Final Declaration

CPMR Intermediterranean Commission
General Assembly

9 July 2021 – Online

15 key recommendations
for the Future of the Mediterranean basin
in a post-pandemic era

This document constitutes the Final Declaration to be approved by the CPMR Intermediterranean Commission General Assembly, gathered online on July 09, 2021.

This Declaration has been drafted in the framework of the 2021 worldwide pandemic situation resulting from the propagation of the SARS-CoV-2 and consequences thereof. It is intended as a CPMR Intermediterranean Commission contribution to the current debates on the socio-economic and environmental recovery of the Mediterranean basin.

Its references are based on the late and current Mediterranean state-of-the-art regarding the following issues, as well as on the previous and current CPMR General Secretariat’s and CPMR Intermediterranean Commission’s works, including those of partner institutions, networks and programmes.

Far from pretending to be exhaustive, the Declaration is articulated around priority issues identified by the CPMR Intermediterranean Commission’s Political Bureau (March 2021); namely governance, climate change and biodiversity protection, global sustainability, blue economy and the Youth.

The tone is set!
One of the biggest strengths of human beings is their resilience; the capacity to adapt themselves to unusual situations, allowing them to strive. The sanitary crisis induced by the SARS-CoV-2 has been and still is one of a challenge, questioning our socio-economic ecosystems and ways of life. After more than one year of adapting our societies and habits to halt the spread of the pandemic, things seem to have taken another turn: moving forward to the “new normality.”

In this context, local and regional authorities have played, play, and will play – a big part. Close to territories and citizens, they are key actors to support and inspire them socially, economically, and sustainably to the best possible extent. Advancing towards an improvement of the situation aiming at the “new normality” nonetheless puts us before challenges that are still to be overcome.

Climate change and biodiversity loss have been critical issues over the past decades and yet, lots of efforts remain to be done to reach carbon neutral societies, lower the impacts of our socio-economic activities on the environment, and safeguard and restore biodiversity, particularly in the Mediterranean. Likewise, understanding that “sustainability” is not only linked to the environment, but rather to all dimensions of our societies, is still a concept that does not resonate everywhere. And yet, it is one side of the same coin.

Passed and recent developments in the Mediterranean region contribute to build a long-term panorama that make essential to deepening in the promotion of a Mediterranean citizenship, that would extend the basis for a true integration of Mediterranean peoples, common actions to tackle common issues, in view to reach a sustainable and peaceful fate.

Reflecting on the ‘Future of the Mediterranean basin in a post-pandemic era’, and building on its previous Declarations, the CPMR Intermediterranean Commission, addressing European, Mediterranean and International institutions, as well as Mediterranean national, sub-national entities and stakeholders, hereby:

1. Reminds that Local and Regional Authorities are crucial entities acting for the cohesion of territories, working closely to citizens, environmental, climatic and socio-economic stakeholders. Ensuring them a voice in decision-making at national, European and Mediterranean global scales is of utmost importance. As is considering them full actors, decision-makers and implementers on the way to a sustainable recovery of the Mediterranean, based on policy coherence, vertical integration and stakeholder participation in line with the 2030 Agenda and the European Green Deal, and in view of the Conference on the Future of Europe and implementation of initiatives thereof.

2. Recalls that multi-level governance – albeit complex – ensures that public policies at Mediterranean, European and national scales answer territorial needs reflected through the voice, management, and decisions of local and regional authorities on the one hand. On the other hand, still through the action of the latter, multi-level governance allows a sound landing of public policies and funds on the ground. In this context, it calls for local and regional authorities to play a prominent role in the new Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) 2021-2027, as well as in the Recovery Instrument, Next Generation EU, as many of them have the competences in the policy areas to which these funds are allocated, thus ensuring that recovery funds have the greatest possible impact on people’s lives, the economy and the environment. It is noteworthy that multi-level governance can be considered as part of the progressive and gradual federalization process of Europe and the Mediterranean.

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1 CPMR Members Regions have taken specific actions regarding adaptation and mitigation of the climate crisis. Have a look at our RegionsACT! Initiative and results.
3. **Recommends** that the role of local-and-regional-authorities-networks’ networks, such as the Mediterranean Cooperation Alliance, be fully acknowledged by European and Mediterranean institutions and stakeholders, in their capacities to support decentralization, the integration and mainstreaming of policies and funds at various governance levels throughout the Mediterranean. Local and Regional Authorities and their networks-can play a key role in the search for greater coordination among already existing transnational frameworks, potentially under the macro-regional perspective.

