MEDITERRANEAN YOUTH COUNCIL
STATEMENT

Energy crisis, climate and impact on youth in the Mediterranean

October 26, 2022

Creation contextual note:
This statement is the finalization of the work around the energy crisis, climate and impact on youth in the Mediterranean which started in Santa Severa, during the MYC working session with Roma University students and Field Study Alumni, through the Lazio region invitation.

STATEMENT

The world and particularly Euro-Mediterranean countries are facing a deep energy crisis. Exacerbated by Russia’s military invasion of Ukraine, the energy crisis impacts all kinds of people and comes at a time when energy prices are rising, inflation impoverishes society and the effects of climate change begin to show their cruelest face.

The firm commitment to increasing renewable energy sources on both shores of the Mediterranean outlines an encouraging future that, however, has not yet arrived. Transition energies -such as natural gas or nuclear energy- maintain and even increase their prominence. Meanwhile, the expected technological advances that would make green hydrogen or nuclear fusion a reality largely depend on huge investments that are unaffordable for most nations worldwide. Innovation comes at a price, and the COVID-19 pandemic already made us question whether those benefits, if they ever arise, would benefit humanity equally.

The Mediterranean Youth Council (MYC) raises its serious concerns regarding the current situation and calls for concrete actions from all stakeholders involved to protect users, including the youth and small and medium enterprises. We also highlight the importance of raising awareness on the urgency of developing serious and feasible measures in order to tackle climate change and transition to a fairer energy distribution system at a trans-Mediterranean level.

We can appreciate in numerous Mediterranean regions the abundance of sun, wind, rivers, and of course, the omnipresence of our Sea, a source of wealth since time immemorial. However, factors such as insufficient public financing, bureaucratic obstacles or insufficient/unclear information prevent renewable energy sources from reaching broad layers of the population.

We currently see energy as a source of problems, an unfavorable starting point for the competitiveness of our companies and a burden most households are obliged to face. However, if we undertake the necessary reforms, this situation could have an expiration date. Effective Euro-Mediterranean transnational and cross-border cooperation could well lay the foundations for a brighter future.
We the Euro-Mediterranean youth deserve the appropriate measures taken, those which would live up to the circumstances and to our expectations. We recognize that the situation is challenging, but there is no room for complacency or immobility; nor for selfishness between nations or members of a same community like ours. Until now, energy has been a source of conflict in the international scene. In order for energy to be one of the areas in which cooperation is feasible, we must irrevocably change our present and make this cooperation somehow appealing and desirable, which is not in our hands, but in those who hold power. Changing this traditional approach towards energy will not only make cyclic crises more manageable, yet they will prevent them from happening or from having such a severe impact.

As we all recognise energy is of utmost importance, we should all admit incorporating the voice of the youth in the Energy Agenda is a basic need, too. No political project could possibly be sustainable without counting on those who may suffer (or benefit) from them. The difference between one and the other could well lie in broadening the scope of consultations. In this case, this would mean ensuring that the voices of the youth are taken into consideration and to do so, mighty hands are needed. The MYC calls upon all competent authorities involved to create space for the youth, as well as for optimistic and ambitious actions. Prosperous, peaceful and liveable territories we demand to be.

In our Countries

The MYC has a specific point of view due to the diversity of the Mediterranean countries and regions represented by our members. It allows our Council to be a point where local realities meet and to therefore highlight examples of good practices and obstacles Mediterranean regions face. As our territories are diverse, our issues and concerns have different dimensions. Yet, we have found a common ground when it comes to seeking greater attention to the consequences of the energy crisis, as it puts our region's stability at risk. Rich in energy sources but lacking appropriate management, our area is being exposed to greenwashing, dependence, deficit, corruption, inappropriate in-place profits, energy shortcuts, poverty, and even conflicts. Needless to say this has got a huge psychological impact, especially on youth.

The rapid increase of energy prices and inequalities in its supply is a signal of deep problems linked with energy policies and management in different countries.

Expected to worsen in the coming months, the current situation of inflation is seriously affecting the livelihoods of people in all Euro-Mediterranean countries and increasing fuel poverty.

While the use of renewable energy such as individual solar panels is promoted and can be afforded by some, we highlight that their access cost remains relatively expensive. In light of the energy crisis, food security and access to basic needs are at risk.

Examples of renewable development to decrease energy dependency can be mentioned but remain at the margin considering the urgency of the situation. The public service of energy supply is already non-existent in some countries and citizens are dependent on private providers.

We are aware that our region has the great potential of not letting this crisis impact the whole system. We trust our capacity to recover and progress by using our own resources, such as solar energy, wind energy, and waste to create energy. There are already numerous initiatives and innovative projects around the Mediterranean, implemented by the youth and dedicated to renewable energy, which should be supported.
Our Positioning

The MYC acknowledges that the energy crisis situation is a consequence of the environmental crisis and in that sense, proposes to work on the awareness and development of green and renewable energies as a long-term solution for all Mediterranean countries. We call for the promotion of green and renewable energies, to diversify the sources of energy and to support the scaling up of energy resources.

The MYC stands against discrimination in the context of energy network operation and we call for the application of the legal principle of non-discrimination. We are aware of the existing socio-economic and regional inequalities in the access to energy resources and in energy transitions. We hereby call for synergies among stakeholders to democratize energy, particularly in times of crisis such as this, and to ensure sustainable energy for present and future generations, within the Mediterranean region and beyond.

The MYC is aware of existing opportunities and growth in renewable jobs and calls for targeted industrial strategies to foster the investment in the research and development sector. We acknowledge that the multiple crises had, have and will have an important impact on the employability and professional perspectives of young people.

Our Recommendations – The MYC:

- **Calls** all stakeholders to take measures so that all young people and future generations are equipped with relevant knowledge and develop appropriate skills and competencies relative to renewable energy jobs. This should be done not only through development programs, but also through rehabilitative programs with the aim of supporting those affected by the crisis but which are equally relevant to the climate cause;

- **Urges** to improve awareness raising about climate change issues and challenges through formal and non-formal education. Additionally, it is crucial to shed the spotlight on the social gaps that exist especially in the developing countries of the mediterranean; this is to ensure that when social mobilization is induced, it is not an exclusive process to a certain socioeconomic class. The reasoning behind this recommendation is quite clear; environmental deterioration and its social, economic, humanitarian, and political consequences are indifferent when it comes to who is affected, polluter or polluted;

- **Recommends** to encourage the monitoring of the carbon footprint of businesses and organizations and to push for an open-agenda approach related to carbon emissions. This needs to be rallied for by aware populaces and supported by governments, if not imposed through legitimate and non-arbitrary means;

- **Calls for** ambitious, mitigating and long-term energy strategies at national and regional levels to ensure equal access to resources and to foster sustainable approaches. This -first and foremost- should come hand in hand with an acknowledgement that since most if not all running systems depend on exploitative and exhaustive activities, it would be inevitable for some systems, especially vulnerable ones to go into shock, hence the aggravated importance for regional cooperation to adapt to the necessary transition towards sustainability.