

The Rabat Declaration

“Launching a new Decade of Sustainable Development in the Mediterranean”

On the invitation of the Parliament of the Kingdom of Morocco and the Circle of Mediterranean Parliamentarians for Sustainable Development (COMPSUD), Representatives of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), UN Environment Programme/MAP, the League of Arab States (LAS), Parliamentarians, Members of COMPSUD, COMJESD (Circle of Mediterranean Journalists for Environment and Sustainable Development), other Media, and other representatives of Civil Society (from Albania, Belgium, Croatia, Cyprus, Egypt, France, Greece, Italy, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, Portugal, Slovenia, Tunisia and Turkey) met on December 17th 2019 in Rabat. They were informed and debated on key environmental and sustainable development issues concerning the Mediterranean region and concluded that significant progress has been made on a number of key areas at regional level (Union for the Mediterranean, Barcelona Convention, Mediterranean Commission for Sustainable Development, League of Arab States) and/or national level, including the reduction of untreated urban and industrial waste discharges into the Mediterranean sea; in integrating pollution prevention in its agenda and shifting towards green and circular economy through the adoption and application of sustainable consumption and production practices; in designation of new protected areas; in introducing formal, non-formal and informal Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) with the involvement of many stakeholders; in elaborating, in several countries, incentives and/or legislation for the reduction of the use of plastics that constitute a major part of marine litter; as well as in shifting to greater use of renewable energies and non-conventional water resources. The UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-2030) and the European Green Deal, among others, offer opportunities for transformative policies and actions.

Despite these very welcome positive developments, unfavorable conditions at regional and global level, including major old and new conflicts, economic recession, political instability and rapidly growing population in some Mediterranean countries of the east and south coasts, have increased the pressures on both natural resources and societies of the Mediterranean. The latter are paralleled by considerable increase of the flows of refugees as well as economic and environmental migrants to Mediterranean countries. The overall critical situation is further exacerbated by the change in the climate of the region, that is warming 20% faster than the world’s average, resulting perhaps in the most severe ecological and climatic crisis of its long history with more frequent and severe droughts, floods, reduced snowfall and ice cover on mountains, forest fires, various types of erosion, intrusion of seawater, rapid biodiversity loss, invasion of alien species, as well as unfavorable impacts on historic monuments and pieces of art and other major challenges, including weakened human security, increased conflicts, health problems and socioeconomic collapse, all phenomena that the 25th Meeting of the Signatory Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC COP25, Madrid, 2-13 December 2019) failed to take seriously into account. As pointed out by the recently approved key messages of the 2019 State of the Environment and Development Report (2019 SoED), it is clear that Mediterranean countries are facing today common challenges that require a high level of multilateral responses, collective actions, and mobilization of significant resources.

Against these developments and in view of the new decade 2020-2030, which will be critical (perhaps the last decade within which preventive mitigation and adaptation measures may make sense and have positive impact) for the future of the environment and sustainable development of the Mediterranean Region and the entire world, Governments, National Parliaments, Media, Scientists, Civil Society Organisations and Society as a whole, including the private/corporate sector, need to urgently and effectively come together in order to address the environmental and climate crisis.

The present gathering focused on the need to work systematically together in order to:

- Further strengthen efficient/good governance and promote a green, circular and, to the extent possible, carbon neutral economy, based on sound scientific evidence-based decision making, by prioritizing integrated environmental planning and management (land-sea-air), participatory processes, including accession to the Aarhus Convention and by introducing and improving relevant legal/institutional frameworks and market incentives.
- Harmonize National Legislations and Frameworks with relevant Global and Regional Conventions, Protocols, Agendas and Strategies and put in place the necessary provisions for their ratification and proper implementation, monitoring and reporting. Among them, of particular significance are the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Aichi Targets of the Convention on Biological Diversity, the UfM Water, Environment, Climate and Blue Economy Agendas, the Barcelona Convention and the recent Decisions of the 21st Meeting of its Contracting Parties (Naples, Italy, 2-5 December 2019), the Ramsar Convention, etc.
- Address biodiversity loss and land degradation together with climate change in a combined and integrated way as a political priority, given the fundamental value of biological diversity, in particular of the marine and coastal ecosystems in providing goods and services essential for sustaining the livelihoods of people across the Mediterranean region.
- Commit to an active and coordinated participation at the 26th Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the UNFCCC that will take place in Glasgow (November 2020) following a preparatory phase coordinated jointly by COMPSUD and major regional bodies and networks.
- Recognize and upgrade at the level of National and Regional security, the security of the “Water-Energy-Food-Ecosystems Nexus” (WEFE Nexus) with due promotion of renewable energies and due amendments in regulatory frameworks for the safe use of non-conventional water resources.
- Within the aforementioned approach, target the two major economic sectors of the region, namely Agriculture and Tourism and accordingly adapt in an integrative way appropriate priorities, strategies, and practices, accompanied by concrete measures.
- Favour with concrete incentives and measures reflected in improved national actions plans nature-based solutions, particularly for landscape restoration and management of coastal wetlands and other vulnerable ecosystems. These measures should be compatible with the Ecosystem Based Approach (EcAp/EBA) and the optimal combination of Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) with Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) and Climate Change measures, the Integrative Methodological Framework (IMF-UNEP/UNESCO/GWP-Med) and the WEFE Nexus approach and constitute no-regret measures for addressing the mitigation and adaptation to climate change, contributing to the achievement of many Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) following an integrated and systemic approach.
- Promote the use of drought plans and maps and vulnerability/flood risk maps as efficient planning/management and decision-making tools.
- Recognizing the gravity of the marine litter problem and the attribution of plastics to it -including biodegradable ones, support a legally binding agreement at global level and the urgent introduction of specific legislation for phasing out single use plastics in parallel to

return/reuse/recycling and extended producer responsibility (EPR) schemes and efficient municipal, agriculture and tourism industry solid waste management systems.

- Concerned about the increasing flows of refugees and migrants to Mediterranean countries and the various significant pressures on the local communities, resources, infrastructures and services including those of water, energy, education and health, request the European Union and the International Community to demonstrate, in concrete ways, solidarity and elaborate comprehensive policies that reduce the pressures in the countries of origin, while supporting the host and transition countries in promoting and maintaining concrete schemes to alleviate the consequences for refugees and reception communities at national and local level.
- Promote systematically Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) at all educational levels and types according to the Mediterranean Strategy on ESD (MSESD) and its Action Plan, and upscale the material and human resources invested in it, as education and awareness are the most efficient and cost-effective means in addressing the challenges of the new decade and beyond by shaping the behaviors towards more sustainable modes of consumption and production and respect to the unique natural and cultural environment and heritage of the Mediterranean.
- Welcome and acknowledge *inter alia* UN, EU and LAS policies, strategies and programs/projects supporting the efforts of the governments and civil society of the region in promoting the protection of the Environment and its Sustainable Development in conditions of peace, democracy, stability, solidarity, respect of each country's sovereignty and protection of human rights.

We emphasize the need for urgent action in the Mediterranean based on renewed strong political will and significant resource mobilization to make all of the above happen.

We thank the Parliament of the Kingdom of Morocco for hosting this meeting and the Moroccan Government for its support.