



Remarks by UfMS Secretary General Ahmad Masa'deh,
The EuroMed Ministerial Conference on Water
Barcelona, 12-13 April 2010

***Co-Presidencies,
Honourable Ministers,
Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,***

It is an honour for me, two years after the last ministerial conference on water, which was held in my home country, Jordan, to be able to speak to you today in my new capacity as Secretary General of the Union for the Mediterranean.

I am assuming my responsibilities fully conscious of the importance of water for the future of Euro-Mediterranean cooperation. I am convinced that water is a key factor for all socio-economic and environmental needs in the region, and therefore cooperation in the water field is crucial in the future work of the Union for the Mediterranean.

We meet today, filled with great hope and determination, to achieve the aspirations of the people of our region and to ensure their access to drinking water and sanitation, as defined in the Millennium Development Goals. The Mediterranean region, which was always considered as the beating heart of the civilization throughout the history, faces major challenges of water scarcity and droughts. The pressure on water resources resulting from global warming will be further exacerbated by increasing demand from growing population levels and per capita consumption. Urgent action is therefore needed to ensure a wiser use of our water resources.

The Heads of State and Government of the Union for the Mediterranean agreed at the Paris Summit to define a Strategy for Water in the Mediterranean, in order to promote the quantitative and qualitative preservation of water resources, the diversification of water supply and the rational and sustainable use of water. The Ministerial Conference on Water, held in Jordan in December 2008, has entrusted the Water Expert Group to settle a common political and methodological framework to facilitate the implementation of regional policies and the financing of related concrete projects in the water field.

I would like to pay tribute to the experts for their excellent work. I am confident that the Strategy of water in Mediterranean, which will be adopted by your Excellencies during your meeting, will promote the coordinated development of Mediterranean water resources



and ensure that resources are shared in an equitable manner, without compromising the sustainability of vital ecosystems.

I am very pleased to see that the Strategy for Water in the Mediterranean includes the objectives endorsed in the Ministerial Conference on Water held in Jordan in 2008. It addresses regional challenges related to water governance, climate change and extreme phenomena, water demand and non-conventional resources, and finally water financing.

Depending on its mandate to identify, process and promote new projects as well as search for funding and implementation partners, and provided that it is equipped with sufficient technical and financial means, the Secretariat of the Union for the Mediterranean will coordinate closely with the Water Expert Group to ensure the implementation of the Strategy for Water in the Mediterranean, and especially the development, according to the Jordan Declaration, of a subsequent Action Plan and related measurable objectives and indicators of the aforementioned Strategy by the year 2011. By the same token, and depending on the mandate of the Secretariat to lead on the monitoring and evaluation of projects implementation, the Secretariat will also monitor the operational objectives to be implemented at local, national and regional levels, according to the Action Plan, for assessments by 2015, 2020, and 2025. I would like to recall here that in the field of water and environment, a first series of projects is materializing. It contains 50 projects either already implemented or in the final stages of development.

The adoption of the common Water Strategy in the Mediterranean is only a first step in the right direction. The Implementation of the Strategy is a challenging task that will be achieved only if it is based on an open dialogue and constructive cooperation among partners. And because integrated water management is not only a regional necessity but a global one, we must also work in concert with other international and regional frameworks, particularly with the United Nations Millennium Goals, the EU Water Framework Directive and the initiatives of the Arab League and the African Ministers' Council on water.

In closing, it is evident that projects to cooperate on water have a very great direct impact on citizens. It is about guaranteeing everyone's right to have access to good-quality water. And equality of access to water is undoubtedly one of the keys to improved health, education, conservation of the environment, eradication of poverty, and economic development. Euro-Mediterranean cooperation on water can accordingly be most visible to and felt by citizens. Therefore, this crucial time in which we are living necessitates a new culture of water. In the case of the Mediterranean, this necessity is at the same time an opportunity to work together. An opportunity that must serve to create confidence-building



mechanisms that will allow us to consolidate our cooperation in this and other areas and achieve peace, stability, security and economic prosperity for our peoples.

You have my personal commitment that we in the UfM Secretariat will be working to make this possible. I personally look forward to working with all the Ministers here and all our partners in the future, to protect what I consider to be the most valuable resource in the Mediterranean region.

Thank you.