



Council of the
European Union

Brussels, 18 May 2022
(OR. en)

9212/22

MAMA 73
MED 21
RECH 249

NOTE

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Delegations
Subject:	Request for endorsement of the Ministerial Declaration to be adopted at the 1 st Union for the Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on Research and Innovation on 27 June 2022

Delegations will find attached a note from the Commission on the above-mentioned subject.



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
Directorate-General for Research & Innovation

Directorate F – Global Approach & International Cooperation in R&I
F.2 International Cooperation II: Asia, Africa, Middle East & External Relations

Brussels,

NOTE FOR THE ATTENTION OF THE RESEARCH WORKING PARTY

SUBJECT: Endorsement of the Ministerial Declaration – To be adopted at the 1st Union for the Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on Research and Innovation on 27 June 2022

CONTACT POINTS: Commission DG RTD Unit F.2 - International Cooperation II: Asia, Africa, Middle East & External Relations

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End of last year, the Council was informed of the intention to enter into discussions on a Declaration to be endorsed on behalf of the European Union at the 1st Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) Ministerial Conference on Research and Innovation¹ planned to take place on 27 June 2022.

Agreement on the text of the Ministerial Declaration was reached at the second UfM ad-hoc Research and Innovation Senior Officials Meeting on 24 February 2022. The declaration was then endorsed by the Union for the Mediterranean Senior Officials on 22 March and the Commission decided on 4 May 2022 to authorise Commissioner Mariya Gabriel to endorse the Ministerial Declaration on behalf of the Union, provided that the Council endorses the Declaration.

Hereby the services of the Commission transmit to the Council for endorsement the Ministerial Declaration to be adopted at the 1st Union for the Mediterranean-UfM Ministerial Meeting on Research and Innovation on 27 June 2022.

The Declaration was also subject to internal consultation and approval within the Commission services in April 2022. The current draft text has been revised to avoid any committable language and potential financial implications. By acting together the different UfM Member States would be able to achieve greater regional integration in R&I, building on the Valletta Declaration of 2017 and on the basis of the new agreed priorities for future collaboration. It is expected that only minor adjustments may be requested by the ministers during the upcoming Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) Ministerial Conference on Research and Innovation.

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¹ It is the 3rd R&I Ministerial with the region, but the previous two were not under the UfM.

First Union for the Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on Research and Innovation

DRAFT DECLARATION

27 JUNE 2022

The Ministers of the Member States from the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) gathered for the 1st virtual UfM Ministerial Conference on Research and Innovation on 27 June 2022 (TBC) under the Co-Presidency of H.E. XXX, Minister of XXX, for the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, and of H.E. Ms Mariya Gabriel, Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth of the European Commission, for the European Union, and in the presence of H.E. Mr. Nasser Kamel, Secretary General of the Union for the Mediterranean Secretariat and hosted by the *French Ministry in charge of Research*, make the following declaration:

1.1. [STOCK-TAKING]

RECALLING

- a. The Ministerial Declaration on strengthening Euro-Mediterranean collaboration through Research and Innovation endorsed in La Valletta, Malta, 2017.
- b. The Union for the Mediterranean Ministerial Declaration on Sustainable Blue Economy that was adopted virtually on 2 February 2021.
- c. The Union for the Mediterranean Ministerial Declaration on Energy signed in Lisbon on 14 June 2021.
- d. The Union for the Mediterranean Ministerial Declaration on Environment and Climate Action endorsed in Cairo on 4 October 2021.
- e. The Climate Change COP26 in November 2021, in Glasgow, where agreements were reached on Paris Agreement rulebook

- f. The conclusion of the Fifth Regional Forum of the Union for the Mediterranean, held in Barcelona on 27 November 2020 and celebrating the 25th Anniversary of the Barcelona Process.
- g. The conclusions of the sixth Regional Forum of the Union for the Mediterranean held in Barcelona on 29 November 2021,
- h. The commitment of the Union for the Mediterranean Member States to the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), in particular SDG 3 on Good Health & Well-Being, SDG 4 on Quality Education, SDG 6 Clean Water & Sanitation, SDG 7 on Affordable & Clean Energy, SDG 9 Industry, Innovation, & Infrastructure, SDG 10 Reduced Inequalities , SDG 11 on Sustainable Cities & Communities, SDG 13 on Climate Action, SDG 14 on Life Below Water, and SGD 17 on Partnerships for the Goals.
- i. The Nouakchott Declaration (2022) of the 5+5 Dialogue on Research, Innovation, and Higher Education and the agreed action areas, developed by the high level working group taking into account the newly agreed priorities of the Union for the Mediterranean Regional Platform in Research and Innovation

ACKNOWLEDGING

1. The OECD Progress Report on Regional Integration in the Union for the Mediterranean region which highlights that regional cooperation in research and higher education can help improve the quality of skilled labour as well as promote the diversification of economic activities. One of the main challenges being to level the playing field, in terms of building capacities in research and higher education.
2. The scientific findings of the First Mediterranean Assessment Report (MAR1) by the Mediterranean Experts on Climate and Environmental Change (MedECC) on the risks associated to climate and environmental change in the Mediterranean region, and its Summary for Policy-Makers as a major input from the scientific community to inform future climate and environmental policies in the region;

