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## UfM Regional Platform on Water

### 14<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the UfM Regional Platform on Water

5-6 June 2024, Lisbon (Portugal)

#### 1. Summary

The 14<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the UfM Regional Platform on Water took place in Lisbon, in the premises of the Portuguese Ministry of Environment and Energy, on 5-6 June 2024. The meeting was preceded by two workshops co-sponsored by the UfM: the Workshop on Increasing Resilience of Water and Sanitation Sector in the Mediterranean Region, and the Workshop on Digital Transformation for Advancing the Water-Energy-Food-Ecosystem Nexus in the Mediterranean Source to Sea Continuum.

Participating UfM member states included Albania, Algeria, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Egypt, France, Israel, Lebanon, Malta, Montenegro, Morocco, Portugal, and Türkiye. Technical and financial partners also took part in the meeting.

The Portuguese authorities welcomed participants and reaffirmed the commitment of Portugal to contribute to the UfM work on water. The meeting was chaired by the European Commission (DG NEAR) while Jordan apologised for not being able to attend the meeting in person and participated online in the welcoming remarks. The UfM Deputy Secretary General for WEBE informed participants of the new UfM structure of regional platforms and working groups.

The overall aim of the 14<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the UfM Regional Platform on Water was to continue supporting efforts by UfM member states to implement the UfM Water Agenda. Meeting participants:

- reviewed efforts by UfM member states, technical and financial partners, and the UfM Secretariat to implement the UfM Water Agenda;
- discussed the conclusions of the workshop on climate resilience in Mediterranean countries organized under the Protocol on Water and Health and welcomed further cooperation with the Protocol;
- discussed the draft regional strategy for the Water-Energy-Food-Ecosystem nexus;
- approved the Terms of Reference of the UfM Working Group on Water Finance and Investment;
- welcomed the UfM Study on the Digital Transformation of the Water System in the Mediterranean;
- supported the organization of the second UfM ministerial meeting on water in autumn 2025;
- provided guidance for more effective working arrangements of the Regional Platform on Water and its working groups.



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### Tasks and deadlines:

- Members of the Regional Platform on Water will consult with their colleagues and share their comments on the draft regional strategy on the WEFE nexus with the UfM Secretariat by 5th July 2024.
- UfM member states interested in (co)chairing the WG-WATFIN should communicate this to the UfM Secretariat as soon as possible.
- UfM member states interested in becoming part of WG-WATFIN should communicate its nominees to the Secretariat by 15 September 2024.
- UfM member states will provide comments to the draft concept note of the ministerial meeting by 5th July 2024

### Timeline of upcoming events

- 14-15 October 2024. Cairo (Egypt). 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference on Water Finance and Investment.
- 15 October 2024. Cairo (Egypt). 2<sup>nd</sup> Meeting of the Working Group on Water Finance and Investment.
- Jan/Feb 2025. Barcelona. Meeting of the Drafting Group for the Ministerial Declaration (if Ministerial meeting approved by SOM)
- March 2025. Second Mediterranean Green Week and Meeting of the Working Group on WEFE (to be confirmed).
- April 2025. Online. 3<sup>rd</sup> Meeting of the Working Group on Water Finance and Investment.
- May/June 2025. Albania. 15<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Regional Platform on Water.
- Oct/Nov 2025. Morocco. 2<sup>nd</sup> UfM Ministerial Meeting on Water (if approved by SOM)

## 2. Operational Conclusions/Follow up per Agenda items:

### Agenda Item 1. Progress in the Implementation of the UfM Water Agenda

#### *Operational Conclusions*

- The sharing of experiences through high quality presentations by senior level speakers is a key added value of the UfM.
- The topic of water regulation is relevant for the objectives of the Regional Platform on Water.
- The Regional Platform on Water will continue to focus on policy issues. Technical work (such as on regulation) will be carried out under the working groups and reported by their Chairs to the annual meeting of the Regional Platform on Water.

#### *Follow-up actions*

- Keynote speeches will continue to be included in the agenda of future meetings of the Regional Platform on Water.
- The UfM Secretariat will follow up with the Portuguese authorities to identify options to tackle the issue of regulation of WASH services under the UfM framework.



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## Agenda Item 2. Cooperation with the Protocol on Water and Health

### *Operational conclusions*

- Meeting participants welcomed the conclusions of the workshop on climate resilience in Mediterranean countries, organised back-to-back with the meeting.
- Climate issues (including climate finance) are relevant also for WASH services, not just for water resources management.
- The health benefits of improved WASH services could figure more prominently in the work carried out under the Working Group on WASH of the UfM Regional Platform on Water.
- There is an opportunity for UfM member states that are not part of the UNECE region to benefit from the tools developed under the Protocol on Water and Health.

### *Follow-up actions*

- The UfM Secretariat will invite the UNECE Secretariat to speak at the 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference on Water Finance and Investment that will take place in Cairo in October 2024, to share their experience regarding the affordability of WASH services.
- The UfM Secretariat will explore with the Co-Secretariats of the Protocol on Water and Health (UNECE and WHO) how to develop increased synergies between UfM WASH thematic priority and the work of the Protocol.

