



**Union for the Mediterranean
2nd Ministerial Conference on Employment
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**Speech of
H.E. Dr. Ahmad Masa'deh
Secretary General of the Union for the Mediterranean**

Madame President, Co-Presidencies, Excellencies, ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a real pleasure for me to be with you today attending the second Union for the Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on Employment in Brussels. This meeting takes place at a crucial juncture of the Union but at the same time, it is a significant signal that this process may bring an important added value to the region as a whole. This meeting translates the determination of the euromediterranean partners to reinforce their cooperation in this vital sector; it proves, once again, that despite difficulties, working together to reinforce cooperation and forge a common destiny should and will prevail.

Excellencies, ladies and Gentlemen,

Employment remains a crucial and a central issue in the euromediterranean economies. It is linked to important social and economic aspects making necessary and urgent to consider employment promotion as a central objective for the Union for the Mediterranean governments.

Demographic structures and the economic situation in the region have made an important progress. Yet, much is still to be done by our respective countries in order to accompany such developments. For instance, recent statistics show that the region is characterized by a significant rate of young and skilled people and an important population growth rate but at the same time an important percentage of unemployment. This confirms that despite important progress, more efforts need to be deployed in order to face this challenge. It is of utmost importance that necessary measures to mitigate the negative effects of erupting events which could have a direct impact or jeopardize our joint efforts, such as for example the recent economic crisis, be taken.

I am fully aware that difficulties associated with employment are multidisciplinary ones, and thus they need multidisciplinary and cross sectoral measures. They need to be tackled by our respective countries with the contribution of different departments and stakeholders, and also the concrete involvement of the private sector, businesses, and NGOs. And because of this I believe that we ought to focus on regional cooperation due to its expected added value. Against this background, an effective way to address this matter would comprise a demarche that includes various tool such as but not limited to the promotion of investment, the efficient cooperation in the fields of migration, the strategizing of education and higher education the output of which must relate to the needs of labor markets, the investment in and development of skillful employees, the provision of decent work conditions to women, the fight against child employment, adhering to and implementing international legislation, and combating informal economies.

Excellencies, ladies and Gentlemen,

Your agenda today is raising very important subjects, notably ensuring decent work. This implies that we will have to work jointly in order to improve the economic and social rights including those to accompany the trade liberalization in order to protect the most vulnerable population (women and children). In this regard, national, regional and international standards, namely those of ILO,

should be our main references in order to improve the situation on the ground and to guarantee quality employment and a better social environment. This will be possible thanks to a frank and a close dialogue with the social partners. And here, I would like to commend the meeting yesterday with the social partners which brought an important added value and ideas to tackle the employment issue in the region and I look forward to the follow up steps and measures in order to concretize the ideas and recommendations which they have proposed.

Along the same lines, I would like to stress how instrumental it is to abide by international legislation, and to be innovative by way of elaborating efficient strategies and putting in place efficient networks, notably the national agencies in charge of employment promotion in our respective countries. The latter proved to be efficient in creating close ties with the international market in different fields (agriculture for example) which led to job creation and thus to a substantial and a direct economic impact on the concerned categories of workers and consequently on our economies at large.

Excellencies, ladies and Gentlemen,

The Secretariat which I have the honor to lead will contribute actively to the identification and implementation of concrete projects covering six priority areas of cooperation which are environmental protection and water, transport and urban development, civil protection and social affairs, alternative energy, higher education and scientific research, and business development. Employment is centrally placed within and across all these sectors. Our goal will be to put all efforts together, creating the necessary synergies among different actors across the Mediterranean basin.

As I have said on other occasions, the Union for the Mediterranean is about partnership. Partnership between countries, institutions and peoples. This requires that our aspired projects must be real and tangible ones with a direct impact on citizens' daily life.

The Mediterranean is a region where economic, cultural, and social exchanges have been performed since the beginning of history. A common birthplace for different civilizations, religions and cultures. This diversity has been the origin of fruitful dialogue and cooperation. At the same time, it has been the place for long and complex disagreements and differences. Labor authorities and forces can contribute to overcome these differences. Their proximity to social and local reality is a plus that can help in understanding them better and to depict new and multilevel solutions.

Today I had the opportunity to apprehend the strong commitment of employment authorities with the noble Mediterranean cause. This is undoubtedly a reason for optimism and a clear sign that your engagement is firm and strong. I take note of your will to contribute actively in the construction of a common space of prosperity in the region. As I said, all efforts are needed and all offers for cooperation are welcomed. In return and on the part of the Secretariat of the Union for the Mediterranean I assure everyone that you will find us tentative, responsive and engaging with all your ideas and initiatives.

Thank you very much.