First of all, let me apologise for the delay but it has been a very intense, very positive and constructive morning of work with our Ministerial Meeting of the Union for the Mediterranean here in Barcelona.

Let me start by saying that it has been – and it is – an honour for me to co-chair this annual gathering of Foreign Ministers in the Union for the Mediterranean with the new Jordanian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ayman Safadi. We already became friends and I am sure that we will continue to work together, not only bilaterally but also as co-chairs of the Union for the Mediterranean as the European Union and Jordan have been doing in these last years. I want also to take this opportunity to salute and thank his predecessor, Mr Nasser Judeh, with whom we worked in an excellent manner all over these years; but as I said, we have already started an excellent cooperation with Ayman.

Since 2012, the economic regional cooperation has been the core of business of the Union for the Mediterranean. This means working with concrete projects on education, jobs creation and economic sustainable development. And we have delivered already concrete results, direct benefits for the young people, women, entrepreneurs and citizens in our region. I am sure the Secretary General [of the Union for the Mediterranean, Mr. Fathallah Sijilmassi] will be more detailed in presenting the results of this work, but let me tell just that having 43 countries, an overall population of 800 million people in our region, gives us a size, a magnitude, an impact that is quite unique and the 47 – if I am not wrong - regional projects labelled with € 5,5 billion supporting this is really a very concrete outcome of hard work, not only of the Secretariat, but also of our teams and I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the teams that have been working also for this Ministerial that has brought, I think, big and important results.
I will close by saying that in terms of political results of this meeting today, I believe we have made a very important collective commitment today with all the Ministers and the representatives around the table. It is more and more evident in our region that the way to solve conflicts, manage crises, prevent tensions is more regional integration and more regional cooperation. This is the most conflictual region of the world and it is also the less integrated one. The two things have a connexion and the European history has shown us over decades, if not over centuries, that the less integration, the less cooperation you have at regional level, the more conflicts you are likely to have and, on the other side, the more conflicts and tensions you have, the more difficult cooperation and integration become.

So, today we have committed together to break this circle of lack of integration and tensions and conflituality and invest in a coherent manner on more political dialogue and more regional integrational cooperation on very concrete fields of actions through our Union for the Mediterranean. This is going to have an impact on our citizens' lives and the special focus of our deliberations today has been the focus on youth. We know well, as the demographic trends of our region indicate that this is the smart thing to do for our present and not only for our future; but also tackling the issue of giving adequate space to our youth, both in Europe and in the rest of the Mediterranean region, is also key to a certain number of top priorities that we share: the economic development, guaranteeing that our societies are open societies with a space for each and every citizen, the management of migration flows but also the prevention of radicalisation and the management of our security concerns that we also share.

So, our decision today is this, to sum up in short, and I stop here: increase our political cooperation, increase our common work on concrete projects for regional integration and cooperation with a special focus on youth, and try to use this to create more stability and more peace in the region. I would like to thank all my friends here on stage with me, and in particular to the Spanish government, all my friends, the [Spanish] Foreign Minister Alfonso [Dastis] for having welcomed us as always in an excellent manner in Spain. Gracias. And I give the floor to my co-chair, the Jordanian Foreign Minister, [Ayman Safadi].

Q&A

**Q. Comment les principes vont-ils être concrétisés ? Et ce que vous avez décidé aujourd'hui engage-t-il les autres membres de l'UpM ? Que dire aux gens pour leur prouver que des choses concrètes sont faites?**

**A:** Si je peux ajouter une petite chose, pour être très concrète, déjà l'Union pour la Méditerranée, ensemble, cela veut dire nous ensemble, les 43 membres, avec le soutien du Secretariat, le travail du Secrétariat, par exemple sur la question de l'emploi des jeunes, nous sommes arrivés à avoir 26 projets avec un impact sur 200 000 jeunes dans la région. C'est quelque chose de très concret, l'exemple du lac de Bizerte c'est seulement un des exemples, des projets qui touchent à l'emploi mais aussi à la gestion de la pollution, sur le climat, l'énergie – comment dit-on en français ? "renewable" – renouvelable, le transport, la gestion des espaces et de développement urbains, et cela touche vraiment la vie des gens.

Et si je peux ajouter une chose: on voit toujours la nécessité de créer des liens entre les deux côtés de
Q. On the new U.S. administration and on the EU-US cooperation, in particular regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

A: It is some 20 questions in one, but I will try. First of all, the European Union is more than ready and willing to cooperate with the new U.S. administration on the basis of our own policies, our own priorities and our own values, so I can say I do not know if this is ‘Europe first’, but for sure I see a lot of fields where American and European interests coincide. And we will define with the new administration - once all the teams are settled in their respective ministries, their set of priorities and policies - some of them are still in definition and in the making, this is normal - policies and priorities and see where we have coinciding policies, coinciding interests where we have space for intense cooperation. I am convinced that especially on counter-terrorism, security but also on some of the conflict we have in the region, in the Mediterranean, we will have a common interest to cooperate as well as we have cooperated always with the last U.S. administration.

There will be issues where probably our interests will not coincide, but it is not for me to spell out the U.S. policies before the new administration will. The EU positions are clear and well known on many different issues, including on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. By the way this morning I had the chance of meeting here both with the Israeli Minister for Regional Cooperation [Tzachi Hanegbi] and the Palestinian Foreign Minister [Riyad al-Maliki] and we discussed not only bilateral issues, but also the EU support for the restart of direct negotiations. I have seen that this is also the affirmed position of the Trump administration: the support to direct talks. This is exactly the position that the European Union has always had. We will see for actions but - and this is not up to us to determine the direction that these actions or these policies will take - for sure the European Union policies are clear and we will work with the U.S. administration on the basis of our own positions that are determined as you know in Brussels or elsewhere we meet at 28.

I would just like to say that again, especially on the Israeli-Palestinian issue, the European Union approach is that of trying to help the parties to find a common ground, to achieve the two-state solution. This is our aim and we will continue to work, hopefully with our partners in the Quartet – U.S., Russia and the United Nations –, with our Arab Partners – Jordan, Egypt, other countries, the Arab League – on the basis of the Arab Peace Initiative that for us is a very good basis to start with, and first and foremost with the parties. We have strong ties both with Israel and with Palestine and this is a plus that the European Union puts at the service of the international community to try and facilitate a positive solution to the conflict. Because when we talk about the need to focus on the youth or on the economic cooperation in the region, this also includes Israel and Palestine. And we see the need, especially when sharing such a small portion of land, to have cooperation, based on steps on the ground that can make life easier for the people on all sides.

See also

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