



## The Euro-Mediterranean Social Partners

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### DECLARATION ON SOCIAL DIALOGUE

*Third Union for the Mediterranean Employment and Labour Ministerial Conference of 26 and 27 September in Jordan*

**Jordan, 26 September 2016**

The Euro-Mediterranean Social Partners (thereafter, the Social Partners) welcome the 3<sup>rd</sup> Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) Ministerial Conference on Employment and Labour taking place in Jordan the 26 and 27 September. They value the exchange which took place between the Social Partners and Ministers before the Conference.

The Social Partners want to contribute positively to the process of setting up strong, independent and effective social dialogues in the 43 countries of the Union for the Mediterranean.

Being two neighbouring regions in the world, the European Union and the Southern Mediterranean region are inter-connected between themselves and impacted by broader trends and challenges of global scale.

In this respect, the Social Partners wish to highlight the particular importance of two global agendas in which they should be involved, namely:

- the COP 21 agreement follow-up, which implies a well-managed transition process and far-reaching transformations in global production and consumption patterns with major implications on labour markets;
- the multi-faceted discussions on Global Supply Chains, including the need to fully exploit their potential in terms of economic growth and employment, while progressing on the development of due diligence based on international frameworks and reducing deficits of decent work and labour rights.

This Declaration focuses on the issue of **social dialogue** and its importance to address employment and labour market challenges in the Euro-Mediterranean region.

The Social Partners are convinced that social dialogue has an important role to play to contribute to balanced policy-making and social policy that lead to social development, by making labour markets and social protection systems more efficient and adapted to new and changing economic and social realities.

Account should be taken of the fact that the two regions have been affected more than others by recent financial, economic and migration crises, and they experienced lately a relatively slow and fragile economic recovery compared to other world regions.

The Nobel Committee acclaimed example of Tunisia shows that social dialogue can also act as a stabilising political factor. In other countries, the social partners bring expertise and legitimacy based on their first-hand knowledge and experience of the world of work.

Social dialogue can take many forms such as advice and recommendations as part of consultations and tripartite arrangements, or such as autonomous bipartite negotiations, e.g. collective bargaining, resulting in solution-oriented and balanced policies. Social dialogue is also a worldwide recognised value, enshrined under the International Labour Organisation (ILO) constitution and European Union (EU) treaty.

There is no blueprint for a well-functioning social dialogue. Social dialogue arrangements reflect the different histories, and economic and political situations of different countries. However, some basic conditions are essential to allow that social dialogue is fruitful and effective. Essential prerequisites for social dialogue to develop are:

- i) the presence of a basic legal framework in line with ILO principles which provides for freedom of association and independence of the social partners;
- ii) the setting up of an enabling and democratic institutional and legal framework at national, regional and local level, allowing for proper and timely involvement of social partners in policy-making on matters which have a direct and/or indirect impact on employment. An appropriate legal framework can also support the further development of an autonomous bipartite dialogue between parties at the different levels of the economy (national, sectoral, regional and at company level);
- iii) measures to promote a culture of social dialogue, including the provision of mechanisms to develop self-regulation, social peace, and prevent and solve conflicts.

Membership and representativeness, as well as mandates and capacity to provide expertise and services to their members make the strength of social partners' organisations. However, where social partners' structures are weak, national public authorities' or international support is necessary to kick-start or step up their capacities. Depending on countries and needs, this may include financial, legal, analytical, institutional, and/or political support.

The Social Dialogue Forums organised in the context of the UfM should continue and aim to share information and good practices on the state-of-play of the social dialogues in UfM countries, and exchange views on present and future priorities.

The most important challenges for social partners, together with governments and policy-makers across the Euro-Mediterranean region, are to strengthen economic growth and competitiveness - as this will be crucial to achieve successful enterprises - decent employment creation, and social cohesion to reduce poverty, inequalities and discrimination.