3. The importance of the Horizon Europe Framework Program for Research and Innovation (including Horizon Europe Missions and European Partnerships) as well as of the Erasmus+ and of the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) - Global Europe for supporting a prosperous, healthy, sustainable, and peaceful Mediterranean Region
4. The scientific findings of the Working Group I contribution to the Sixth Assessment Report, *Climate Change 2021: The Physical Science Basis*, and its Summary for Policy-Makers informing about global and regional climate simulations.
5. Progress made in R&I cooperation in the region since la Valetta Declaration in 2017 including the successful rollout of the BLUEMED initiative, which aims at tackling pollution towards a healthy, productive, and resilient Mediterranean Sea and coastal regions, and of the Partnership for Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Area (PRIMA), which aims at the achievement of sustainable management of water resources, farming systems and agro-food value chains, and its nexus, with both initiatives contributing substantially to science diplomacy.
6. PRIMA's Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda (SRIA), and its monitoring and evaluation system that enables an effective joint research and innovation programme in crucial sectors for the Mediterranean, providing scientific progress and technical solutions for the water and agri-food areas and their interconnected nexus.
7. The BLUEMED Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda and its Implementation Plan, aimed at designing a shared pattern to foster blue growth and the sustainable use of marine resources in the Mediterranean Sea and the BlueMed Pilot action for a Healthy Plastic Free Mediterranean.
8. The ongoing process of establishing a multi-stakeholder platform on Sustainable Food Systems with FAO and CIHEAM, which supports Science, data and innovation, and Education, capacity building and awareness raising as entry points for a context-specific framework for collaboration and cooperation on sustainable food systems in the Mediterranean.

9. **The Partnership agreement between the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) and the European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts (ECMWF), to support all UfM countries to access the critical data they need to tackle Mediterranean climate change challenges.**
10. **The Lisbon Manifesto on Earth Observation for Africa and Europe** prepared by the Portuguese Presidency of the European Council in the context of the Africa Europe Space Earth Observation High Level Forum, 10-11 June 2021, co-organised, together with European Commission, African Union Commission, ESA, EUMETSAT and European Union Agency for the Space Programme (EUSPA)

And RECOGNISING that

11. The COVID-19 global pandemic has brought drastic consequences on public health, national economies, and the well-being of citizens of the UfM Member States here represented while, at the same time, there are now immense opportunities ahead of us to build more resilient societies and economies by taking full advantage of cooperation in higher education, research and innovation aiming at changing the ways our societies advance for the betterment of people's lives and the natural environment. These opportunities will notably be seized by speeding up the twin green and digital transition and harness their potential.
12. The Renewed Partnership with the Southern Neighbourhood² and planned Economic and Investment Plan and the EU Global Approach to Research and Innovation³ aim at strengthening long-term regional cooperation through the creation of sustainable economies, and decent and sustainable jobs, linking scientific and technological innovation with employment opportunities, including for SMEs and young entrepreneurs. Building on this, the Global Gateway⁴ will further boost smart, clean and secure links in digital, energy and transport sectors and to strengthen health, education and research systems across the world. A specific attention will be paid to the contribution of digital to all sectors and industries, in a pragmatic and also human-centric approach.

² JOIN(2021)2final:
https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/joint_communication_renewed_partnership_southern_neighbourhood.pdf

³ [ec_rtd_com2021-252.pdf \(europa.eu\)](#)

⁴ [joint_communication_global_gateway.pdf \(europa.eu\)](#)

13. Through its European Green Deal, the European Union has stepped up its commitments and set a blueprint to achieve climate neutrality, as well as to restore nature and path to pollution-free environment, while boosting green, circular, and resource-efficient economy, including sustainable blue economy.
14. The positive role of Science Diplomacy in enhancing regional cooperation in the Mediterranean while developing skills and promoting circulation of talents, especially on fields of sustainable development where Research and Innovation play a prominent role, including in climate action, health, renewable energy, marine and inland waters sustainable food systems, and green, circular, and resource-efficient economy, including sustainable blue economy.

1.2. [WAY FORWARD]

ACKNOWLEDGE the set of R&I Roadmaps⁵ and recommended actions delivered by the technical Expert Group, representing both North and South shores of the Mediterranean, and adopted by the National Focal Points of the UfM Regional Platform for Research and Innovation, on 7 July 2021, according to the three priority areas of Climate Change, Health, and Renewable Energies. Including also the horizontal approach to integrated crisis management, which draws inter-linkages between the three previously identified priorities while acknowledging the importance of this approach in making up for the delays in the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals especially in the identified priority areas as a result of the pandemic.

