

## **Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) Ministerial declaration on Sustainable Blue Economy**

**2 February 2021**

The Ministers, gathered at the Conference for the promotion of sustainable blue economy in the Mediterranean region, on 2 February 2021, under the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) Co-Presidency of H.E. Mr. Marwan Alkhitan, Minister of Transport, for the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, and of H.E. Mr. Virginijus Sinkevičius, Commissioner in charge of Environment, Oceans and Fisheries for the European Union (EU), and in the presence of H.E. Mr. Nasser Kamel, Secretary General of the UfM Secretariat,

### **1. *Recalling***

- a. the Joint Declaration of the Summit for the Mediterranean held in Paris on 13 July 2008, and the Marseille Declaration of 3-4 November 2008;
- b. the first UfM Ministerial Declaration on Blue Economy, of 17 November 2015;
- c. the relevant UfM Ministerial Declarations, including on Transport (November 2013), Environment and Climate Change (May 2014), Cooperation through Research and Innovation (May 2017) and Employment and Labour (April 2019);
- d. the “2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”, and, in particular, its Sustainable Development Goal 14: “Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development”, the other ocean-related targets, and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda adopted at the Third International Conference on Financing for Sustainable Development held in 2015;
- e. the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean (the “Barcelona Convention”), the Mediterranean Action Plan and the 2016-2025 Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development; the outcomes of the 21<sup>st</sup> Meeting of the Contracting Parties of the Convention (December 2019), and the Naples Ministerial Declaration, committing to concrete actions for the protection of the Mediterranean Sea, including the support to sustainable blue economy and an ecological transition in the region;
- f. the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea<sup>1</sup>, and other relevant international conventions, Multilateral Environmental Agreements and customary international law, relating to activities in oceans and seas, including for the conservation and sustainable use of the oceans and their resources;
- g. the Paris Agreement<sup>2</sup> under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC); as well as the outcomes of the 25<sup>th</sup> UNFCCC Conference of the Parties dealing, inter alia, with ocean and highlighting its importance and inviting the Parties to consider how to strengthen mitigation and adaptation action in this context
- h. the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and its work on the elaboration of a post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, with focus on the marine

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<sup>1</sup> <https://ufmsecretariat.org/ref1/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://ufmsecretariat.org/ref2/>

environment, to be adopted at the 15th meeting of its Conference of the Parties (COP 15).

2. **Recognizing** the 2020 deadline as critical for the achievement of Agenda 2030, in particular SDG14 on the conservation and sustainable use of oceans, seas and marine resources and **taking note** of the upcoming international fora like the UN Ocean Conference, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) World Conservation Congress and the 2021-2030 UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development;
3. **Recalling** the political mandate of and the recommendations from the 2015 UfM Ministerial Declaration on Blue Economy and **taking note of** the “Review of the implementation of the Ministerial Declaration on Blue Economy” prepared by the UfM Secretariat;
4. **Welcoming** the successful completion of the following deliverables:
  - a. the establishment of the UfM Blue Economy Working Group<sup>3</sup>;
  - b. the establishment of the ‘Mediterranean Blue Economy Stakeholder Platform’<sup>4</sup>;
  - c. the adoption by several UfM countries of blue economy strategies following a cross-sectorial approach and developed in close association with stakeholders;
  - d. the establishment of a technical assistance facility to support regional policy dialogue on Integrated Maritime Policy and capacity building activities in various sectors of the blue economy, particularly to the benefit of southern Mediterranean countries;
  - e. the launch of the ‘Initiative for the sustainable development of the blue economy in the western Mediterranean’ (WestMED) and the Algiers’ Ministerial declaration on Blue economy (December 2018);
  - f. the expansion of the Research and Innovation for Blue Jobs and Growth in the Mediterranean area (BLUEMED Initiative) with the aspiration to gradually include all UfM countries, in close collaboration with the UfM Secretariat; and
  - g. the launch of numerous programmes and projects co-funded by various European Union’s instruments such as Horizon 2020, the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund, the European Neighbourhood Instrument, the European Regional Development Fund and the Connecting Europe Facility Programme;
5. **Taking note of** the relevant inputs provided by blue economy stakeholders through the online consultation organised by the UfM secretariat in March 2020;
6. **Concerned** by the significant impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on economic activity and employment in the Mediterranean region and that this socio-economic crisis may exacerbate pre-existing inequalities among countries and within communities;
7. **Taking into account** that, much like maritime activities themselves, the negative effects of the pandemic too are interconnected; and that any strategy or intervention to speed up recovery and make the blue economy more resilient should therefore apply across sectors and consider possible cross-border effects;