4. **Observes** that decentralization processes should be further encouraged and implemented throughout the basin, using bilateral, multi-lateral or territorial cooperation to the best possible extent and observing the multi-level governance principles. In particular, organizations, strategies, frameworks for cooperation and initiatives, such as the Union for the Mediterranean, the Summit of the Two Shores, EUSAIR, WestMED, BLUEMED, INTERREG or thematic programmes *et al.* present a full potential to that end, bringing about common issues, and in synergy with local and regional authorities’ actions. In this context, with regard to cross-border cooperation, it expresses its concern at the setback experienced as a result of SARS-CoV-2, calling, in the light of the debate on the Future of Europe, for cross-border cooperation to once again occupy its position on the EU’s political agenda, thus helping to make it an element that will contribute to recovery from the crisis.

5. **Is optimistic** regarding the opportunities presented to move forward towards the creation of a global Mediterranean macro-regional strategy. The transformative potential that derives from the construction of a Mediterranean macro-regional governance framework, including the different levels of government, is also an excellent opportunity for recovery from the SARS-CoV-2 crisis. In coherence with already existing macro-regions and initiatives in the Mediterranean such as EUSAIR and WestMED, observing a gradual, voluntary, coordinated, integrated and tailor-made approach based on multi-level governance, a global macro-regional strategy would strengthen cohesion at the Mediterranean scale. It would also allow better coordination to tackle the challenges Mediterranean coastal and insular regions are to face, and notably the transition towards greener, ecological and more sustainable economies, climate change mitigation and adaptation, the preservation of biodiversity, and issues linked to digitalization, connectivity, employment, education and skills, the youth, the integration of vulnerable communities, and the fight against poverty to cite a few.

6. **Calls on** the current and upcoming Presidencies of the Council of the European Union (Slovenia, France, and later Spain) to put the Mediterranean under the spotlight and really work towards the promotion of sustainable Mediterranean economies, cultures and the potential the basin represents for the European Union and Neighboring countries. Furthermore, this alignment of three Mediterranean Presidencies close in time is a real opportunity to support the set-up of a global Mediterranean macro-regional strategy along the abovementioned lines, preparing the forthcoming programming period, and reinforcing the diplomatic effort and cohesion across the whole basin. In parallel, **asks** the European Parliament for its

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3 The Mediterranean Cooperation Alliance is a network of networks composed by local and regional authorities throughout the Mediterranean. It is unique in its kind and proposes innovative visions about multi-level governance.

4 In this respect, it applauds the recently approved ATLÁZUL cross-border cooperation project (Interreg V-A Spain-Portugal, POCTEP 2014-20) whose objectives include the promotion of innovation and knowledge in blue growth, as well as the development of synergies in the marine and maritime-terrestrial fields and in whose partnership, led by Andalusia, other CPMR member regions are taking part (Andalucia).

5 The CPMR Intermediterranean Commission held a Working group meeting on macro-regional strategies on June 28, 2021. Exchanges with European institutions were quite positive indeed. Furthermore, a Report on “A Macro-regional Strategy for the Mediterranean” will be presented to the European Committee of the Regions (COTER) end of 2021, under the coordination of Region Sud and Mrs. Agnès Rampal.

6 In this regard, multilateral fora for multi-level dialogue and exchange such as the Three Cultures of the Mediterranean Foundation, involving entities from all three shores of the Mediterranean, constitute an important tool in this process.
specific support to seize the question of the Mediterranean macro-region, for example by elaborating an Initiative Report on the topic and in full collaboration with Mediterranean Regions and stakeholders.⁷

7. **Acknowledges** the European Commission’s Communication on “A New partnership for the Southern Neighborhood” outlining key aspects to strengthen cooperation across Mediterranean countries and readapt the EU’s Neighborhood Policy (ENP) to current issues. As stated in its dedicated Declaration, the CPMR Intermediterranean Commission **reminds** that local and regional authorities should be fully part of the decision-making processes towards the further implementation of the ENP, and not “mere implementers.” Furthermore, climate change mitigation and adaptation, sustainable blue and green economies, biodiversity protection and restoration should be one of the main thematic angular stones of the future developments of the ENP.⁸ In this respect, the development of cross-border projects that strengthen relations between the regions on the three shores of the Mediterranean, bringing added value as a generator of responses to global problems from a local perspective, should receive special interest.