And WILLING to

- j. In the area of climate change, promote Research and Innovation actions particularly to assess the impact of water scarcity and extreme events such as floods, droughts and heat waves in rural and urban areas negatively affecting livelihoods, and to develop adaptation strategies, innovative technologies and practices for sustainable agricultural production, and preserving biodiversity as well as marine activities in the Mediterranean in relation with marine biodiversity and protected areas , and ecosystem services in the context of climate change tackling the pollution of sea and coastal areas..

⁵ <https://ufmsecretariat.org/platform/ufm-regional-platform-on-research-and-innovation/>

- k. In the area of Health, address the pressing need to improve epidemic preparedness and response intelligence for rapid action coordination among Euro-Mediterranean countries. To orient Research and Innovation actions in the future towards building resilience of health systems, facilitating more equitable access to health services and technologies, and constructing greener cities conducive to healthier behaviour.
- l. In the area of Renewable Energies, address the need to harmonize and map existing databases in the region, modernize electric power systems (e.g. smart grid technologies), promote advanced technologies especially in the areas of green hydrogen production, storage- and infrastructures implementation, and lastly improve energy loss management through innovative approaches.
- m. Reducing GHG emissions by the use of renewable energy technologies and green fuel. In particular, addressing the interconnected impact domains between climate change, health and renewable energies in the Union for the Mediterranean countries: water resources, waste, ecosystems and their services, sustainable and intelligent transport solutions, food safety and security, health and human security.
- n. In the area of Earth observation, to develop blue and green economy-based undertakings, namely for the delivery of new knowledge to effectively address the challenges of green transition, making use of the opportunities driven by digital transition, including the development of early warning and monitoring systems for water, agriculture, clean oceans and atmospheric issues.
- o. Promote cross-cutting and enabling actions that facilitate the R&I Roadmaps, and in particular the knowledge triangle comprising research, continuity of education, innovation, which includes the following key stakeholders: researchers, students, entrepreneurs, NGO officers, and policy-makers. Promote innovation as a tool for building knowledge, skills, vocational training, careers and economic inclusion of Mediterranean graduates and researchers.
- p. Promote social sciences and humanities research and innovation to tackle all the challenges in the Euro-Mediterranean region, following Valletta Declaration, 2017 and Lisbon Declaration on Humanities, Open Research and Innovation, 2021.

EMPHASISE the need to level the playing field in research and innovation cooperation, investments, and to orient national-level policies, smart specialisation strategies and programmes across all UfM Member States according to the priorities of Climate Change, Health, and Renewable Energies, and ensuing set of R&I Roadmaps and recommended actions or steps forward, as identified by the UfM Regional Platform in R&I.

ACKNOWLEDGE that research and innovation cooperation between Member States of the Union for the Mediterranean should be based on a shared vision of fundamental R&I values and principles, including the respect of the freedom of scientific research, to build and to foster reciprocal and mutual beneficial collaborations.

HIGHLIGHT the need to swift action, in accordance with the Implementation Plan that has been elaborated by the National Focal Points of the UfM Regional Platform in Research and Innovation, and commit to mobilising resources including from national funding agencies and alignment of national-level policies including bilateral programs.

TAKE NOTE of the PRIMA programme as a unique research and innovation platform enabling to address complex challenges in the Region and, based on its successful work, HIGHLIGHT the importance to discuss its continuation with the adequate modalities, in line with the Horizon Europe approach to Partnerships, and in line with the policy priorities as set up in this declaration.

PARTICIPATE in the implementation and deployment of Mission “Restore our Ocean and Waters by 2030” and its Mediterranean zero pollution lighthouse, e.g by joining forces to prevent and eliminate pollution of the Mediterranean Sea and its main river catchment areas, in particular litter and plastic, nutrients, chemical pollution and other forms of pollution including noise pollution.

SUPPORT the establishment of the Mission lighthouses of the Mission Restore Our Ocean and Waters by 2030, and the Mission implementation charter and encourage the mobilisation of programmes, initiatives and public and private funds.

CONSIDER the opportunity and added value of multilateral research and innovation cooperation in the European Partnerships for climate neutral, sustainable and productive Blue Economy, Zero Emission Waterborne Transport and Water4All, through which research and innovation projects can be co-funded, complementary to the Horizon Europe different work programmes and the Horizon Europe Missions.

UNDERLINING the role of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) as a unique forum for dialogue in the Mediterranean region and a key platform to achieve effective regional cooperation, encourage the UfM Regional Platform in Research and Innovation to follow-up on this Declaration, assess the progress made and finalise/support the implementation of the agreed priorities.

CALLING on the Secretariat of the Union for the Mediterranean to continue fostering linkages on research, innovation, education and skills in the Mediterranean region, fully utilising available tools promoting a level-playing field in researchers' career, skills and mobility, supporting capacity building, coordination and joint actions, including on innovation and employability of Mediterranean students, graduates and researchers. The Secretariat of the UfM is also tasked to continue supporting the UfM Regional Platform on Research and Innovation, following the guidance of the Platform Co-Chairs.

INTEND to reconvene in principle in 3 years to discuss the appropriate follow-up.

The present instrument is not intended to create rights or obligations under international or domestic law or to result in binding financial implications.