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<sup>3</sup> The ‘Blue Economy Working Group’ replaced the ‘Working Group on Integrated Maritime Policy (IMP) in the Mediterranean’, following the 2015 UfM Ministerial Declaration on Blue Economy.

<sup>4</sup> The ‘Mediterranean Blue Economy Stakeholder Platform’ replaced the Virtual Knowledge Centre and took into the increasing needs expressed by the blue economy stakeholders, as per the 2015 UfM Ministerial Declaration on Blue Economy.

8. ***Stressing***

- a. the growing environmental and climate-related challenges facing the entire region, which are exacerbated by rapid population growth and coastal urbanisation together with unsustainable use of marine resources;
- b. the fact that the risks for outbreaks of zoonotic diseases with pandemic potential are increased by the impact of climate change and human pressures on ecosystems, which also result in enhanced vulnerability;
- c. the need to adequately address environmental and climate-related challenges facing the entire region, as well as their cumulative impacts to ensure the social well-being of current and future generations in the region;
- d. the importance of the application of the ecosystem-based approach, the precautionary principle and the use of the best-available scientific advice for the development of relevant policies and measures;

9. ***Reaffirming*** the potential of the blue economy to promote sustainable growth, decent work and reduce poverty in the Mediterranean;

10. ***Considering*** that the sustainable blue economy encompasses all maritime and coastal activities that reconcile economic growth, improved livelihoods and social inclusion with the protection of marine and coastal ecosystems and biodiversity, sustainable resource use and climate change mitigation and adaptation;

11. ***Acknowledging***,

- a. the need to enable all Mediterranean countries to fully enjoy the benefits of a sustainable blue economy through adequate finance, capacity building and technology transfer, taking into account the countries' needs and priorities;
- b. the need to strengthen citizen and stakeholder engagement and in particular the involvement of the younger generations;

12. Ministers ***reaffirm*** the important role of the Union for the Mediterranean in enhancing regional and sub-regional cooperation, supporting integration and partnership, and the need to provide the Secretariat of the Union for the Mediterranean with the adequate support and the necessary means to properly perform its function;

13. Ministers ***agree*** that coordinated, comprehensive and coherent policy responses are necessary to speed up recovery of the blue economy in the Mediterranean and ensure its long term sustainability and ***call for*** further action in the following areas:

**As regards governance and the future of sea basin strategies in the Mediterranean region:**

14. Ministers ***task*** the UfM Secretariat to reinforce dialogue between UfM member countries and stakeholders on the sustainable blue economy, maximizing regional coordination, partnerships, opportunities for cooperation and pooling of resources – in close cooperation with the UNEP/MAP Barcelona Convention and other relevant partners, and ***commit*** to continue their constructive work within the Blue Economy Working Group;

15. Ministers ***welcome*** the proposals made by civil society representatives of 10 countries within the Summit of the Two Shores to develop concrete projects in the fields of sustainable development, support to Mediterranean youth, development of digital technology, culture and circular economy;

