



European Union



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The
Hashemite
Kingdom of
Jordan

UfM Blue Finance Conference: Investing in a Sustainable Blue Economy in the Mediterranean

22 June 2022, 09.00 – 18.30 at the WTC in Barcelona, Spain

Preliminary concept note

Background

The ocean economy is expected to double to \$3 trillion by 2030, employing 40 million people, as compared to 2010. Blue Finance offers tremendous opportunities to help address pressing challenges and contribute to economic growth, improved livelihoods, and the health of marine ecosystems.

In the Mediterranean region, the main sources of investments in the sustainable blue economy include public funding opportunities offered by International Organisations, governments, Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs) and “green funds”. Such funding is offered in the form of grants or lending instruments aimed at the co-financing of projects and providing support to infrastructure development and SMEs. In parallel, the private sector is showing increasing interest in sustainable investments through innovative financial instruments, such as “blue bonds”.

The UfM Ministerial Declaration on Sustainable Blue Economy, adopted on the 2nd of February 2021, converges on the need to tackle specific aspects of blue finance, as follows:

As regards sustainable investment in the blue economy:
(Ministers)

- 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;*
- 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;
- Ministers reiterate their call on *UfM members to continue making the necessary domestic reforms to create a more conducive environment for investments;*
- Ministers commit to *promote the transition to sustainable blue economy in their national recovery strategies;*
- 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 and notably in the following domains:*
 - a. *preservation of the marine environment;*
 - b. *innovation in a sustainable blue economy, circular economy, waste management and*
 - c. *reduction;*
 - d. *sustainable food value chains from the sea – incl. both fisheries and aquaculture;*
 - e. *marine renewable energies and de-carbonization of blue economy sectors;*
 - f. *sustainable maritime transport including energy efficiency in ports;*
 - g. *sustainable coastal and maritime tourism, including the protection and valorisation*
 - h. *of maritime cultural heritage;*
 - i. *adaptation to climate change, notably adapting relevant infrastructure and acting*
 - j. *against coastal erosion by using nature-based solutions.*

In addition, the EC Communication on a new approach for a Sustainable Blue Economy, adopted May 2021, emphasises the EU's commitment to supporting non-EU countries in developing a sustainable Blue Economy. Further, the renewed partnership with the Southern Neighbourhood and its New Mediterranean Agenda adopted February 2021 includes a priority on "Green transition: climate resilience, energy, and environment". Hence, encouraging investments in green/blue sectors in southern Mediterranean countries aligns with EU policies and objectives.

Overall goal

Following on the above and with the support of the EU/DG MARE, the UfM conference on Blue Finance aims at:

1. Providing an overview of the current investment opportunities for the sustainable development of the Mediterranean Blue Economy and Offering practical guidance on the procedures to follow;
2. Discussing the enabling conditions (policy/regulatory environment; technical assistance; etc.), to attract funding
3. Organising direct networking opportunities and matchmaking sessions between countries and businesses and financial institutions, banks or investors.

This can best be done by building on a solid background, i.e. based on a number of formal priorities and goals, set and endorsed by the countries themselves, thus providing a clearer vision for Banks and Financial institutions, in terms of sectors and/or activities that countries are prioritising.

Hence, the event will be linked to both EU and UfM political priorities, aligning in particular with the 2021 UfM Ministerial Declaration on Sustainable Blue Economy: the priorities should be seen as sectors and/or enablers for which funding and investment should be targeted and encouraged.

Although overall the conference will cover the whole Mediterranean and will be open to all UfM and EU countries, it will focus particularly on the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean countries and will have session(s) especially dedicated to these.

Format

It will take place in the form of a physical Conference in Barcelona, with the expected number of participants being around 200/250.

The idea is to bring together various financial institutions, banks (multilateral and national), private investors as well as key representatives of the UfM countries, including industry/business.

The Conference will be structured around two main sessions on:

- **Access to finance**, including enabling conditions for investing in Mediterranean and examples/best practices currently in place. Opportunities and modalities for investments in blue economy sectors; EU funding; International funding; funding by Multilateral Development Banks; National funding; and Private investments. The sessions will be set-up as either panels or presentations by the Banks/financial institutions and will ensure interactivity and attendee participation (time for Q&A, slido/MentiMeter etc.). They will showcase specific examples on projects already undertaken with their funding.

- **Matchmaking sessions** between the countries and the Banks/Financial institutions. These will be booked and planned in advance so that the participants can present concrete project proposals and discuss/receive in situ feedback as well as plan ahead their viability.

Main outcomes expected

Access to information and bridging the gap between investors/funders and countries: The conference will contribute to better aligning and mobilising financial flows towards sustainable blue economy sectors and activities prioritised by the countries in the Mediterranean region.

Both countries and the industry often lack information as to the funding opportunities already available. This conference should help guide them and should provide clarity on this as well as, inter alia, addressing the enabling environment to invest in sustainable blue economy in the Mediterranean, and sharing successful experiences/cases from different regions.

Matchmaking: The conference will enable countries and companies to present specific projects for which they require funding and get feedback as to their viability.