Participation and Objectives
The 13th Meeting of the WEG took place in Rabat (Morocco) on 7th and 8th June 2023. The meeting was co-chaired by Jordan and the European Union and organised with financial support from Sida, INWRDAM, and GWP-Med. It was attended by 50 participants, including representatives from 8 UfM member states (Bosnia-Herzegovina, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Malta, Morocco, North Macedonia, and Spain) and the European Union as well as from many partners. Several member states that were planning to attend the meeting sent apologies for cancelling their attendance due to different circumstances (Albania, Lebanon, Portugal, Tunisia, Türkiye).

The overall aim of the 13th Meeting of the WEG is continue supporting efforts by UfM member states to increase water security in the Mediterranean region through the implementation of the UfM Water Agenda and the UfM Financial Strategy for Water.

The specific objectives of the Meeting were:

1. To review progress at national level in the implementation of the UfM Water Agenda, including the UfM Financial Strategy for Water, since the 12th meeting of the WEG.
2. To review efforts at regional level to support the implementation of the UfM Water Agenda, including the work of the UfM Secretariat and different partners.
3. To review the work plans for 2023-2024 developed by the four water task forces as well as the Secretariat’s plans for the UfM Programme on Water Investment and Financing.
4. To reflect on the conclusions of UNFCCC COP-27 and the UN 2023 Water Conference and discuss whether and how the work of the WEG needs to evolve accordingly.
5. To discuss the need for a new UfM Meeting of Water Ministers in order to provide impetus to the implementation of the UfM Water Agenda.

Conclusions
Meeting participants welcomed North Macedonia to the meetings of the WEG, as the most recent member of the UfM.

Meeting participants thanked Mr. Abdelaziz Zerouali for its keynote presentation on the implementation of the UfM Water Agenda in Morocco. WEG members presented some highlights regarding action to implement the UfM Water Agenda.

Meeting participants welcomed the work plans of the Task Forces for the next biennium and invited the co-chairs of the Task Forces on Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) and on
Meeting participants welcomed the UfM Secretariat’s work on water, including the support for the Task Forces, the participation in international meetings, and the new publications.

Meeting participants welcomed the presentations by different partners on their contributions to the implementation of the UfM Water Agenda.

Meeting participants welcomed the implementation of and future plans for UfM Programme on Water Finance and Investment. They welcomed the conclusions and recommendation of the high-level meeting on water finance and investment that took place in Cairo in October 2022 (that produced the Cairo Action Agenda on Water, Climate and Finance (and of the side event on Water Finance in the Mediterranean that took place in Newy York in March 2023. They supported continuing the collaboration with the EU Delegation in Egypt to organize a new edition of the joint annual event in the framework of Cairo Water Week and the proposal to include a focus on WEFE Nexus (continuing with the idea of rotating topics aligned with the Task Forces). They supported the re-launch of the UfM Water Finance Task Force.

Meeting participants commended Egypt putting water on the agenda of COP-27, and the UfM Secretariat for ensuring that the UfM work on water was present at the UN 2023 Water Conference.

Meeting participants welcomed the conclusions of the First Regional Roundtable on the Water-Energy-Food-Environment (WEFE) Nexus and supported the proposal of developing a Regional Strategic Framework on the WEFE Nexus. At the same time, some UfM member states alerted to the need to ensure that advocacy for the WEFE Nexus does not undermine the current IWRM (Integrated Water Resources Management) approach.

Sida and SIWI-Stockholm International Water Institute invited the UfM to be present at the next World Water Week taking place in Stockholm between 20-24 August under the theme “Seeds of Change: Innovative Solutions for a Water-Wise World”.

WEG members requested the UfM Secretariat to explore options to modify the format of the WEG meetings in order to attract wider and higher-level participation and provide more strategic direction. One option to consider is the possibility of organizing some WEG meetings back-to-back with the meeting of EU Water Directors. The UfM Secretariat will send a letter to all WEG members to ask them to re-confirm the name of their WEG member (Water Director) and alternate WEG member. WEG members agreed to provide written input to the UfM Secretariat on how to improve the work of the WEG.

Spain recalled the International Drought Resilience Alliance (IDRA), launched on 7 November 2022 in Sharm el Sheikh, Egypt, at the margins of the UNFCCC COP27 in a high-level event spearheaded by Senegal and Spain. Spain also suggested the Secretariat of the Union for the Mediterranean, as an intergovernmental organisation which gave support to the alliance, to be part of the recently established Steering Committee.

WEG members strongly supported the need for a new UfM Ministerial Meeting on Water to provide high-level political orientation to the work on water carried out around the Mediterranean.
The future UfM Ministerial Declaration on Water could focus on WEFE approach integration, water finance, investment and pricing, water rights, cross-boarder aspects, and water and climate security.

Given the lead time needed to organize a ministerial meeting and the foreseen institutional changes in the UfM Secretariat and the European Commission around summer 2024, the target date for the 2nd UfM Ministerial Meeting on Water is early 2025. Morocco communicated its availability to host the 2nd UfM Ministerial Meeting on Water. By September, the UfM Secretariat will prepare a concept note focused on the process and will circulate it to WEG members for input before presenting it to the Senior Officials Meeting (SOM) in October or November for approval. If the SOM approves the organization of a new ministerial, a drafting group will be convened in January 2024. Spain expressed interest in being part of the drafting group.

WEG members agreed that the reports of the WEG meetings shall be published in the UfM Secretariat’s website.

The WEG will reconvene by mid-June 2024.