16. Ministers **take note of** the on-going implementation of the European Union Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR) and **call** participating member countries to make full use of future European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) and the Instrument for pre-Accession (IPA), including Interreg programmes, to actively support the development of sustainable blue economy in the Adriatic and Ionian region;
17. Ministers **recognise** both the WestMED initiative and the EUSAIR as successful examples of cooperation, focused on clear goals, priorities and measurable targets and as a catalyst for the development of sustainable blue economy projects in the region;
18. Ministers **call** for further opportunities for exchange of experiences and best practices, as well as cooperation between the countries of the Mediterranean region, maximizing the potential of the above mentioned two sub-regional initiatives and encourage the involvement of other UfM countries in relevant activities;
19. Ministers **call** on relevant Managing Authorities<sup>5</sup> and participating countries to further enhance synergies between future Interreg programmes and other European Union funds, aligning them to the extent possible to address the needs of the whole region whilst avoiding double funding, and promoting their contribution to the achievement of policy objectives set out either in the UfM context, or within the context of agreements between the European Union and third countries, or within the context of other regional cooperation agreements;
20. Ministers **encourage** the engagement of all the relevant national and local authorities;
21. Ministers **call** on other donors to further support the fruitful cooperation in the region and complement the ongoing and future actions, as possible and opportune;

**As regards marine research and innovation, skills, careers and employment:**

22. **Concerned** about the disparities in research and innovation and their potential impact on the sustainable development of blue economy in the region;
23. **Concerned** about the mismatch between the skills of the labour force and the evolving needs of the industry, as well as a shortage of attractive jobs in the sector;
24. Ministers **welcome** the ongoing implementation of the BLUEMED Initiative and its Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda, as well as its various work strands;
25. Concerned about the lack of systematic data relating to the impact of climate change on oceans, Ministers welcome the continuation of the European Union's Copernicus programme as a key enabler for environmental monitoring, adaptation to climate change and development of blue economy;
26. Ministers **reaffirm:**
  - a. the need to invest in socioeconomic observatories and provide scientific evidence to support integrated approaches to the development of the sustainable blue economy;
  - b. that research and innovation investments at all levels are needed to address key challenges of the region, provide tailor-made solutions for society at large and create new and sustainable business opportunities in the blue economy;

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<sup>5</sup> Managing Authorities are national authorities in charge of the European Union financial programmes.

- c. the need to prioritize education, vocational training and scientific capacity including technology transfer to anticipate transformative technological trends and promote just transitions;
- d. the importance of working closely with the private sector to promote innovation and identify and address skills gaps;

27. Ministers ***call for***

- a. The uptake of the BLUEMED Implementation Plan and the continuation of the BLUEMED Initiative for Blue Jobs and Growth in the Mediterranean region under Horizon Europe, as a key element for an integrative implementation of the Research and Innovation Agenda for the Mediterranean through a coordinated multi-programme effort;
- b. The promotion of the Startup Europe Mediterranean (SEMED) initiative, aiming, in partnership with BLUEMED, to connect all the actors of the innovation system in the Mediterranean area as well as other instruments and initiatives to support the sustainable development, job creation and competitiveness of Blue economy SMEs;
- c. The continuation and further development of the Copernicus marine service to tackle coastal challenges as called by the MED7 group white paper “*Copernicus for the blue economy in the Mediterranean sea and beyond*”;
- d. The establishment of blue economy clusters - including transnational ones, the strengthening of existing clusters, and increased cooperation between national clusters in the Mediterranean;
- e. Stakeholders to work together in sector-specific partnerships to develop and implement strategies to address skill gaps and promote decent work and tailored training for blue economy sectors;
- f. Further use of the Mediterranean Blue Economy Stakeholder Platform managed by the UfM Secretariat to facilitate contacts between existing education networks, exchange information including pedagogic tools and serve as an interface for mobility programs;
- g. The UfM countries to collaborate in the relevant international fora to adapt training and education requirements for maritime-related professions, in view of technological developments and climate-related commitments;

