



**10TH MEETING OF THE MINISTERS
FOR FOOD, AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES of
THE MEMBER COUNTRIES OF CIHEAM**

Algiers, 6 February 2014

**Welcome Address by the President of CIHEAM
Prof. Dr. Adel El-Beltagy**

**Excellences,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

On behalf of CIHEAM, I would like to welcome all the Ministers, the DG of FAO, Ambassadors, Delegates, Media representatives and all the Delegations gathered in this meeting. Your presence with us is a strong testimony of your commitment to CIHEAM.

I would like to thank the Algerian Government for their warm hospitality and for organizing this meeting and especially thank the Hon. Abdelwahab Nouri, Minister for Agriculture and Rural Development of Algeria for hosting today the 10th ministerial meeting of CIHEAM.

The history of CIHEAM is linked to that of Europe and the Mediterranean Basin. It has progressively and patiently emerged within dynamic political, social and economic contexts.

As an intergovernmental organisation composed of 13 Mediterranean States we have a diplomatic and legal basis that is unique in the region. The founding treaty of CIHEAM was in fact the precursor of a vision of Euro-Mediterranean cooperation.

The process of enlargement of our Organization to include countries to the South and East of the Mediterranean, initiated in the 1980's, confirmed the pioneering spirit of our founders who wished to construct partnerships between the shores of the Mediterranean.

As transmitter of knowledge, CIHEAM has enabled those who put value into building ties all around the Mediterranean to enter into a relationship of exchanges and cooperation.

- Since the creation of CIHEAM, about 10 000 students have followed long-term courses (Master of Science).
- Close to 20 000 people have received professional specialized training (short courses).
- About 7 000 lectures have been invited and involved in our education system.

I have the pleasure to inform you that in the Law presented by the French Minister of Agriculture, Mr Stéphane Le Foll, and voted last month, a clear mention enables CIHEAM to deliver French diplomas to the future managers of agriculture, agroindustry and rural development of the Mediterranean. This recognition in France is a real progress for the accreditation of Ciheam's diplomas, after the ones obtained in Albania, Egypt, Lebanon, Turkey and Spain).

Today, this meeting in Algiers is the 10th ministerial meeting, the first having been initiated in 1999 in Rome at the invitation of the Italian authorities. I would like here to thank Paolo De Castro who was then the minister of agriculture in Italy and the initiator of the ministerial meeting in the framework of CIHEAM.

It is noteworthy that in the last two decades World Food Summits organized by FAO (1996, 2002 and 2009) have always emphasized the importance of enhancing sustainable agricultural development for alleviating poverty and livelihood of rural communities. The World Bank has expounded upon these issues in its *World Development Report 2008*.

CIHEAM continues to uphold the firm belief that agriculture, food, fisheries and the sustainable development of rural communities constitute the foundation of Mediterranean cooperation.

Building on its 13 member states and its 5 geographical sites (Bari, Chania, Montpellier, Paris and Zaragoza), CIHEAM maintains and develops constant Mediterranean dialogue while associating all national and international experts who share this task for collective action.

Beyond its core mission of cooperation based on specialized education, training and high-level research, CIHEAM also contributes to enrich and facilitate the political debate on agricultural issues by managing directly development programmes and organizing regional debates. The biannual meeting of the ministers of agriculture of our 13 member states represents major contribution to that goal.

CIHEAM should continue to explore avenues of cooperation with international and regional organization that are active in the Mediterranean:

- The European Institutions and especially the Commission with the DG for Agriculture, the DG Research and DG Development and Cooperation, and the Parliament with its Commission for Agriculture.

- The Centers of Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) coordinated by ICARDA
- FAO and other UN Institutions. Though CIHEAM has maintained institutional links with FAO since 1977
- The World Bank
- The Arab Organization for Agricultural Development (AOAD)
- The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)
- The Global fora for agricultural research (GFAR) and the regional fora for agricultural research in the Arab region like the Association of Agricultural Research Institutions in the Near-East and North Africa (AARINENA)
- And several national institutions in our member countries.

