roadmap for Improving Water Investment Policies.* Representatives from different stakeholder groups (including public agencies responsible for water-related investments; public and private operators of water infrastructure; local and international financiers; water users; research centres; and regional bodies with an interest in water security issues; and other development partners) will explore the following questions:
 - a. What are some examples of improvements in water investment policies in the Southern Mediterranean?
 - b. What aspects of their water investment policies do Southern Mediterranean countries need to improve the most to mobilise and sustain investments in water security?
 - c. How can EU, UfM and other partners best support the efforts of national authorities to mobilise and sustain investments in water security?

5. *Conclusions and closing.* The meeting co-organisers will highlight the main conclusions from the event and close the meeting.

Date and place

The 2021 EU-UfM Water Investment Policy Forum will take place on Monday 25th October 2021 from 9:00-13:00 CET under a hybrid format in Cairo (Egypt) and on-line. The exact address of the venue and the on-line platform details will be communicated to registered participants in due course.

Organising Committee

The organising committee is composed of:

- *Almotaz Abadi*, Managing Director of UfM-Water
- *Ayman Ayad*, Sector Manager for Water and Utilities, EU Delegation to Egypt
- *Tahani Sileet*, Head of Central Department for External Cooperation, Ministry of Water Resources and Irrigation, Arab Republic of Egypt
- *Roberto Martin Hurtado*, Senior Advisor on Water Economics, UfM-Water

How to contribute and participate?

Speaking roles. Representatives of national authorities and other stakeholders interested in having a speaking role at the EU-UfM Water Investment Policy Forum should contact Roberto Martin Hurtado (roberto_martin@hotmail.com) and cc: Almotaz Abadi (almotaz.abadi@ufmsecretariat.org) and Ayman Ayad (ayman.ayad@eeas.europa.eu) in order to explore the different possibilities. At the time of developing this concept note, the organisers expect that most (but not all) speakers will attend the meeting on-site. The EU may be able to support the presence in Cairo of a limited number of speakers.

Participants. Given the hybrid format, the number of participants will be limited to a maximum of 40 participants on-site and a maximum of 120 participants on-line.