**As regards sustainable food from the sea: fisheries and aquaculture**

- 28. ***Stressing*** that Mediterranean fisheries are of vital importance for food security, and provide essential socio-economic value for vulnerable coastal communities across the region;
- 29. Ministers ***recall*** the important role played by the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) as the key pillar for regional cooperation on fisheries and ***urge*** all UfM member countries to comply with the management recommendations adopted by the GFCM with the view to sustainably manage key stocks in the region and develop sustainable aquaculture;

30. Ministers **welcome** the adoption of the MedFish4Ever Ministerial Declaration<sup>6</sup> as a strong political commitment to ensure the environmental, social and economic sustainability of Mediterranean Sea fishery resources for present and future generations;
31. Ministers **strongly encourage** the adoption of an ambitious new GFCM strategy for the period 2021-2025 to further turn around fisheries governance in the Mediterranean towards increased sustainability;
32. Ministers **urge** all UfM member countries to apply an ecosystem-based approach to fisheries management and provide adequate protection of marine environments, notably vulnerable species and sensitive habitats, through the establishment and strengthening of marine protected areas and fisheries restricted areas<sup>7</sup>;
33. Ministers **emphasize** the urgent need to reduce anthropogenic driven impacts, such as climate change, and all forms of pollution, including land-based and sea-based pollution, pollution from air, chemical pollution, excess nutrients, underwater noise as well as the invasive alien species in accordance with the objective of reaching Good Environmental Status within Ecosystem Approach process of the Barcelona Convention;
34. Ministers **welcome** initiatives for increased cooperation between the Mediterranean countries in the fight against Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing , including inter alia the GFCM's IUU Plan of Action (IPOA-IUU) and the cooperation between the European Fisheries Control Agency (EFCA) and national fisheries control authorities;
35. Ministers **recall** the significance of the small-scale fisheries (SSF) sector in supporting the livelihoods of coastal communities across the Mediterranean, and **call for** further support to the GFCM's Regional Plan of Action for Small-Scale Fisheries in the Mediterranean and Black Sea (RPOA-SSF) as a vital political commitment to strengthen and support sustainable SSF in the region as well as their resilience to shocks;
36. **Taking into account** the potential for development of aquaculture and blue bio-economy in the Mediterranean, Ministers **emphasize** the GFCM's Strategy for the Sustainable Development of Aquaculture as instrumental to ensure a level playing field in the Mediterranean and bring about a more competitive, sustainable, profitable and equitable aquaculture sector;
37. Ministers **call** for further research, innovation and support to SMEs to diversify the sustainable blue bio-economy in the Mediterranean and **invite** UfM countries to invest in market innovation, including ecolabelling and traceability to support more sustainable and resilient seafood systems.

**As regards sustainable, climate-neutral and zero-pollution maritime transport and ports:**

38. **Taking into account** the vital and strategic role of maritime transport in the Mediterranean, its role in ensuring connectivity among the UfM member countries but also the potential role of the shipping sector in reducing global greenhouse gas emissions and the need for this sector to address environmental, climate change and social-related challenges;

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<sup>6</sup> The MedFish4Ever Declaration was signed on 30 March 2017 by sixteen countries, notably, Albania, Algeria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Cyprus, France, Greece, Italy, Malta, Monaco, Montenegro, Morocco, Slovenia, Spain, Tunisia and Turkey, as well as, the European Union.

<sup>7</sup> Without prejudice to the sovereign rights of states, including in international waters, and in accordance with international laws on the basis of cooperation between countries and provided that they are agreed on the relevant areas.

