

# The Union for the Mediterranean: An Active Commitment for Ambitious Accomplishments

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Beyond the geopolitical uncertainties inherent to the Middle East conflict or the doubts arising from the international crisis, the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) continues to have all the potential required for building a new Euro-Mediterranean Region.

Without lapsing into complacent optimism nor giving way to an exaggerated, pro-Euro-Mediterranean orientation, much less shirking our collective responsibility with regard to the regional conjuncture, there is no denying that, despite the painful events that this region has experienced, the UfM has survived all attempts at discrediting and instances of questioning to which it has been subject to date.

Based on the overriding need for protection against possible relapses of the crisis intermittently shaking the region and for overcoming the obstacles that the Barcelona Process already came up against, the UfM should be invested with all political legitimacy and be equipped with all the tools and mechanisms necessary for it to function.

It is through this approach and not by undergoing abrupt stops at the mercy of events that the UfM will manage to mobilise all of the potential and energy that it possesses in order to contribute lucid, balanced and pertinent responses to the challenges and threats of all sorts that the Mediterranean faces.

The Kingdom of Morocco is fully convinced that the establishment of a 'zone of specific interests' among the Mediterranean countries to interconnect diverse initiatives and involve numerous actors and stakeholders is today a need. This approach constitutes the ideal means for overcoming antagonisms, reconciling contrasts and foreseeing a common future. In this regard, His Majesty King Mohammed VI solemnly expressed Morocco's entire and thorough sup-

port for this initiative in October 2007, which the King had qualified as "visionary and audacious". This commitment was reiterated again at the Paris Summit (July 2008) when His Majesty indicated his great satisfaction at the launching of this initiative, which he described as "founding a renewed regional order and generating a laudable partnership dynamic in the region, the cradle of monotheistic religions and melting pot of ancient civilisations."

It is in regard to these many considerations that the 43 countries undersigning the Paris Declaration in July 2008 called upon one another to maintain the political momentum created by the Paris Summit in order to attempt to establish a new regionalism that could rise to the challenges of the 21st century.

More than any other geographic region in the world, the Euro-Mediterranean Region has been particularly sensitive to the unrest born of the international crisis, considering not only the imbalances, gaps and disparities, but also the de facto solidarity, the interconnections of varying nature and numerous networks that singularise the Mediterranean.

The uncertainties raised by the crisis and the calling into question of schemes and parameters that were incontestable and uncontested not long ago are causing the world to prepare for undergoing a transition whose stakes and scope we have not yet managed to define.

In the Mediterranean at present, there is a conjunction of several phenomena that transcend the economic jolts and raise questions about regulatory mechanisms and reformed regional governance.

Beyond the strategic centrality of the Mediterranean, which it has managed to restore, the UfM should also foster the convergence of the respective concepts regarding the future of the Mediterranean, at a time when a number of geopolitical constellations affect our region. The UfM should thus set into motion a daring, innovative change of course in part-

nership approaches implemented to date and promote the concept of regional governance prioritising the values and advantages of geographical proximity at a time when the repercussions of the international crisis afflict the countries along the two shores.

In order to do so, the UfM should be conceived as an eminently political project whose goal is to lend regional solidarity its full meaning.

In this regard, His Majesty has emphasised that this project constitutes “a propitious occasion for opening the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership to new attempts at rallying the Partners so as to capitalise on strong points and optimise impetus.”

In this perspective, it is important to insure that institutional debate on the UfM does not undermine the original intention and goals of this new partnership framework. To this end, it is also important that the attributions and prerogatives with which the UfM Secretariat will be invested allow it to take up a position as interface between policy and operational matters, insofar as it is called to formulate proposals so as to foster the initiative while ensuring the necessary links among government bodies, the parliamentary segment and the other Partners (employers, regional authorities, Civil Forum and so on) for the identification and implementation of projects.

Moreover, the mechanism of variable geometry, rightly considered the major innovation of the UfM, should be sufficiently mastered so as to insure flexibility, efficiency, transparency and non-discrimination among the Partners.

The objective is to foster a coherent overall approach in dealing with spaces for initiatives involving a determined number of countries according to well-identified geographic specificities and assets.

Though it is objectively unrealistic to expect to realize the objectives established with the ensemble of partners from the South at an identical pace, it is, however, necessary, within a framework of overall coherence and strategic approaches, to be able to advance, namely with those who are ready and willing.

This is why the UfM should contain intrinsic mechanisms of differentiation so as to foster the development of partnerships modulated according to each partner's ambitions and strengths.

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but be a pioneer in the innovative approach of building the Mediterranean Region.

Today, the UfM offers a singular framework, ambitious and appropriate for addressing numerous common issues, in particular issues relating to energy, water, the environment, the development of small and medium-sized enterprises and industries, migration and culture.

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Consequently, Morocco expects the rapid and efficient implementation of the six major structuring projects established at the Paris Summit.

In this context, the Kingdom is pleased at its adoption of the Euro-Mediterranean Fez University Project at the Conference of Marseille, whose academic vocation, curriculum and pedagogical specialisations will be complementary to and in synergy with those at the University of Portoroz in Slovenia. With this new initiative, Morocco once again demonstrates its Euro-Mediterranean vocation, though its track record has already made this quite clear.

This project will pay tribute to the city of Fez, which is celebrating the 1200th anniversary of its founding this year, allowing the Moroccan university and academic tradition to be celebrated within a dynamic of openness, exchange and interculturality.

Moreover, the UfM should be able to apprehend the economic dimension through the creation of a Euro-Mediterranean Economic Area (EMEA) which would be, to a certain extent, based on the European Economic Area (EEA) uniting the EU with its northern neighbours and which would transcend the strictly commercial logic to cover aspects relating to the knowledge economy, education and human development.

Moreover, and in order to allow the UfM to be in tune with the imperatives that really concern public opinion on the northern and southern shores of the Mediterranean, it will be important to conceive of a participative, solidary and transparent governance regarding cross-cutting issues such as migra-

tory flows, environmental protection, the struggle against global warming and desertification, infrastructure, transport and energy networks, and so forth.

Taking into account all of these parameters, along with the effective involvement of all Partners, in good faith, will allow us to remain true to the spirit of Barcelona, which, for its perspicacity and pertinence, remains more relevant than ever.

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All of this demonstrates that the success of the UfM is everyone's business. As His Majesty, King Moham-

med VI indicated, "the ambitions are great, on a par with the challenges to be met, and the expectations are immense, on a level with the hopes roused by this project." He also recalled "the responsibility of doing everything in one's power to attain the objectives established with a view to the construction of a space of peace and security, development and prosperity, exchange and dialogue among the peoples of the two shores."

By way of conclusion, I would like to pay an elated tribute to the Catalan Metropolis that now epitomises this formidable Euro-Mediterranean identity. The choice of Barcelona as host to the UfM Secretariat is not fortuitous insofar as it represents the symbol of a space where the concepts of openness, solidarity, collective intelligence and complementary synergies between the northern and southern shores will prevail, and these concepts incontestably constitute the pedestal of the UfM's values.

More than ever committed to peace, security and stability in this part of the world, Morocco, an age-old Mediterranean country if any there are, will not spare any efforts to achieve the success of this commendable initiative.