## Agenda Item 3. Contributions of technical and financial partners to the implementation of the UfM Water Agenda

### *Operational conclusions*

- The Mediterranean region is more advanced than others in tackling the Water-Energy-Food-Ecosystem (WEFE) nexus, including thanks to activities led by GWP-Med in Albania, Jordan, Lebanon, Montenegro, Morocco, Palestine and Tunisia. There is a need to demystify the concept of WEFE nexus (as many UfM member states are already making progress but without using that label) and to ensure equal footing and progress among the different WEFE nexus sectors.
- Meeting participants welcomed the outcomes of the WEFE Nexus Digitalization Workshop, organised back-to-back with the meeting. Technological solutions are available, but there is a strong need for policy decisions to create or clarify governance frameworks (including enforcement) at national level that can guide the deployment of technological solutions.
- Meeting participants welcomed the Twin Basin Initiative to support the implementation of the UfM Water Agenda through capacity development.
- Meeting participants welcomed the work of RAED to support the implementation of the UfM Water Agenda through awareness raising and stakeholder engagement.

### *Follow-up actions*



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- Partners will continue to be invited to the meetings of the Regional Platform on Water to report on their contributions to the implementation of the UfM Water Agenda.
- The UfM Secretariat will continue to explore how best to ensure that the relevant work of technical and financial partners is integrated in the working groups of the Regional Platform on Water.

#### **Agenda Item 4. Water activities facilitated by the UfM Secretariat**

##### *Operational conclusions*

- The UfM Secretariat is carrying out substantial efforts to lead regional coordination and communicate the positions and work of the UfM on water in different fora. The recent Mediterranean Green Week (first edition organized in May 2024 in Istanbul) presented a key opportunity to further the WEFE nexus work.
- The development of the regional strategy on the WEFE nexus is proceeding at good pace, a first draft has been shared with the members of the Regional Platform on Water.
- The annual conference on water finance and investment now includes, in addition to the EU Delegation in Cairo, the African Development Bank as a partner. Preparations for the 2024 edition, which will focus on WASH Finance, are well underway. This edition will close the cycle of supporting the themes on climate (2022), WEFE nexus (2023) and WASH (2024). The UfM Secretariat will continue to publish each year a policy brief with the main messages of the conference.
- The first meeting of the Working Group on Water Finance and Investment (WG-WATFIN) took place on-line on 27 May 2024, when it discussed its draft terms of reference and the possible elements of its work programme. The Regional Platform on Water approves the terms of reference of WG-WATFIN.
- Meeting participants welcomed the Study on Digital Transformation of the Water System in the Mediterranean.

##### *Follow-up actions*

- Members of the Regional Platform on Water will consult with their colleagues and share their comments on the regional strategy on the WEFE nexus with the UfM Secretariat by 5<sup>th</sup> July 2024.
- The UfM Secretariat will explore the possibility of organising the consultation of the next draft of the regional strategy on the WEFE nexus in the framework of the next edition of the Mediterranean Green Week.
- The second meeting of the WG-WATFIN will take place on 15 October 2024 in Cairo (Egypt), back-to-back with the 5th annual conference on water finance and investment. UfM member states interested in (co)chairing the WG-WATFIN should communicate this to the UfM Secretariat as soon as possible. UfM member states interested in becoming part of WG-WATFIN should communicate its nominees to the Secretariat by 15 September 2024.
- The UfM Secretariat will work on the development of a roadmap for the digitalization of the Mediterranean water sector.

#### **Agenda Item 5. Second UfM Ministerial Meeting on Water**



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### *Operational conclusions*

- The Second UfM Ministerial Meeting on Water is currently targeted for the autumn of 2025.
- Morocco re-confirmed its willingness to host the ministerial meeting.
- The SOM needs to approve a concept note before formal preparations for the ministerial meeting can start. A draft concept note has been shared with the members of the Regional Platform on Water for comments.
- A “ministerial package” of documents will be submitted for approval at the ministerial meeting. This will include a short political declaration and three strategic documents (1) a regional strategy on the WEF nexus, (2) a set of recommendations on Water Finance, and (3) a roadmap for the digitalization of the Mediterranean water sector.
- A drafting group will be convened to draft the ministerial declaration.
- The three strategic documents will be prepared in the framework or in consultation with the relevant Working Groups under the Regional Platform on Water.
- All documents in the ministerial package will be tabled for approval at the next regular meeting of the Regional Platform on Water (May/June 2025) for approval before submitting them to the ministerial meeting.
- The term “water security” poses problems for at least one UfM member state.
- The ministerial declaration should include a mechanism for follow-up.

