

SIXTH MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE ON RESEARCH, INNOVATION AND HIGHER EDUCATION

LISBON, 6th DECEMBER 2024

Fostering integration for an innovative, inclusive and resilient Western Mediterranean Region
Science diplomacy for youth empowerment and sustainable development

LISBON MINISTERIAL DECLARATION

The Ministers in charge of Research, Innovation and Higher Education of the Western Mediterranean (5+5 Dialogue) met on the occasion of the Sixth Ministerial Conference on **Research, Innovation and Higher Education in Lisbon** on 6th December 2024 in the presence of the Forum's observers: the European Commission (EC), the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), the Arab Maghreb Union (UMA), the Mediterranean Universities Union (UNIMED) and the PRIMA Foundation (PRIMA).

Acknowledging

- The recommendations of the previous Conferences of Ministers in charge of Research, Innovation and Higher Education of the 5+5 Dialogue;

- The challenges and opportunities facing the 5+5 Dialogue member countries and convinced of the importance of strengthening cooperation in research, innovation, and higher education for peace, promoting economic growth, social inclusion and facilitating skills' development and circulation of talents in the Western Mediterranean Region.

Recognizing the role of Research, Innovation and Higher Education contributing to overcoming challenges and crisis management in the Mediterranean, supporting national economies, and enhancing the wellbeing of citizens across the 5+5 Dialogue member countries.

Recognizing the importance of innovation and technology transfer as a fundamental pillar to connect academia with socio-economic and skills demands, to support economic development, employment and the resolution of global challenges faced by all countries, considering frugal innovation.

Considering the implementation of the UfM Roadmaps on Research and Innovation addressing challenges and priorities of Health, Renewable Energies and Climate Change and its horizontal integration and priorities for the future crisis management, adopted at the UfM Ministerial conference on Research and Innovation in June 2022, through several instruments, such as Horizon Europe, including the Mediterranean Initiative, the Euro-Mediterranean Hub for Research and Innovation, and the Partnership for Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Area (PRIMA).

Recognizing the role of the African Union-European Union (AU-EU) Innovation Agenda one of the flagship initiatives of the Global Gateway, as well as Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy for Africa 2024 (STISA-2024) in support of the AU Agenda 2063, and the opportunities for research and innovation cooperation under the AU-EU High Level Policy Dialogue in Science, Technology and Innovation.

Recalling the commitment of the 5+5 Dialogue member countries to promote and support Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations 2030 Agenda towards sustainable development.

Taking note of various inputs and exchanges of information amongst the 5+5 Dialogue member countries, the European Commission, The Union for the Mediterranean, and the Arab Maghreb Union.

Emphasizing the common determination to strengthen collaboration for reinforcing the potential of youth and women, and inclusive access to Research, Innovation and Higher Education as fundamental to the development and prosperity in the Mediterranean Region.

Calling for fostering linkages in Research, Innovation, Higher Education, and skills in the Mediterranean region, by fully exploiting available tools, promoting a level-playing field in researchers' career, skills, and mobility, supporting capacity building, coordination, and joint actions, including on innovation and employability of Mediterranean students, graduates, and researchers.

REAFFIRM

The consensus that all 5+5 Dialogue member countries are to remain closely networked and maintain regular contacts through the **Group of Senior Officials**, and to ensure the implementation of the agreed conclusions, monitoring and evaluating launched initiatives, and leveraging synergies between different sectors for diplomacy, peace, promoting dialogue, social cohesion, youth employment, and sustainable development in the Western Mediterranean Region through Research, Innovation, and Higher Education.

RECALL

The agreement during the First, the Second, the Third, the Fourth and the Fifth Ministerial Conferences of the 5+5 Dialogue on Research, Innovation and Higher Education held respectively in Rabat (September 2013), Madrid (March 2015), Tunis (March 2017), Rome (June 2019), and Nouakchott (October 2022) to organise in Lisbon, Portugal, the **Sixth Ministerial Conference** on 6th of December 2024, and to pursue the cooperation within the Western Mediterranean Region.

WELCOME

The Brussels Statement on the Multilateral Dialogue on principles and values for international cooperation in research and innovation, adopted during the Ministerial Conference on 16th February 2024 which reinforces the 5+5 Dialogue member countries commitment to fostering international cooperation based on shared principles and values, and the endorsement of the Marseille Declaration on international cooperation in research and innovation under the French presidency of the EU in 2022.

The renewal of PRIMA for three more years (2025-2027) with the necessary commitment from the 5+5 Dialogue member Countries, focusing on the same key themes: Water, Agriculture, and Food Security, with an increased emphasis on the holistic approach addressing the Water-Energy-Food-Environment (WEFE) Nexus, contributing to science diplomacy in the region.

The science diplomacy High-level meetings in the Mediterranean region, including the contribution of 5+5 Dialogue to the Barcelona Meeting on 3rd October 2023, organized by the UfM and the European Commission, and the outcomes of the Cairo High-level Meeting on Science Diplomacy, on 2nd October 2024, organised by the UfM, the League of Arab States, and the European Commission.

The existing, complementary and forthcoming initiatives and programmes within the Mediterranean Region.

REITERATE

The importance of establishing new and strengthening existing bilateral and multilateral research and innovation missions and partnerships to deliver effective solutions to green, digital, health, social and innovation challenges in the Mediterranean, via arrangements between the 5+5 Dialogue member countries to coordinate their independent investments in key fields or through partnerships providing for the pooling of resources in joint initiatives.

