



**MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE ON THE ACTION PLAN FOR EDUCATION
FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN THE MEDITERRANEAN**

Nicosia, Cyprus – 8-9 December 2016

Statement by Gaetano Leone, Coordinator, UNEP/MAP

Excellencies,

Colleagues,

Partners,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honor for me, on behalf of UN Environment, its Mediterranean Action Plan and Secretariat of the Barcelona Convention, to welcome you all at this Ministerial Conference.

For four decades we have worked on protecting the marine and coastal environment of the Mediterranean and contributed to its sustainable development. The 21 riparian countries of the Mediterranean and the EU, as Contracting Parties of the Barcelona Convention, have developed a unique legally-binding framework for policy and action, collaborating with many partners represented here today on a common transformative agenda for regional cooperation, partnership and solidarity.

We now meet at a defining time for global sustainable development and for the future of the Mediterranean region, as we strive to find peaceful solutions to tensions and conflicts, to integrate agreed global goals and targets into the regional development agenda, to transition to a green and blue economy, to revive and boost stagnant economies, and to implement a new climate change agreement.

Against this background, earlier this year, the Parties of the Barcelona Convention approved the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development 2016-2025, an ambitious policy



framework for securing a sustainable future for the Mediterranean region consistent with the SDGs.

The subtitle of the MSSD is “Investing in Environmental sustainability to achieve social and economic development”. In this region, characterized often by inequality, tension and conflict, and high pressure on natural resources, our vision is one of prosperity and peace, life and livelihoods, and healthy ecosystems. For this vision to become reality, the promotion of education and research is a crucial strategic direction that we must embrace together.

Therefore, we salute the efforts that have gone into making the MSED a reality. We equally welcome the definition of an Action Plan for its implementation that will be integral part of the transposition of the overall MSSD into reality.

I referred to the challenges of this region, but we also know that for thousands of years its peoples have demonstrated extraordinary richness of thought and practice, creative ambition and drive, wealth and sophistication of institutions devoted to satisfy human curiosity and needs through education and research, a vibrant civil society, and unique resourcefulness.

It is on the basis of this tradition that we can look with optimism at the implementation of the strategy on education for sustainable development. Around the Mediterranean, cooperation and dialogue are values that, in spite of the tensions, remain central to our collective success. We of the Barcelona Convention system stand ready to join hands for tangible results of the Action Plan that is in front of us.

Thank you.