The Social Partners from both regions wish to highlight four areas on which some learning and/or cooperation between the two regions may have added value:

- **Informal work**, the challenge is for governments to create enabling frameworks to integrate the informal sector into the formal economy and support jobs and businesses in the formal sector. This will boost tax and social security revenues and allow for fair competition between enterprises and between workers.
- **Youth employment**, the challenge is for governments and social partners to tackle the lack of job opportunities, the lack of certain key competences/ shortage of adequate skills, and to determine the terms of employment, including labour costs, with the aim of helping young people to enter and develop in the labour market, while respecting agreed social and labour rights, and fostering sustainable integration of young people in employment. Where this is not the case, young people may be confronted with scarring unemployment spells, or they may well find themselves stuck in a succession of short-term and/or limited-hours contracts due to a lack of other opportunities.
- **Skills development**, the challenge is to improve national education and training systems to ensure a better match between the content of education and training curricula, the way qualifications are designed, and labour market needs. Together with improved career advice, this will help increase the employability of graduates, thereby improving and shortening labour market transitions.
- **Migration**, the challenge is to manage south-south and south-north influx in a way that is feasible for both sending and receiving countries, and in line with growth and labour markets prospects. The refugee crisis has exacerbated the challenge when it comes to managing an unprecedented humanitarian crisis. Both aspects requires the close involvement of social partners to contribute to devise adequate solutions for all.

A number of ongoing initiatives have addressed these issues. Some project activities aiming to foster social dialogue in some countries in the Southern shore of the Mediterranean have started recently. In this respect, initiatives led by the UfM, the European Commission or other relevant actors aiming to reinforce the capacity of social partners' organizations in the Southern shore of the Mediterranean, are important. In the coming years, Social Partners will continue exploring the need for further activities to support further progress in social dialogue. Therefore, they welcome the Ministers' request to the Commission to consider providing the necessary resources.

The Social Partners welcome the Ministers' intent to convene the 4<sup>th</sup> UfM Conference on Employment and Labour in 2019. In the run up to this, they ask the European Commission and the UfM Co-Presidency and Secretariat to take the necessary steps to hold a Euro-Mediterranean Social Dialogue Forum in 2017 or in 2018.

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\* in association with:



## About us

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*Employers organisations:*

### **BusinessEurope**

BusinessEurope is the leading advocate for growth and competitiveness at European level, standing up for companies across the continent and campaigning on the issues that most influence their performance. A recognised social partner, we speak for all-sized enterprises in 34 European countries whose national business federations are our direct members.

Website: [www.businessseurope.eu](http://www.businessseurope.eu)

### **CEEP**

Established in 1961, CEEP gathers enterprises and authorities from across Europe, both public and private, at national, regional and local level, which are public employers or providers of services of general interest.

Website: [www.ceep.eu](http://www.ceep.eu)

### **UEAPME**

L'Union Européenne de l'Artisanat et des Petites et Moyennes Entreprises is the employers' organisation representing crafts, trades and SMEs from the EU and accession countries at European level, created in 1981. UEAPME has over 80 member organisations.

Website: [www.ueapme.com](http://www.ueapme.com)

### **BUSINESSMED**

The Union of Mediterranean Confederations of Enterprises is an employers' organisation in the Mediterranean basin, to the implementation of a strong and coherent economic strategy which aims to accelerate the integration, economic and social development in the region.

Website: [www.businessmed-med.com](http://www.businessmed-med.com)

*Trade unions organisations:*

### **ETUC (and the liaison committee Eurocadres/CEC)**

The European Trade Union Confederation was founded in 1973 to promote the interests of working people at European level, and to represent them in the EU institutions. Its membership now includes 89 national trade union confederations in 39 countries, plus 10 European trade union federations.

Website: [www.etuc.org](http://www.etuc.org)

### **ATUC**

ATUC is a regional organisation of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC). It was founded in 2014, with a mandate to defend fundamental freedoms and trade union rights, to combat discrimination against women and migrants, and to foster the implementation of international standards in the 16 Arab countries. ATUC is made up of 20 trade union confederations in 13 countries.

Website: [www.arabtradeunion.org](http://www.arabtradeunion.org)