UfM Regional Forum: discussions focus on situation in Syria and cooperation in the Mediterranean

“The need for the Union for the Mediterranean has never been stronger,” said High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini at the 4th ministerial Regional Forum of the Union for the Mediterranean, which she co-chaired today in Barcelona with Jordan's Prime Minister Ayman Safadi.
"Our common region today is still facing many of the challenges it was facing five years ago. Too many crises are still open. Syria is facing yet another escalation of violence, with consequences that we believe will be extremely negative for us all - and this is why we ask for this military intervention in North East Syria to immediately stop. In Libya, the political process has been halted once again by this year's new military offensive. And the two-state solution continues to be eroded on the ground," said Mogherini. "In fact, the reasons for investing in the Union of the Mediterranean are even stronger today," she went on to say.

"The Union for the Mediterranean is an investment in multilateralism and regional cooperation. It is an open channel among governments that may not always share the same views ... but share the same region - and if there is one thing you cannot change it is geography - and many of the same interests. It is a space for dialogue, in times when unilateralism too often prevails."

The High Representative stressed that "the success of this mechanism is that it focuses on common interests, common opportunities and ways in which different players and different stakeholders - not only government but also civil society - can overcome political obstacles and put the people of the Mediterranean region at the centre of our common action."

She stated that the UFM Forum helped to develop a sense of shared responsibility, despite the fact that the region still faces quite some problems, conflicts and crises but also problems related to the economic development, access to employment, equal opportunities, climate change, environmental issues, South-South.

"This Forum has been in these years, and has also proven to be in its fourth edition today, a useful tool to address some specific issues, with so many projects we are doing under the label of the Union for the Mediterranean. It has also been a useful tool to create the environment, the political channels, the approach of coming together and listening to each other, that can also pave the way to creating better conditions for solving - where it can be done, in relevant fora - the crises of this region," affirmed the High Representative.

The Forum decided today that work in the coming months will focus on environment and climate change. The UfM will continue to focus on practical areas that have an impact on the life of citizens across the Mediterranean; these include trade, investment, job creation – in particular for young people and the empowerment of women – economic cooperation, digital economy, research and innovation, infrastructures, energy, civil protection and tourism.

During today's meeting, Ministers' discussions also focused on three main challenges in the region: the Israeli-Palestinian issue, the situation in Libya and the recent developments in Syria.

"We all expressed very serious concerns about the current developments and the expectation that the situation can improve. Most importantly, that the first positive steps that were taken under UN leadership with the agreement on the Constitutional Committee could be followed-up by the UN Special Envoy [for Syria, Geir Pedersen]. The EU deplores the current military activities in north-east Syria and we wish to see them being stopped as soon as possible," concluded the HRVP.

See also

Remarks by High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini at the 4th Regional Forum of the Union for the Mediterranean
Remarks by HRVP at the press conference following the 4th UfM Regional Forum
Video
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