39. **Recalling** the UfM Ministerial declaration on transport and the Regional Transport Action Plan for the Mediterranean, and **welcoming** the ongoing work towards a UfM Strategic Action Plan for Transport Connectivity;
40. Ministers **welcome** the entry into force in 2020, of the International Maritime Organisation's (IMO) requirement setting the global 0.50% sulphur limit in marine fuels, under Annex VI to the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL), to reduce relevant air pollution worldwide including in the Mediterranean basin;
41. Ministers **stress the importance for** all UfM member countries to comply with the 0.50% sulphur limit in marine fuels and **call upon** all riparian UfM member countries, which have not already done so, to ratify the Annex VI to the MARPOL Convention as soon as possible, to maximise health and environmental benefits,
42. Ministers **welcome** the decision by the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention, in December 2019, to adopt the roadmap for a proposal for the possible designation of the Mediterranean Sea, as a whole, as a Sulphur Oxide Emission Control Area (SOx ECA), pursuant to MARPOL Annex VI, with the view to submit a proposal to IMO in 2022 based on the outcome of the socio-economic studies and the decision of COP 22, and **support** its timely preparation in order that the Med SOx ECA enter into force as soon as possible, according to the above roadmap;
43. To promote the transition of the Mediterranean fleets and ports towards carbon-neutrality and zero pollution, Ministers **call for** strengthening expertise and boosting investments in infrastructure taking duly into account the specific needs and priorities of Mediterranean countries; including investments on the provision of Onshore Power Supply and energy saving technologies for ports activities as well as on the development of alternative fuels, and transitional fuels as appropriate, and technical and operational energy efficiency for ships;
44. Ministers **encourage** Mediterranean countries to actively cooperate and participate in the implementation of joint projects in the provision of clean energy and technology and **welcome** the establishment of the WestMED Technical Group on Sustainable Transport/ Green shipping;
45. Ministers **stress** the importance of developing necessary means for facilitation of maritime trade such as a fully digital administrative environment for waterborne transport that will reduce costs for the operators and increase the efficiency and effectiveness of administrations, including the digitalisation of reporting formalities in ports, necessary for achieving the full benefits of a Maritime Single Window system.
46. Ministers **underline** the need to ensure that seagoing vessels are dismantled in a manner which is environmentally sound and respectful of worker's rights; in that regard, they **call** on Mediterranean countries to ratify the Hong Kong International Convention for the Safe and Environmentally Sound Recycling of Ships, and to make sure that vessels flying their flag only get dismantled in facilities which meet high social and environmental standards;

**As regards interactions between marine litter and the blue economy:**

47. **Considering** the negative impact of plastic and micro-plastic pollution on the marine environment but also on blue economy activities – notably tourism, fisheries and aquaculture;

48. Ministers **welcome** the progress in the implementation of the Regional Action Plan on marine litter management in the Mediterranean, and the application of the Sustainable Consumption and Production approach as per the 2014 UfM Ministerial on Environment and Climate Change, and the following approval of the 2016 Regional Action Plan on Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) of the Barcelona Convention;
49. Ministers **welcome** the UfM Secretariat's support and actions to promote regional coordination and partnership on marine litter possibly within a wider green, circular economy approach, in close cooperation with the Barcelona Convention Secretariat and many other relevant (international, regional, national and local) stakeholders and frameworks, and **invite** all UfM countries to develop further initiatives to raise public awareness on marine litter and address it, including micro-plastics, through actions that include among others marine litter monitoring and removal;
50. Ministers **welcome** the BLUEMED pilot initiative for a 'Healthy, plastic-free Mediterranean Sea', launched in 2018, and **call upon** all UfM countries to contribute to its implementation as appropriate, and notably to identify good practice initiatives which actively engage public and private players, as well as legislation and technological solutions for the prevention of the phenomenon, the recovery and valorisation of plastics already in the sea and the potential for the development of alternatives to plastics;
51. Ministers further **welcome** the Barcelona Convention's COP 21 commitment to take urgent action to prevent plastic leakage in the Mediterranean Sea, by promoting prevention measures and circular approaches, and adopting national plans to progressively achieve 100% plastic waste collection and recycling, by 2025;

As regards reduction of marine litter generated by blue economy sectors:

52. Ministers **welcome** the International Maritime Organisation Action Plan addressing marine litter and **invite** UfM member countries to improve port reception facilities to ensure proper collection and recycling of waste coming from all maritime activities;
53. Ministers **call for** exchange of best practices to address the issue of marine litter from aquaculture and the issue of abandoned, lost or otherwise discarded fishing gear in the framework of the GFCM, and **invite** UfM member countries to engage with fishermen to involve them in the collection of marine litter at sea.