### *Follow-up actions*

- UfM member states will provide comments to the concept note by 5<sup>th</sup> July 2024
- The UfM Secretariat will submit a revised draft to the concept note to the SOM.
- The UfM Secretariat will convene a meeting of the drafting group in January/February 2025 in Barcelona.
- All documents in the ministerial package will be tabled at the next regular meeting of the Regional Platform on Water (May/June 2025) for approval before submitting them to the ministerial meeting.
- UfM member states will be invited to submit successful case studies to be highlighted and integrated in the strategic documents, following the example of the UfM Financial Strategy for Water.

### **Agenda Item 6. The future of the Regional Platform on Water (closed session)**

#### *Operational conclusions*

- The Regional Platform on Water aims to have representation of UfM member states at Director General level.
- To make that possible, the Regional Platform on Water is open to have its annual meeting organised back-to-back with a meeting of the EU Water Directors.
- The structure of the annual meeting of the Regional Platform on Water could include half-day for policy discussions at Director General level, and one full day to discuss the work carried out by its working groups.



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- To be effective, each working group under the Regional Platform on Water should have, in addition to two co-chairs, a technical secretary provided by a regional partner as well as Terms of Reference
- It will be proposed to the ministerial meeting that the Regional Platform on Water have full responsibility for the creation and closing of working groups. Each working group should have annual work programmes with clear deliverables.
- The number of working groups should be reduced to a maximum of three. These would be a Working Group on WASH, a Working Group on WEFE nexus, and a Working Group on Water Finance and Investment. Climate issues should be integrated in each working group.
- The Regional Platform on Water needs to improve the monitoring of the implementation of the UfM Water Agenda as well as the communication of its work.

#### *Follow-up actions*

- Malta will bring to the next EU Water Directors meeting the proposal of holding one back-to-back meeting with the UfM Regional Platform on Water every one or two years.
- The UfM Secretariat will develop draft terms of reference for the Regional Platform on Water (to be eventually approved by the Ministerial Meeting) and for the working groups on WASH and WEFE (to be approved by the Regional Platform on Water at its next regular meeting in spring 2025).
- The UfM Secretariat will develop proposal for a monitoring framework and a communications plan for discussion at the next regular meeting of the Regional Platform on Water.

#### **Next meeting**

- The next regular meeting of the UfM Regional Platform on Water is scheduled for May/June 2025.
- Albania offered to host the next meeting. Given the current uncertainty regarding national elections in Albania in 2025, Malta offered to host the meeting in case it is not feasible to organise it in Albania.

#### **List of attendance:**

- UfM Co Chairs:

Mr. Frederic Fournet EC - DG NEAR

Mr. Mohammed Al-Dwairi (Ministry of Water & Irrigation, Jordan)

- UfM Secretariat:

Mr. Almotaz Abadi Deputy Secretary General. Union for the Mediterranean

Mr. Frederic de Dinechin Senior Advisor. Union for the Mediterranean

Mr. Roberto Martin-Hurtado. External Consultant. Union for the Mediterranean



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Ms	Samira Shaban-Pina	Project Analyst. Union for the Mediterranean
Ms	Mirian Gonzalo	Professional Assistant. Union for the Mediterranean
Mr	Arduen Karagjozi	Albania
Mr	Kamel Djelouah	Algeria
Ms	Jovana Radulović	Bosnia and Herzegovina
Ms	Enas Ahmed	Egypt
Mr	Lionel Launois	France
Mr	Yoram Yizhak Morad	Israel
Ms	Mona Fakih	Lebanon
Mr	Manuel Sapiano	Malta
Ms	Siham Laraichi	Morocco
Ms	Durdina Bulatovic	Montenegro
Mr	Borko BAJIĆ	Institute of Public Health of Montenegro
Ms	Vanessa Fernandes	Portugal
Ms	Anabela Rebelo	Portugal
Ms	Bertília Valadas	Portugal
Mr	Jaime Baptista	National Council on Sustainable Development. Portugal
Mr	Ali Cem Deniz	Directorate of Climate Change Türkiye
Ms	Simla Yasemin Özkaya	Türkiye
Ms	Huriye Incecik Ceylan	Türkiye
Prof	Khaled AbuZeid	CEDARE
Mr	Anton Mickel	ENTREMED
Ms	Sara Marjani Zadeh	FAO
Dr.	Heba Al Hariry	FAO
Mr	Vangelis Konstantianos	Global Water Partnership - Mediterranean (GWP-Med)
Mr	Dimitrios Faloutsos	Global Water Partnership Mediterranean (GWP-Med)
Dr	Elena Lopez Gunn	Icatalist



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Mr	Saad Seddik	Institut Méditerranéen de l'Eau (IME)
Ms	Noura Abdelwahab	International Water Management Institute
Ms	Catarina Fonseca	IRC WASH
Dr.	Hassan Aboelnga	Middle East Water Forum
Ms	Yosra Albakkar	Pathfinder International
Mr	Omar Amawi	PRIMA
Mr	Eric Mino	SEMIDE/EMWIS
Ms	Nataliya Nikiforova	UNECE
Mr	Dionisio Pérez Blanco	Universidad de Salamanca
Mr	José González Piqueras	Universidad de Castilla La Mancha
Prof.	Michael Scoullos	Water and Environment Support (WES)