8. **Welcomes** the Union for the Mediterranean’s 2nd Ministerial Declaration on the blue economy, reiterating the importance of this field for the Mediterranean. The role multi-level cooperation and governance play in developing sustainably the blue economy across the basin for societies, economies, and peoples is key and should clearly be emphasized. Transnational and territorial cooperation represents the opportunity to work together in an integrated and coherent way to tackle global challenges that know no borders such as pollution, pandemics or climate change.

9. **Is pleased by** the quite promising European Commission’s Communication on “A New approach for a sustainable blue economy in the EU,” that refers to the involvement of local and regional authorities in the co-design and co-implementation of solutions, promotes a holistic and ecosystemic approach, and highlights the importance of working within sea-basins where there are common identified needs. Moreover, it seems to give particular attention to global sustainability, as well as to the development of initiatives aimed at raising awareness and sensitising citizens on the importance of improving the situation of our marine and coastal ecosystems, knowing the benefits for the present and for future generations.

9.a. The CPMR Intermediterranean Commission **recalls** that the blue economy is a perfect engine to build an integrated strategy at the Mediterranean level as a first step towards a wider cooperation of connected policies to the three pillars of sustainable development. Local and regional authorities should have a clear role and guarantees in that undertaking.

9.b. **Highlights** the need to support the transition towards a sustainable use of natural resources, in particular within the Mediterranean insular context.⁹ Strongly reducing the use and disposal of plastic waste, implementing sewage treatment all along the basin, recovering the Mediterranean water culture, protecting biodiversity and fighting invasive species specially in islands, preserving coasts and islands from rising sea levels, and adapting agriculture to global warming are only a few of the actions at Mediterranean level to tackle the immediate environmental hazards.

10. **Points out**, in reference to the previous point, that specific attention should be brought to managing potential conflicts for the uses of the sea and for a sustainable use of natural resources. An ecosystem-based approach has to be applied to Integrated Coastal Zone Management and Maritime Spatial

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⁷ In the continuity of the abovementioned COTER Report coordinated by Region Sud/A. Rampal, the CPMR Intermediterranean Commission is also reflecting with the MedCoopAlliance on how to concretely operationalize this potential macro-region. This, notably through cooperation programmes such as INTERREG Euro-MED and NEXT-MED.

⁸ For more details, please have a look at our dedicated Declaration.

⁹ In line with the Opinion on the same subject defended at the Committee of Regions by Balearic Islands President Ms. Francina Armengol “Towards sustainable use of Natural Resources within the Mediterranean insular context” - https://cor.europa.eu/en/our-work/Pages/OpinionTimeline.aspx?opld=CDR-344-2020
Planning\textsuperscript{10}, as well as impact assessments need to be clearly considered and performed prior to the design or the construction of infrastructures on land or at sea to limit conflicts and negative externalities on communities and on the surrounding environment. These are important conditions to award public funds to projects whether at European, national, regional or local levels.

11. **Strongly underlines** that the need to promote and support the transition of the Mediterranean economies towards a circular economy as a condition to advance towards economic resilience and sustainability in the region. Green and sustainable economy starts from the beginning of the value chain indeed. Practically speaking and for coherence matters, it is necessary to rethink our approaches to the economy. For example, by further developing social and solidarity economy, supporting local distribution networks and consumption, shifting paradigms regarding finance by supporting and implementing initiatives such as the Sustainable blue economy finance principles\textsuperscript{11}, using material that are gathered, built and sold “locally” across the EU and/or the Mediterranean to the best possible extent. This, in order to be able to ensure lower carbon footprints on the one hand, while guaranteeing employment for European and Mediterranean people and youth on the other, fulfilling the objectives of the 2030 Agenda and the EU Green Deal’s and promoting social inclusion. Beyond that, this would allow the digital transition and the shift towards emerging technologies, including alternative fuels such as clean hydrogen to be smoother, with positive externalities instead of zero-sum impacts.