#### **As regards coastal and maritime tourism:**

54. Ministers **highlight** that coastal and maritime tourism is one of the major economic sectors for Mediterranean countries with their accessible and attractive coastlines and coastal cities, but that this sector has significant impacts on the environment and local population;
55. Ministers **highlight** that preserved marine and coastal ecosystems and marine cultural heritage contribute to the attractiveness of coastal areas;
56. Ministers **recognise** that relevant policies, including research and innovation, must acknowledge the impacts of tourism activities on coastal areas, and the vulnerability and complexity of the coastal and maritime ecosystems;
57. Concerned by the devastating effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the tourism sector and indirectly on other blue economy sectors, Ministers **agree** to:
  - a. promote policy coordination, stakeholder collaboration and cooperation mechanisms to strengthen the resilience of the tourism sector in the Mediterranean;

- b. develop comprehensive monitoring, evaluation and statistics schemes and promote the digitalization of the sector;
- c. implement sectoral strategies and action plans to green and reduce carbon emissions from the whole tourism industry, including tourism-related maritime transport;
- d. address seasonality and over tourism by promoting the diversification of the tourism offer, encouraging experience-based and slow tourism as well as associating the hinterland;
- e. promote eco-tourism and niche tourism, including activities such as pesca-tourism, culinary tourism, and sport tourism, among others;
- f. promote fiscal and investment policies to support sustainable coastal and marine tourism.

**As regards Maritime Spatial Planning and Integrated Coastal Zone Management<sup>8</sup>:**

- 58. **Highlighting** the increasing competition for the use of marine and coastal space and resources in the Mediterranean and the need for increased effort to control and minimize the impacts associated with the expansion of activities in coastal areas and at sea while increasing the coverage of Marine Protected Areas;
- 59. Ministers **recognise** that tools such as ecosystem-based Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) and Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP) are important to enable the development of sustainable blue economy sectors and activities, attract investment, and reduce impacts on the environment;
- 60. Ministers **underline** the importance of preserving and enhancing ecosystems, including vulnerable marine ecosystems notably through well-connected and effectively managed marine and coastal protected areas and **highlight** the importance of preserving the connection with inland wetlands in line with the recommendations adopted under the RAMSAR convention;
- 61. Ministers **take note** of the progressive use as governance tool of ICZM and MSP since the adoption of the 2015 UFM Ministerial Declaration on Blue Economy, **welcome** the work of the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO on Maritime Spatial Planning in the western Mediterranean and **invite** all UfM member countries to further use Maritime Spatial Planning in support of the development of the sustainable blue economy in the Mediterranean, including by addressing Land-Sea Interactions, as appropriate;
- 62. Ministers **commend** UfM Member Countries that developed ICZM national strategies and **call** for their further development and update, when necessary, through the provision of adequate financial and technical support;
- 63. Ministers **welcome** the adoption by the Contracting Parties of the Barcelona Convention, in last December 2019, of the Common Regional Framework for ICZM, as a guiding document to facilitate the implementation, in the Mediterranean, of the ICZM Protocol;
- 64. Ministers **recognise** the crucial role played by national and local authorities, in MSP and ICZM and **call for** their further involvement and coordination as appropriate.

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<sup>8</sup> As applicable for the UfM Member States not legally bound regarding the MSP and ICZM matters.

