

## Climate and energy priorities for the Commissioner for the Mediterranean

The announcement of the appointment of a Commissioner for the Mediterranean and a new Pact for the Mediterranean can help shape a more strategic and co-creative approach to the Southern Neighbourhood, in line with the European Commission's current priorities on security, green industrial competitiveness and economic stability for the EU that take into account Southern Mediterranean countries' expectations.

Building the conditions for a climate resilient, integrated, renewable-based Euro-Mediterranean region, encompassing the two shores of the Mediterranean, can boost regional and EU-wide industrial competitiveness, create a backbone for economic diversification and be a blueprint for a renewed European approach to international partnerships.

The Commissioner for the Mediterranean mandate cannot overlook the profound security, trade, social, and financial impacts of climate change on the Mediterranean region: the region is a climate change hotspot, warming faster than the global average - climate models consistently project regional warming at rates about 20% above global means and reduced rainfall (-12% for global warming of 3°C). Direct and indirect climate impacts affect the stability and future prosperity of Southern Mediterranean countries. **The EU's response will shape whether its Southern Neighborhood poses security and conflict risks or can provide geopolitical stability; and whether climate impacts will create forced migration flows or whether green economic growth can instead create new jobs and boost macroeconomic resilience. While an incomplete, failed or unjust transition poses existential challenges to the EU, an equitable approach can unlock new opportunities for both shores of the Mediterranean.**

The Mediterranean Alliance of Think Tanks on Climate Change (MATTCCh), a network of experts and think tanks across the wider Mediterranean region, recommends that the agenda new Commissioner for the Mediterranean incorporates the following guidelines and priorities:

1. Building mutually beneficial energy partnerships with Southern Mediterranean countries

Cooperation on renewables and clean energies can contribute to enhance stability and to an improved socio-economic situation in the region. The new course of energy diplomacy with Southern Mediterranean countries should prioritise local value creation, sustainable growth, trade and green industrial cooperation. We recommend:

- Shifting the focus of energy diplomacy towards Southern Mediterranean countries from fossil fuels supply to renewable energy cooperation. Renewable energy offers a reliable source for growing energy needs, protection against the volatility of fossil fuels prices, and an opportunity to boost strong industry and clean supply chains across the Mediterranean. The Mediterranean region is an ideal location for solar and wind, but the potential for renewable energy deployment is largely untapped, particularly in the Southern shore. Science has long made the case for the electrification of the economy through upscaling renewable energy deployment to reduce carbon dioxide emissions and mitigate climate change.
- Adopting a region-wide energy transition approach. The transformation to a clean, flexible, reliable and secure Euro-Mediterranean energy system should emphasise the role of cross-border infrastructure projects and prioritise energy efficiency, storage, and grid connectivity. These elements are critical to ramping up renewable energy deployment to meet the globally agreed goal of tripling renewables and doubling energy efficiency by 2030.
- Facilitating and accelerating the creation of a clean industrial environment, leveraging *nearshoring*, *greenshoring* and *friendshoring* to foster win-win partnerships that can elevate the

socio-economic gains of the entire Mediterranean region. Renewable deployment and green industrialisation offer a route to stable jobs both in Europe and in Southern Mediterranean countries.

- Supporting the energy diversification and green industrial development of fossil fuel producing countries as a measure to foster their gradual transition away from fossil fuels. In the wake of the energy crisis, Southern and Eastern Mediterranean countries have gained importance as EU fossil suppliers. However, the EU projects that its gas demand will decline 53% by 2030 and 85% by 2050, meaning its short-term search for new gas suppliers leaves these suppliers vulnerable in the longer term. Short, medium and long term demand forecasts of European energy demand for fossil fuels must be better communicated to allow producing countries to plan long term and diversified economic strategies.
- Better aligning financial instruments and tools (Global Gateway, NDICI, Team Europe Initiatives) to new decarbonisation priorities, refocusing financial flows and improving market conditions for renewables, energy efficiency, energy storage and grid infrastructure. To amplify these efforts, the Commission should promote coordination of national, regional and multilateral actors to increase access to finance and attract private investment.

