

**Brussels, 24 September 2026**

**To:**

**Ministers responsible for Water of the 43 Union for the Mediterranean Member States attending the Second UfM Ministerial Meeting on Water**

**Cc:**

**Union for the Mediterranean Secretariat**

**Ms Jessika Roswall**, European Commissioner for Environment, Water Resilience and a Competitive Circular Economy

**Ms Dubravka Šuica**, European Commissioner for the Mediterranean

**Permanent Representations** of the UfM Member States to the European Union

**Embassies** of the UfM Member States in Rome.

**Subject: *Wetlands in the implementation of the UfM Ministerial Declaration and the Rome Initiative on Water***

Excellencies,

We are writing as organisations working across the Mediterranean to protect and restore wetlands and improve sustainable water management.

Ahead of the Second Union for the Mediterranean Ministerial Meeting on Water in Rome, we ask for your support in ensuring that wetlands and water-related ecosystems are explicitly recognised in the implementation of the Ministerial Declaration and the Rome Initiative on Water, and in the wider UfM water agenda.

**Wetlands are a vital part of the Mediterranean's natural water infrastructure.** Rivers, lakes, floodplains and deltas regulate water flows, improve water quality and help recharge aquifers. They support water supplies for industry, energy production, agriculture and local businesses. During droughts, they retain water and help maintain soil moisture. Coastal lagoons, floodplains and marshes also protect cities, ports, tourism facilities and other infrastructure from flooding, storm surges and erosion.

**Conventional infrastructure and new technologies are important, but they cannot secure water availability if the ecosystems that capture, retain and clean water continue to deteriorate.** The evidence presented in the [Mediterranean Wetlands Outlook 3](#) is alarming: nearly 56% of the region's historical wetlands have been lost, natural wetlands have declined by a further 12% since 1990, and 95% of major river systems are now fragmented by artificial barriers.

The Ramsar [Global Wetland Outlook 2025](#) also makes clear that wetlands are essential natural infrastructure that provide society with up to \$39 trillion in benefits each year in the world - yet this figure does not fully reflect their intrinsic worth or cultural significance. They are key allies in tackling climate change, supporting water availability and quality, reducing the impacts of floods and droughts, storing carbon and sustaining livelihoods and local economies. Wetlands protection and restoration offer cost-effective solutions to societal challenges, providing multiple benefits.

Including wetlands in the UfM water agenda would also support the objectives of the Pact for the Mediterranean by connecting water management, economic stability and climate resilience. **Investment in wetland restoration and other nature-based solutions can help countries develop sound and investable projects through the Rome Initiative, the Global Gateway and wider Euro-Mediterranean cooperation.**

This would also support the implementation of the EU Water Resilience Strategy, which calls for the restoration and protection of the water cycle, stronger investment and greater cooperation with international partners and recognises wetlands as nature's most effective water managers and landscape water retention as a strategic pillar. For the EU and its Member States, this also means fully implementing, rather than diluting, the Water Framework Directive and maintaining strong water protection standards at home as they work with Mediterranean partners through the Rome Initiative.

The recently announced European Water Initiative provides a further opportunity to bring this external dimension into practice. The UfM Ministerial Declaration and the Rome Initiative should contribute to this agenda by placing the protection and restoration of wetlands at the centre of EU cooperation with Mediterranean countries.

These priorities are also supported by the European Economic and Social Committee and its [EU Blue Deal](#) and its recent opinion [CCMI 261 on the Blue Deal Accelerator](#) which calls for wetland restoration, investment in nature-based-solutions and stronger water diplomacy through Wetland Partnerships under the Global Gateway.

**We therefore call for wetlands and water-related ecosystems to be recognised in the Rome Water Initiative and its implementation.**

The draft global report on collective progress in implementing the Kunming–Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework finds that ambition and implementation for inland water ecosystems are lagging behind those for terrestrial ecosystems. This concerns restoration, protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures, as well as action to address land-use change.

**Explicitly naming wetlands and water-related ecosystems would help ensure that they receive the political attention and funding needed to meet the 2030 targets.** It would also give wetlands and water-related ecosystems a stronger place in efforts to link climate and biodiversity action. The Rome Ministerial is an important opportunity to send this message ahead of CBD COP16, UNFCCC COP31 and the 2026 UN Water Conference.

We therefore ask you to **raise this issue during the Ministerial Meeting and to support its integration into the implementation of the Ministerial Declaration, the Rome Initiative and the work of the UfM Regional Platform on Water**, in particular by:

1. Recognising wetlands and water-related ecosystems as essential natural infrastructure for water provisioning, food security, disaster risks reduction, as well as climate mitigation and adaptation.

2. Integrating wetland restoration and nature-based solutions into the WEFE Nexus Strategy in the Mediterranean Source to Sea Continuum and the UfM Recommendations on Water Finance.
3. Combining natural, conventional and technological solutions to secure water for people, ecosystems and economic activities.
4. Mobilising public and private finance for wetland protection and restoration, including through project pipelines supported by the Rome Initiative and the Pact for the Mediterranean.
5. Strengthening the link to the Convention on Wetlands and its objectives, including cooperation on shared river basins and transboundary wetlands to improve the management of shared water resources.
6. Involving civil society, economic sectors and local communities in the design and implementation of projects.

Our organisations are ready to provide technical evidence, examples from across the Mediterranean and to support the integration of wetlands and Nature-based Solutions into the implementation of the Rome Initiative and the work of the UfM Regional Platform on Water. We would also be pleased to support the development of wetland restoration projects and investment pipelines under the Rome Initiative.

We hope we can count on your support in Rome.

Yours sincerely,



#### Contacts

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