**As regards marine renewable energies:**

65. Ministers *recognize* that marine renewable energies (MRE's) can play a crucial role in meeting the reduction targets in greenhouse gas emissions and in combatting climate change;
66. Ministers *recognize* the potential role of MRE's for the sustainable development of the economies of the coastal areas and islands and the need for closer regional cooperation;
67. Ministers *call for* cooperation on research and innovation towards the development of technologies capable of fully exploiting the potential of MRE sources of the Mediterranean, including combining different marine activities (i.e. renewable energy, aquaculture, fisheries, bio-resources, environmental conservation and restoration, maritime transport, and tourism services) in the same marine space;
68. Ministers *call for* offshore operations for renewable energy production to be carried out by taking safety precautions and considering environmental impacts;
69. Ministers *call for* the enhancement of relevant regulatory frameworks and facilitation of licensing process while preserving adequate assessment and public consultation prior to installing MRE infrastructure.

**As regards maritime safety and security of blue economy activities:**

70. *Recognising* the importance of ensuring a high level of maritime safety and security throughout the Mediterranean Sea basin, for the protection of citizens and countries, and for the development of a sustainable blue economy;
71. Ministers *welcome* the active role taken by the Mediterranean Coast Guard Functions Forum (MedCGFF) in enhancing regional cooperation and promoting understanding of maritime issues of mutual importance and of common interest related to Coast Guard Functions across borders and sectors, both civil and military, and *invite* the forum to develop training activities and further facilitate exchange of information, expertise, technical assistance, training and best practices to address illicit activities at sea;
72. Ministers *recall* the importance of improving maritime safety, in accordance with the Conventions of the International Maritime Organisation, capacity to prevent and react against manmade and natural disasters, as well as pollution from ships, in cooperation and within the agreed legal framework, with relevant regional organisations, and through regional institutions such as the regional Maritime Pollution Emergency Response Centre for the Mediterranean Sea (REMPEC) and initiatives, such as the SAFEMED initiative implemented by the European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA);

**As regards sustainable investment in the blue economy:**

73. *Concerned* about the critical status of the marine environment in the Mediterranean and the uneven levels of economic development and access to finance, including concessional finance, between countries in the region, both for public and private stakeholders as well as the lack of capacity, in particular in the developing UfM countries;
74. Ministers *welcome* the increasing interest of European and International Financial Institutions in the sustainable blue economy, and in particular their active participation in meetings of the UfM Blue Economy Working Group, as well as other events organized by the UfM Co-Presidency and Secretariat;

75. Ministers **reiterate** their **call** on UfM members to continue making the necessary domestic reforms to create a more conducive environment for investments;
76. Ministers **commit** to promote the transition to sustainable blue economy in their national recovery strategies;
77. Ministers **call upon** International Financial Institutions, development partners, public and private actors to prioritize investment in the sustainable blue economy according to the Sustainable Blue Economy Finance Principles<sup>9</sup> and notably in the following domains:
- a. preservation of the marine environment;
  - b. innovation in a sustainable blue economy, circular economy, waste management and reduction;
  - c. sustainable food value chains from the sea – incl. both fisheries and aquaculture;
  - d. marine renewable energies and de-carbonization of blue economy sectors;
  - e. sustainable maritime transport including energy efficiency in ports;
  - f. sustainable coastal and maritime tourism, including the protection and valorisation of maritime cultural heritage;
  - g. adaptation to climate change, notably adapting relevant infrastructure and acting against coastal erosion by using nature-based solutions.

**Finally,**

78. Ministers **look forward to** the UfM Ministerial meeting on Environment and Climate Action to be held in Egypt in 2021, and call for the two Ministerial declarations to feed and complement each other;
79. Ministers **call on** the UfM Blue Economy Working Group to regularly share progress made at national and regional level in the implementation of this Ministerial Declaration, and call on the UfM Secretariat to report to the UfM Senior Officials' Meeting;
80. Ministers **agree** to hold the next UfM Ministerial Conference on Blue Economy, at the latest in 2025.

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<sup>9</sup> <https://www.unepfi.org/ecosystems/sustainable-blue-economy-finance/>