



**Speech of H.E. Dr. Ahmad Masa'deh  
Secretary General  
Secretariat of the Union for the Mediterranean**

**On the occasion of the Institutional Dinner and Open Debate at  
the Second Forum of Local and Regional Authorities in the  
Mediterranean.**

Barcelona, May 2, 2010.

**Your Excellency Minister Moratinos (Secretary of State and dear friend Anna Terron,**

**Your Excellency Mayor Hereu,  
Excellencies the esteemed Mayors,  
Mr. Chairman of the Chamber of Commerce,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

What a pleasure for me to join you in this Open Debate at this magnificent “Llotja de Mar”.

“Muchas gracias” to the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Spain was always a trustful friend in all the process of my candidacy and Mr. Moratino’s outstanding diplomatic skills have been always in hand to advance in the Mediterranean Process.

Please, let me express my sadness and preoccupation for the news of Mr. Losada’s health problems. I wish him a full and speedy recovery and my hearts goes out for his family. I am sure that we are all here looking forward to having him again with us.

Let me say also “moltes gràcies” to Mayor Hereu for his kind words in his introduction remarks. I am grateful for the warm hospitality that Barcelona has shown me since I took office.

I want to congratulate also the organizers of this Second Forum for the success of this event. I want to congratulate specially the responsables of United Cities and Local Governments for their inspiring leadership in this initiative and all the teams of the Barcelona City Council, the “Generalitat de Catalunya”, and the “Diputació de Barcelona” that have participated in the organization of this event.

**Your Excellencies,**



Since the Union for the Mediterranean was brought forth at the Paris Summit, we have been welded by a sense of optimism for the future that lay ahead. I fully understand this feeling as we are inaugurating a new era; we are witnessing a historic moment.

This unprecedented political will was truly a promising start and I really hope that the same consensus that reigned over the initial steps, over the designation of Barcelona as the venue of the headquarters of the General Secretariat, even over my election as Secretary General, will really prove to be harbinger of the work that lay ahead and the new path we have embraced.

As for myself, I would like to emphasise how deeply honoured I am for this new role as Secretary General. It is a daunting and humbling responsibility that I am assuming and I am fully determined to live up to the trust that all the Mediterranean countries have bestowed upon me. I am committed to do my utmost to maintain the spirit of consensus, of cohesion, that lays at the very core of the Union for the Mediterranean and was witnessed at the beginning of this Union, since the Paris Summit.

When we gathered at Paris, and also then at Marseille, it was inspiring to witness how all the Mediterranean countries committed themselves to raise hopes again, determined to uphold a single but momentous principle – that despite the entrenched disputes and old grievances that have rippled us apart, there is more that unite than divide us. In this context we need to endorse a doctrine for the future, a doctrine that reminds us that next generations deserve better than what we enjoy now. In particular, I should underline that future Mediterranean generations deserve justice, deserve prosperity and deserve peace.

We know it is not going to be easy, that the stakes are higher than ever and the challenges we face are neither easy to handle nor even easy to foresee.

Let us not forget that there are millions of people in the Mediterranean who are stranded in poverty, or their living chances are dour because they lack even basic access to water and sanitation. Let us not forget that conflict and war have had its toll on us and our capacities. Let us not forget that despite the economic growth which we witnessed during the last years, the current global financial crisis has reminded us what is at stake and alerted us to our future prospects for further development. We are hastened by climate change. We are losing opportunities because of lack of logistical infrastructures, not to say that our human capital, our most precious asset, needs more resources to flourish.

This is the situation we must face heads on. The upcoming summit should not lose sight of these issues and more. The Union for the Mediterranean has an ambitious agenda that wants to tackle the underlying roots of most of these problems by



advancing on six key areas of cooperation, which include environmental protection, transport, civil protection, alternative energy, education and scientific research and business development. The summit should be an opportunity to politically augment the Union for the Mediterranean, to politically empower the Secretariat and enable it and give it support whether financially, technically or politically, to re-indorse what has been agreed in Paris and to re-emphasise the potential work in the said six sectors. But most importantly, to push for peace in the Middle East on the basis leading for the creation of an independent Palestinian State, ending occupation, accounting for the security of the State of Israel, normalising relations between the countries, peoples of the region, and opening real cooperation opportunities between all of the Member States on the UfM whether economically or socially.

We do not want to contend ourselves just with grand statements and bold promises. We want to engage ourselves in practical initiatives that will result in tangible results.

And to reach this goal, it is undoubtedly that we need the thrust, the steam of cities. Because too often this sort of initiatives tend to see the whole picture and device broad blueprints for action with generic recommendations, but what we really need is to learn from cities, because you have the know-how needed to bring general suggestions into more focused solutions that fit better with the diversity of the problems that we want to tackle.

Also, as it has been already pointed out, half of the Mediterranean population already lives in cities and, according to UN sources, 75% of all the Mediterranean population by 2025 will live in urban settlements. And in this context allow me to remind you that while cities have a clear structure, a planification, and networks of services, urban settlements, on the contrary, may lack access to communications, infrastructure, even to basic services. And that is why the Union for the Mediterranean is keen on tackling issues of transportation and civil protection.

A very important point that we need to take into account is the environment concerns. Cities account for half of the sources of contamination, but also must be part of the solution. If we are able to introduce more sustainable policies into the planification and the daily life of the cities, the most critical problems perhaps will not be completely solved, but will be clearly alleviated. This is why I will support an initiative of echo cities within the UfM.

Also, in relation to innovation, I want to praise all the work undertaken by cities to promote business developments and new economic opportunities. And in this field, I would like to carry out initiatives that may bring together all the different stakeholders that are involved in the advancement of talent.

### **Your Excellencies,**



Given the entire outstanding role that local and regional authorities are currently playing in the Mediterranean, I cannot but express my determination to pay more attention to all the inputs that you all might be so kind to give to the Union for the Mediterranean.

And I wish you success in your discussions tomorrow that will cast light on the importance of local and regional authorities in the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership.

Esteemed Guests, allow me to close by addressing our Mayor Mr. Hereu directly, being one of his citizens now: "Mayor, you have poured yourself into the defense of, not only what cities are, but also what cities can be. Through your leadership in Barcelona, you have taught us the true value of proximity, the profound importance of listening to everybody, the invaluable assets you can gain simply by making everybody feel that they are not at the sidelines of policies, but at the very core of them. You always say your true passion is Barcelona, that this city has always been a "great opportunity" and you work tirelessly to make of Barcelona, "més Barcelona que mai" [more Barcelona than ever]. But you have been humble enough to recognize that this "more Barcelona" means working "more" with other cities. And I want to publicly recognize your words when you also say that "more Barcelona means more Mediterranean".

Thank you very much.