



Union for the Mediterranean

Energy challenges in the Mediterranean region, reaching and securing energy efficiency towards sustainable development.

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Union for the Mediterranean: Introduction

The Union for the Mediterranean is a multi-national partnership that was established in 2008 at the Paris summit for the Mediterranean, as a part of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership, also known as the Barcelona Process, which was created in 1995.

It consists of 43 countries both from the European Union and the wider Mediterranean region. More explicitly::from the north side of the Mediterranean, the 27 member states of the EU along with Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Monaco, Montenegro and Turkey, from the south side Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt and Mauritania and from east side Lebanon, Israel, Palestinian National Authority, Jordan and Syria.

The central goal of the Union for the Mediterranean is the dynamic revival of the Mediterranean region into an area where peace, security and stability will thrive. The beginning of a new phase where all the parties involved will share the same commitment to the democratic values, cooperation and prosperity of the region.

The main areas of discussion for the UfM are defined by the commitment of the Union to maintain the "acquis" of the Barcelona Process which purpose is the promotion of peace, stability and prosperity of the Mediterranean basin. Therefore the four main chapters of cooperation, developed in the Barcelona process remain the same. These are:

Politics and Security

Economics and Trade

Socio-cultural

Justice and Interior Affairs. (The fourth chapter was included at the 10th Anniversary Euro-Mediterranean Summit held in Barcelona in 2005)

Along with the aforementioned, the 43 Ministers of Foreign Affairs have also identified another six priority areas that address the needs of the Mediterranean relations.(November 2008)These are the following:

De-pollution of the Mediterranean.

Maritime and land highways

Civil protection

Alternative energies: Mediterranean solar plan

Higher education and research: Euro-Mediterranean University

The Mediterranean business development initiative.

In terms of institutional structure, the UfM has produced an innovative administrative system. All of its members have agreed on the establishment of a Secretariat and the creation of a co-presidency system.(the Paris and Marceille declarations, 2008)The former is a structure of technical nature, with the task of selecting and monitoring projects which comply with the main objectives of the Union. The latter is a new system of administration where two partner countries, one from the European Union and one the other Mediterranean partner countries, share the presidency on all levels for a non-renewable period of two years.

Other structures which promote the vision of the UfM for regional cooperation include: the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly and the Euro-Mediterranean Regional and Local Assembly.

Lastly, the funding of the Unions' proceedings and on going projects is received mainly from the private sector, along with the substantial contribution from the European Commission (through the European Neighboring Policy Instrument-ENPI),the European Investment Bank (through the Euro-Mediterranean Investment and Partnership-FEMIP),the World Bank and the newly established InfraMed Infrastructure Fund.

Despite its shared values and its common cooperation with the EU, it is important to underline that the Union for the Mediterranean remains an independent organization with no legal ties to the European Union and every other regional Union.

Union for the Mediterranean and Energy Challenges

a. Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency (REEE) on the road to sustainable development

According to the Paris declaration in 2008, the topic of Energy and alternative energy resources is officially recognized as a priority issue of concern for the member state countries. This act is an acknowledgment of the high importance of renewable energy and energy efficiency, especially in the Mediterranean region.

Renewable energy and energy efficiency (REEE) are considered to be the basic foundation for a sustainable energy policy, which is a part of the energy strategy of the UfM. Their simultaneous development is the only way to start transforming the economy in terms of energy supplies and usage of alternative resources and reduce the carbon dioxide emissions, leading not only to the protection of the environment and its people but also to long awaited and long needed sustainable development to the Mediterranean countries. The point is that renewable energy presents an opportunity but also a complex challenge for the Mediterranean region. The question that remains to be answered is: what is this regions' capacity to pursue energy policies and support the development of renewable energy and energy efficiency on the territory? Is it possible for a region with a history of multilateral tensions between its neighboring countries to agree and promote a polymorphic plan of action for RE? The answer to these heated questions can be found into the principles and objectives of the UfM, but most importantly, into the political will to continue this immense effort for a greater future for the Mediterranean.

Therefore, the efforts made by the UfM on alternative energies are a momentum, which with the proper strategy and financial tools, it can make a substacial difference to national, regional and international level of cooperation, peace and stability.

b. Alternative energy strategy: The Mediterranean Solar Plan

The start of the Unions' tough challenge for an effective energy strategy has begun at the Paris Summit in July 2008, where the 43 member states initiated the Mediterranean Solar Plan(MSP),a project that looks to promote the production and use of renewable energies.

The MSP is based on a framework of actions, centered to create "large scale, private sector driven and ultimately self-sustained markets for REEE technologies" in the Mediterranean that will lead to the use of clean, renewable energy in the wider Mediterranean region as well as the transfer of a percentage of that energy to countries in northern Europe.

The main objectives of the plan are:

1. Reach by 2020 the goal of 20GW(Gig watt) of new generation capacities by

renewable energy sources,(wind and solar energy), on the South shore of the Mediterranean.

