

## MIO-ECSDE's intervention during the 2021 UfM Ministerial on Environment and Climate Action – High Level Side event

### Biological Diversity, Ecosystem Restoration and Food Systems

*Protecting and Restoring at the core of the shift towards  
Green, Blue, Circular Economy*



It is my honor and pleasure to address this very important side event of this long awaited UfM Ministerial, on behalf of MIO-ECSDE, the major Mediterranean Federation of all the non-State Organisations, of North, South, East, West of the region, working on Environment, Culture and Sustainable Development issues, including, among its 133 members, EEB from the North and RAED from the South and I would like to thank the UfM Secretariat for this opportunity and the continuous support through the Blue Green Med and other initiatives to the civil society organisations.

In addition, however, I would like to reinforce Dr. Adly's points (on civil society participation) and express some kind of disappointment among our members, perhaps because of COVID-19 that some of the traditions of full participation of civil society organisations in the Ministerials, etc., have been forgotten. However, I am sure that this will be restored fully soon.

With only one week ahead of COP 15 and at the start of the UN Decade for Ecosystem Restoration (2021-2030) the issue of Biodiversity, Ecosystem Restoration and Food Systems it is of utmost importance for our organisation and among the key priorities of our Agenda.

On the question of the organizers "*Where does the Mediterranean stand?*", my answer is "It balances in the middle of a stretched rope", or if you wish, it navigates within the gray interface, which separates the area of catastrophic deterioration of our natural basis

which provides us still security and inspiration at many fronts and an area of potential massive improvements, if our recommendations and hopes raised during this meeting are fulfilled.

The negative conditions for the ecosystems and their services due to accelerated natural and anthropogenic pressures are certain and have been well-presented and explained by other speakers and included in the First Mediterranean Assessment Report, the combination of the most serious of which are mentioned in the Draft Declaration.

The improvements, on the other hand, at the moment are still rather **positive and generous intentions**, very welcome of course, but currently they are still at the “policy” level. In order to be implemented, political will should become more visible at all levels and coupled with implementable and concrete measures and generous investment of resources, not only material, but also human ones. In the latter, the role of NGOs and civil society, at large, is absolutely crucial.

MIO-ECSDE in synergy with its members and other partners addresses the issue through a set of key interrelated interventions and approaches:

1. The promotion and application of the **Water-Energy-Food-Ecosystem Nexus**, aiming at securing and restoring ecosystems through integrated alleviation of pressures generated by the current excessive uncoordinated exploitation of the other three components of the Nexus, namely water, energy and food resources.
2. **Support and advocacy for meaningful designation of all types of protected areas of adequate surface and diversity** (such as UNEP/MAP Specially Protected Areas (SPAs), Natura 2000 sites), and with emphasis on the Biosphere Reserves of the MAB UNESCO programme and/or areas managed accordingly, following the same concepts), because we believe in an approach based on the “differentiated intensity” of management. Only by applying a combination of strict protection in the “core” areas with parallel promotion of sustainable development options in the “transition” zones, effective conservation will be achieved with the support of local communities. We have experienced and guided the positive results of such cases. Following this line of thinking, we have organized in the last 8 years annual capacity buildings/trainings in cooperation with the EU LIFE Programme, the UNESCO Regional Bureau for Science and Culture in Europe (Venice) and the Hellenic Green Fund under the title of Summer/Hybrid Universities) for managers of PAs, graduate students and relevant staff members of competent non-State organisations.
3. **By restoring/cleaning and monitoring biodiversity hotspots**, with the involvement of citizens and schools. We embarked on a campaign to make coastal PAs “**SUPs-free**”, capitalizing also on the results of the UfM supported Interreg Med Plastic Busters MPAs project where MIO-ECSDE is a key partner, and we hope that towards this achievement on the Southern shores as well, the contribution of

- the EU funded WES (Water and Environment Support) project will be of great importance.
4. Biodiversity restoration starts with behavioral changes and this requires a systematic Formal, Non-Formal and Informal **education-public awareness**, and addressing specific target groups (e.g. farmers, tourist enterprises, etc.). These interventions are at the heart of the activities of the MEDIES (Mediterranean Education Initiative on Environment and Sustainability) network of MIO-ECSDE, which includes more than 6000 educators from throughout the Mediterranean region.
  
  5. MIO-ECSDE and MEDIES have worked in depth on the tangible and intangible **heritage of the Mediterranean diet**. The SIDUMEF programme, supported by the Anna Lindh Foundation on Mediterranean food and with the contribution of groups from all over the Mediterranean, North and South, covers the Mediterranean food from the historic, health, environmental and economic aspects.

The activities I mentioned focus on the specific issue of our discussion but are complemented with a galaxy of interventions and mobilization of other influential circles, apart from the one of our NGO Members, such as the COMPSUD for the Parliamentarians and the COMJESD, for the Media. With all the above, we hope that we contribute to the work of the Mediterranean States and of the UfM's 2030GreenerMed Agenda in keeping our valuable biodiversity for this and the future generations.

### Prof. Michael Scoullou

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- Chairman of Global Water Partnership-Mediterranean
- Team Leader of the EU-funded Water and Environment Support mechanism in the ENI Southern Neighbourhood region
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