## 2. A regional adaptation strategy is critical to future-proofing the Mediterranean region

Cooperation on resilience and adaptation measures needs to play a role in defining a new strategic approach towards the Southern Neighbourhood. Euro-Mediterranean countries share similar vulnerabilities to climate change, but not the same level of risk preparedness. We recommend:

- For the Commissioner for the Mediterranean to support and work towards a coordinated regional governance for implementation of adaptation strategies, plans and targets across the region, taking into account different starting points, needs and priorities. Systemic adaptation approaches should consolidate the international dimension of the EU Adaptation Strategy, actively engaging with governments, international organisations and strengthening the role of the Union for the Mediterranean.
- The European Union should support Mediterranean countries in developing and implementing their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), as well as National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) as strategic tools for the most fragile countries to receive financial support in adequate multilateral contexts. A NDC, accompanied by a NAP and a Long Term Decarbonisation Strategy, provides a compass to fully understand the needs and development trajectories of the individual country, effectively reorienting cooperation tools and accounting for climate impacts.
- Adaptation and resilience measures have concrete positive economic and social outcomes. The Commissioner's agenda should ensure that cross-sectoral adaptation strategies are taken into account with priority given to the most vulnerable economic sectors: agriculture, water management, fisheries and tourism.
- The services of natural ecosystems in climate adaptation should be recognised and protected at the policy level. This includes assessing and enhancing the adaptation capacity of ecosystems like coasts, wetlands, and forests, as well as their mitigation services, particularly in forests and marine areas, considering that these actions often do not require upfront investment.

## 3. Better using the EU's resources to deliver for the Mediterranean:

The highest political mandate for the Commissioner is crucial to harmonize energy, environment, climate, and security objectives, moving from energy crisis mode towards a long-term strategy that benefits both the European Union and the Southern Neighbourhood. We recommend:

- For the Commissioner to make just transition a pillar in the New Pact for the Mediterranean, delivering whole-of-society approaches with and within partner countries, engaging with civil society, stakeholders and communities in Southern Mediterranean countries, consulting with experts to align policies that can ensure shared co-benefits, and uplift the socio-economic conditions of the most vulnerable communities to climate change.
- For the Commissioner to work in synergy with EU Delegations to better communicate external trade and industrial measures (CBAM, NZIA, CRMA, EUDR, EU Methane Regulation), acknowledging the impacts of such measures on countries in the Southern Neighborhood. The European Commission should work towards co-designing strategies and policies with partner countries to mitigate negative externalities of its regulations while also advancing concrete tools that respond to new decarbonisation priorities.
- For the Commissioner, together with the High Representative and the Commission, to focus on reconciling divergent Member States' agendas and priorities towards Southern Mediterranean countries. A unified European approach can reposition the Union as a credible and trustworthy partner in an increasingly multipolar world.

The next European policy cycle coincides with broader climate momentum as we approach COP29, the update of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and COP30. We recommend for the Commissioner for the Mediterranean to foster a dialogue with Southern Mediterranean countries and seize this opportunity to advance ambitious climate targets. This will aid staying the course on the European Green Deal and the EU's climate neutrality goal in a just and inclusive manner. It is crucial to highlight the importance of international climate finance and the alignment of financial flows with climate objectives. With the expected conclusion of the New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG) negotiations and progress on reforming International Financial Institutions (IFIs) at COP29, the EU, as the largest donor with €28.5 billion contributed in 2022, must lead by example in supporting these initiatives and forge a new, more distributed, climate leadership governance.

**Who are we:** This letter is facilitated by the Mediterranean Alliance of Think Tanks on Climate Change, a network of think tank institutions and experts across the Mediterranean region—collectively representing more than 25 institutions from more than 10 different Mediterranean countries—launched at the third MedCOP in Tangier in 2023 and endorsed by the Union for the Mediterranean at the first Green Week in Istanbul in May 2024.

Signatory Institutions: Arab Reform Initiative, CREAM - Public research center, ECCO - the Italian Climate Change Think Tank, E3G (think tank), EMBER, Natural Resource Governance Institute (NRGI), the Regional Center for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency (RCREEE), ZERO - associação sistema terrestre sustentável, The Economic Policy Research Foundation of Turkey (TEPAV), Sustainable Economics and Finance Association (SEFiA).

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