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**GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT FACILITY**  
INVESTING IN OUR PLANET

## **Opening Remarks**

by

**Monique Barbut, CEO and Chairperson  
Global Environment Facility**

to the WSDF :

**“Key Geostrategic Issues in the Mediterranean and Across Europe:  
Environment, Energy, Development”**

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Minister Nathalie Kosciusko-Morizet

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I will not feign my pleasure at being with you today to share our ideas and our programs for the Mediterranean as I was born there and have a deep attachment to it.

Fernand Braudel cautioned us that “the Mediterranean could be a thousand things simultaneously: not one landscape, but innumerable landscapes; not one ocean, but a series of oceans; not one people, but myriad civilizations co-existing in the same space.”

The Mediterranean is a complex, infinitely variable area, depending on the period or issue under consideration; these are the qualities that simultaneously make it rich, enduring, and fraught with weakness. It remains elusive.

Recent events must force us to ask the right questions: does “the Mediterranean, the crossroads of civilizations” still have meaning or has it become mainly a divided region?

We must admit it; the events of early 2011 took us all by surprise:

1. In Tunisia and Egypt: the man on the street toppled heads of State and governments; the people, and in particular the young people, expressed an unprecedented level of anger because they could no longer bear the inequality, unemployment, injustice, and corruption;
2. Syria and Libya are embroiled in turmoil, while discontent is expressed in Algeria and Morocco;
3. The economic crisis affects all the countries in the euro area, in particular Greece and Spain, where for the first time unemployment has reached 21 percent.

We must draw lessons from this experience. As soon as possible, we must perform an in-depth analysis of what is taking place in the Mediterranean countries. In this way we will be able to devise innovative responses to the urgent demands of the people in the southern and eastern Mediterranean countries.

If I were to choose one enduring feature of the Mediterranean, it would precisely be its penchant for innovation. In fact, the Mediterranean has historically been ahead of its time on several fronts:

- In the political arena, with the invention of the republic or of city-states: Athens, Carthage, Rome, or Venice for example;
- In the area of economics, with leadership of the port cities, shipping, or tourism, with 30 percent of commercial shipping and 30 percent of global tourism;
- But also with respect to the environment, adaptation, and management of scarce water resources: I am thinking of these extraordinarily modern albeit traditional water management techniques, whether by means of oases or subterranean networks: the *khettaras* in Morocco and the *foggaras* in Algeria.

These are the types of innovations that are needed today in the Mediterranean, and the GEF will continue to support initiatives that are in line with this approach—in the areas of solar energy, control of greenhouse gases, biodiversity, agriculture—and ensure that the Mediterranean agreements, for

example in economic matters, incorporate the environmental dimension as well as natural resource management.

The environmental services provided by Mediterranean ecosystems are at risk and have deteriorated—in particular as a result of the effects of the concentration of people along the coast. In this area, the number of international tourists could skyrocket over the next 25 years to between 300 million and 600 million with substantial seasonal variation, which will be extremely difficult to manage. At present, one-third of the population lives on the coast, and the population in coastal zones has doubled over the past 30 years. Urbanization of the coast continues, often in a haphazard and unplanned manner, and wastewater released into the sea is largely untreated (60 percent in 2002).

If the current trend continues, the demand for energy will increase 50 percent by 2025. This energy demand is expected to be accompanied by an increase in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions of 55 percent to 119 percent by 2025, as fossil fuels now account for 80 percent of the energy supply.

Furthermore, the adverse effects of all of these problems are multiplied:

- **Vulnerability to climate change: an increase in the sea level of 15 cm to 20 cm has been observed** over the past 100 years and at a faster rate in these past 10 years. This has **direct consequences for ecosystems, soil fertility, and water resources;**
- A substantially elevated risk of worsening food insecurity owing to lower food production;
- The disappearance of more than 40 species of fish in the next few years, with a worrying scenario for bluefin tuna and several species of skate and shark; and finally
- The risks of pollution from hydrocarbons, the deterioration of underwater seagrass beds, and exotic invasive land and sea species.

Undoubtedly, economic growth coupled with countries' performance and stability can go a long way toward improving living conditions for the people. You will agree with me that for this to happen, the appropriate handling of the fruits of growth must be ensured through an investment in young people, health, education, employment, and the reduction of social disparities. However, at the same time, economic growth must not come about at the expense of sound environmental management, the very foundation of the

Mediterranean, where more than anywhere else the environmental question is also a matter of economic and food security, of well-being, and therefore, of peace among peoples and territories.

The future will look to production and consumption models that incorporate the social aspects and sustainable management of natural resources, known to some as the green economy. Investments in the environment also create jobs.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The GEF has made a significant investment in this region: \$463 million for 122 projects; mobilization of \$1.75 billion in cofinancing; 764 microprojects through the Small Grants Programme that directly targets community organizations; and for the current phase (GEF-5), a budget of \$250 million.

The Mediterranean has been one of the key regions for our programmatic approach as evidenced by the following:

- The strategic partnership with the Union for the Mediterranean through the Mediterranean Sustainable Development Program; and

- The sustainable management of surface water for the East Nile or the subterranean waters of the Sahara aquifer.

We are confident that the GEF can significantly broaden the scope of its work in the Mediterranean, but we will require a much stronger mutual commitment in order to make a qualitative leap forward.

In this regard, I am very interested in innovative projects and programs, in particular the Mediterranean solar plan and the Mediterranean sea highways, to which, after the elections in Tunisia and Egypt, we are prepared to provide financial assistance, if the countries so desire.

As you can see, ladies and gentlemen, we have an active presence in the Mediterranean, and we will continue to strengthen our cooperation there. I am also counting on this Forum to advise us of the best course so that we may work together to address the incredible challenge before us of the sustainable and equitable development of the Mediterranean.

Thank you.