12. **Advises**, in this sense, that for the Mediterranean, incentives directed to enterprises to gather, build and sell in priority across the EU and/or the Mediterranean could be promoted by the European Union and through its Neighborhood policy and related programmes and funds (NDICI-Global Europe, EMFAF, Horizon Europe, LIFE, NEXT MED, Euro-MED...). Non-European Mediterranean countries are **strongly encouraged** to create and/or to contribute to these incentives as well.

13. **Reiterates** its recommendations towards the sustainable recovery of the coastal and maritime tourism sector in the Mediterranean stated in it 2020 Final Declaration.\textsuperscript{12} Indeed, being one of the most developed sectors of the Mediterranean blue economy and with clear impacts on the surrounding environment, coastal and maritime tourism represents a considerable opportunity to improve and fulfill the objectives of the EU Green Deal, lower the sector’s carbon footprint, create sustainable employment, and reinvent the tourism user experience.\textsuperscript{13} The European Commission’s consultation on the transition pathway for tourism is encouraging,\textsuperscript{14} notably to highlight the key role of Regions in its follow-up implementation, as well as their implication in the design and execution of National Recovery Plans for the sector.

14. **Insists on** the necessity to strengthen the efforts on awareness raising and capacity building with national, regional and local governments across the Mediterranean about the importance to incentivize enterprises and people to understand their part to play for a sustainable and resilient Mediterranean. Likewise, institutions should help the youth and workers to build capacity and upgrade their skills in coherence with

\textsuperscript{10} The Interreg MED Blue Growth Community, in which the CPMR Intermediterranean Commission participates as partner, has released a set of recommendations on Maritime Spatial Planning. For more information: https://blue-growth.interreg-med.eu/no-cache/news-events/news/detail/actualites/interreg-med-blue-growth-community-supports-the-maritime-spatial-planning-2021

\textsuperscript{11} The principles were developed by the European Commission, WWF, the World Resources Institute (WRI) and the European Investment Bank (EIB) and are hosted by UNEP FI as part of the Sustainable Blue Economy Finance Initiative. https://www.uneppi.org/blue-finance.

\textsuperscript{12} This Final Declaration is based on the outcomes of a study carried out last year by the CPMR Intermediterranean Commission, including feedback and contributions from its member Regions, and on projects recommendations. https://cpmr-intermed.org/download/declaration-of-the-intermediterranean-commission-2020-general-assembly

\textsuperscript{13} Lots of projects have been working on solutions to be implemented at a broader scale over Mediterranean countries and territories; among them, one can quote CO-EVOLVE, Co-Evolve4BG, MITOMED+ , HERIT-DATA, DESTIMED PLUS, WINTER MED, SMARTMED or BESTMED, and the Interreg MED Sustainable Tourism Community as a whole. They constitute a rich pool of practices and recommendations to be capitalized and mainstreamed on the ground.

\textsuperscript{14} https://ec.europa.eu/growth/content/stakeholder-consultation-transition-pathway-tourism_en
the current context of socio-economic recovery and climate-ecological necessities. The sharing of good practices and their mainstreaming over territories and policies should be reinforced via the different programmes and funds available in the 2021-2027 programming period and beyond.

15. **Looks forward** to developing the activities of the CPMR Intermediterranean Commission’s Youth Council, in collaboration with the Mediterranean Assembly of Young Citizens (AJCM). Giving more voice to the Mediterranean Youth within Regional policy-making processes is a relevant way of understanding what the expectations of the coming generations are for our world. In this sense, we firmly believe there is a need to provide for tools and a space for the Mediterranean youth to work together on different global challenges, develop their projects ideas, and establish joint actions to face up to the effects of these challenges such as environmental degradation and climate change, and promote social and cultural integration. Reflecting with the Youth is the best way to understand how to adapt our economies, social prerogatives, and environmental approaches for the future.

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*Final Declaration approved unanimously on 9 July 2021 by the 2021 Intermediterranean Commission General Assembly*

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The CPMR Intermediterranean Commission gathers around 40 Member Regions from 8 different EU members states and other countries: Albania, Cyprus, France, Greece, Italy, Malta, Morocco, and Spain. It is open to all the different sub-national levels in all Mediterranean countries.

The gathering of the Intermediterranean Commission Members Regions represents a bond of peace, stability and development between three continents, Europe, Africa and Asia.

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