The commitment towards the growth of the Euro-Mediterranean Hub for Research and Innovation serving as a one-stop-shop for information on relevant funding opportunities and events. The hub is an important tool for all the 5+5 Dialogue current and future initiatives.

The support to PRIMA as a research and innovation platform attracting a critical mass of key actors and funds enabling to address complex challenges in the Mediterranean Region, contributing to the integration, resilience, and prosperity of the Mediterranean.

The collaborative opportunities offered by European partnerships in strategic research and innovation areas for the Mediterranean, such as sustainable water and sustainable food systems, pandemic preparedness, clean energy transition, urban transition initiatives, among others.

Likewise, the lighthouse initiative Zero Pollution for the Mediterranean in the scope of the Horizon Europe Mission "Restore our Oceans and Waters by 2030" and share of best practices and knowledge between the Mediterranean and Atlantic, as well as the work carried out by the European Partnership for a Sustainable Blue Economy to design, lead and support a sound inclusive transition towards a regenerative, resilient and sustainable blue economy also in the Mediterranean basin.

The crucial importance of promoting international mobility for researchers within the Western Mediterranean region and beyond. 5+5 Dialogue member countries recognize that enhancing researcher mobility contributes to the diversity of perspectives, fosters the sharing of knowledge, promotes shared research values and principles, and significantly contributes to the overall advancement of research and innovation. 5+5 Dialogue member countries are committed to encourage the share of policies and programs that facilitate and encourage research mobility.

The importance of the Horizon Europe Framework Program for Research and Innovation, the Erasmus+ Programme, the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) – Global Europe for supporting a prosperous, healthy, sustainable, and peaceful Mediterranean Region, the importance of the instruments 2021-2027 of the European Union and recognizing the need to facilitate the setup of collaborative Western Mediterranean networks under the funding framework such as Horizon Europe, the Innovation Fund, the Programme for the Environment and Climate Action (LIFE), NEXT MED amongst others, contributing to capacity building, advanced training, promoting interinstitutional cooperation and transnational mobility contributing to science diplomacy.

The support to cooperation programmes and projects between institutions of the 5+5 Dialogue member countries, including infrastructure projects such as the setting up of

Centres of Excellence aiming at increasing research and innovation cooperation, competitiveness and entrepreneurship amongst others.

ENCOURAGE

The support to facilitate the collaborative Western Mediterranean networks under the new funding programmes of the European Commission (2021-2027) to submit common proposals to build capacities for enhanced Western Mediterranean collaboration for research and innovation.

5+5 Dialogue member countries, networks and expert groups to deploy science diplomacy more structurally and strategically by connecting science diplomacy scholars and practitioner across the region as a lever for building trust across the Mediterranean region and tackling common challenges through joint actions and initiatives.

EXPRESS

Political support to endorse UfM labelled projects on research, innovation, higher education, employability, advanced training, and capacity building within the 5+5 Dialogue.

AGREE

To implement the annex **Work Plan 2024-2026**, prepared by the Group of Senior Officials in a joint effort, with the aim of strengthening policy dialogue and cooperation in research, innovation, and higher education for fostering integration for an innovative, inclusive and resilient Western Mediterranean Region Science diplomacy for youth empowerment and sustainable development.

THE MINISTERS

Congratulate the **Republic of Portugal** for the work accomplished during its presidency of the 5+5 Dialogue and congratulate the **Islamic Republic of Mauritania** for its role as co-president.

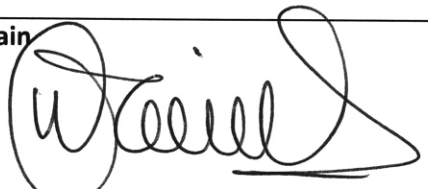
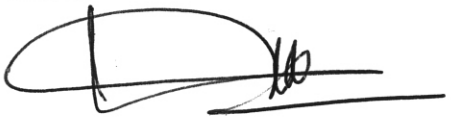
Acknowledge the intention expressed by Libya to chair the next biennium of the 5+5 Dialogue for the years 2024-2026.

Approve the Work Plan 2024-2026 and call for the next Ministerial Conference 2026 in Libya, which will be organized by Libya as President and co-Presidency by the Republic of Portugal.

Express their deep appreciation to the Government of Portugal for the hospitality and all arrangements that contributed to the success of this Ministerial Conference.

Acknowledge the intention expressed by Malta to chair the next 5+5 Dialogue Ministerial Conference after the Libyan Presidency.

Signatures:

Algeria  Ambassador of Algeria in Portugal	**France**  Director for European and International Affairs to the French Ministry of Higher Education and Research
Italy  Deputy Head of Mission at the Italian Embassy in Portugal	**Libya**  Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research
Malta  Parliamentary Secretary for Youth, Research and Innovation, Ministry for Education, Sport, Youth, Research and Innovation	**Mauritania**  Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research
Morocco  Minister of Higher Education, Scientific Research and Innovation	**Portugal**  Minister of Education, Science and Innovation
Spain  Secretary General for Research, Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities	**Tunisia**  Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research

This declaration is originally written in English. A certified translation in French and Arabic will be provided by the Presidency. In case of discrepancies in interpretation, the English version will prevail.