2. Supply the region with the majority the energy production ,while exporting a percentage to the EU.

3. Contribute to the improvement of the energy efficiency in the Mediterranean region.

4. Assist to the employment demands of the southern Mediterranean region by creating jobs and industrial capacities.

The Secretariat of the UfM has been appointed to coordinate all the relevant sides of this project (member of the UfM, European Commission, partners and other industries and NGOs) for the management, selection and endorsement of pilot projects.

The successful result of these objectives can be assured by a strict framework that combines actions to obtain possible obstacles and actions to create projects for REEE products. The reality is that the idea of making REEE products a "mainstream" option for energy markets to the Mediterranean and wider region needs a high-level management of the political and economic sectors in a national and international level.

That is the reason why the UfM: MSP has categorized its actions into five "building blocks":

1. Policy and regulatory frameworks
2. Funding and support schemes
3. Physical infrastructures
4. Renewable energy as an industrial catalyst
5. Transfer of knowledge and capacity building

These five areas represent a different set of steps, who can only work efficiently if they develop at the same time. All of these efforts aim to launch renewable energy products (mainly solar and wind energy)in order to minimize the earnings of the fossil fuel markets and give a new dynamic to the economy of the Mediterranean countries, a step closer to sustainable development.

c. Alternative Energy Strategy: UfM and Dii: Desert power 2050

Desert Storm 2050 is one the most recent initiatives of the Union for the Mediterranean in the field of Energy. On May 16 2012, the UfM and the Desertec Industrial Initiative (Dii) have sighed a memorandum of understanding for future collaboration, in order to both fulfill their objective for the production of RE in the Mediterranean area.

Dii is an innovative, private industry alliance, which gathers companies from all the EUMENA (European Union-Middle East-North Africa) region, that share the same vision for

the future energy production and supply system in the area. The main objective of Dii, is to demonstrate, through scientific research and analysis, how Renewable Energy products (solar and wind energy) can provide the EUMENA region with a sustainable, affordable and reliable power system.

First established in 2009 (30/10/2009) under the German law as a GmbH (limited liability company) Dii consisted of 13 signatories from Europe and North Africa. Three years later, Dii has expanded, incorporating private companies as shareholders and associated partners from all over the world. It now counts 56 industrial partners across 15 countries.

The followed strategy for the realization of this vision is incorporated into "Desert Power 2050", which the UfM has shown its support. The project seeks to illustrate that a power system based on approximately 90% Renewable Energy can become a reality until the year 2050. According to the action plan, this goal can be accomplished through the utilization of areas that combine excellent solar and/or wind recourses with scarcely populated regions. In the broader EUMENA region, the desert areas in Middle East and North Africa (MENA) along with the southern EU countries and some areas in the northern EU states (mostly for wind power) fit the criteria.

One of the most compelling tasks of Desert Power 2050 is the understanding of the fact that Europe and MENA, regions with long and rich history behind them, in the field of Energy, unlike the predominant view, should be considered as one, single region. This notion is a catalyst to the progress of the plan. It leads the way for the next step, the installation of an integrated power system, using the latest technologies, throughout the EUMENA, of which both regions will benefit from.

On one hand, the MENA countries will gain from the production clean, renewable energy through a secure and reliable system that will meet their overgrowing power demands. On the other hand, Europe will profit from the considerably cheaper electricity. Apart from the solely economic advantages, the cooperation between the two regions in the field of power, could gradually solve some of the most hotly-debated issues: fossil fuel dependency and climate change. The EUMENA countries will depend more on the RE products, which have minimum environmental footprint, leading to the decrease of the carbon dioxide emissions.

The shared vision of a interconnected sustainable EUMENA power system is ultimately the reason why the Union for the Mediterranean supports this projects. In combination with MSP, international cooperation among the EUMENA countries can be further enhanced for a greater purpose.

Conclusion

The Union for the Mediterranean is a forum that aims for all Mediterranean countries and the rest of the EU countries to begin a multilateral dialogue on the most hotly debated issues that concern the Mediterranean basin. Among them energy is a major issue, the promotion of energy efficiency and renewable energy in order for the Mediterranean countries to overcome the energy challenges and reach sustainable development. The UfM has been taking action towards that way with the launch of the Mediterranean Solar Plan and the collaboration with Dii for "Desert Power 2050". Both projects have tremendous potential to shift the market of energy towards renewable resources and finally secure a better future for generations to come.

Questions that should be addressed during the conference

- How can the UfM overcome the existing energy challenges in order to move forward?
- How can the UfM:MSP be applied to member states, in terms of a legislative framework?
- In the midst of the turbulent situations of some UfM member states, how can the UfM:MSP have positive results on its pilot projects?
- Apart from wind and solar energy, are there any other renewable energy sources that can be explored by the UfM?
- Can the UfM collaborate more closely with member states in order to promote its efforts in the field of energy to the public?

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