Over the years, CIHEAM has been associated with international scientific events and to major political fora. We will be actively present in Milan for the Universal Exposition 2015 entitled “*Feeding the Planet. Energy for Life*”.

Excellencies, Ladies and gentlemen,

Agriculture and food, more than ever, have become central themes in the world strategic agenda. The World is at the start of a new agricultural era, in which boosting yields and reducing food losses will be essential to feeding 9 to 10 billion people in 2050.

Closer global cooperation can support food production and food security. This is particularly true in the Mediterranean Area where the different social, economic, political, and demographic dynamics and interdependences are shaping the challenges.

The Mediterranean region is regarded as a major barometer of international relations, constantly maintaining its dynamic strategic position throughout its history. Political, social, economical and institutional transitions are taking place toward a new state of transformation.

These transitions could not be dissociated from the demographic and out migration realities and dynamics the Mediterranean is facing. About 500 million people live in European Union and about 280 in the Mediterranean Arab Countries and Turkey.

The population of the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean Countries will increase by some 25% to 370 million in 2030, 275 million being in North Africa (Morocco to Egypt) alone, after it was 100 million in 1980 and 200 million in 2010.

Up to 2013, around 7.7 million of the total foreigners living in the European Union come from Southern and Eastern Mediterranean countries so a total of around 20% of the foreigners living in Europe.

To this, it is important however to add that up to 2011, there is around 140 000 illegal border crossings to the European Union, 130 000 coming from Mediterranean routes so more than 85%. This represents a doubling of the numbers of 2010.

In Europe, the population will increase only very slowly, by less than 2% over the entire period until 2030. There will be 40% more people who are older than 65 years than there are in 2010.

Europe has a need for qualified migrants and hence there is some complementarity between the needs of the European Union for work forces and the availability of people of working age in the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean Countries.

This complementarity could make migration beneficial for both sides, and if it were recognized, then it could improve the public perception of migration and make it more acceptable.

The winds of change at global and regional levels had its impact on the Mediterranean region. The food crises, financial tsunami, energy crunch, and the threats of climate change demand our joint effort and is highly needed to readjust and adapt. Science and Technology can go a long way towards that goal.

A knowledge based dynamic economy will be our ultimate goal. Furthermore, enhancing human resource capabilities will be a major element for strengthening cooperation and resilience in the Mediterranean.

CIHEAM as 52 year old institution has been navigating through environment that is marked by constant flux. CIHEAM has to seriously reposition itself to meet the growing challenges of the 21st century. A brainstorming exercise to reposition CIHEAM will help us to construct a strategic framework and governance modalities.

A clear niche for CIHEAM activities, considering alternative providers, based on a need driven participatory approach will help to enhance effectiveness and recognition. Such prospects do not only mean identifying priorities but it also will allows CIHEAM contribute to a long-term vision of Mediterranean cooperation and integration.

Excellences, Ladies and gentlemen,

The stakes are known

Agriculture is definitely a part of the determining sectors for the future of the Mediterranean and for enhancing regional integration. It is now, necessary to face, without fear, the challenges of the present to construct the best future that we all wish for. Closed sea and open land, I must reemphasise that the Mediterranean interface can only exist if it can maintain imaginative and concrete vision in the long term, a vision at the heart of which lay knowledge sharing, education and a win-win cooperation.

Let us recall that several World Food Summits and the ones dedicated to Sustainable Development and Environment (for example: Rio+20, Johannesburg, Copenhagen, Cancun, etc.).

As mentioned in L'Aquila Joint Statement on Global Food Security on July 2009: *“Food security is closely connected with economic growth and social progress as well as with political stability and peace. The food security agenda should focus on agriculture and rural development by promoting sustainable production, productivity and rural economic growth. In this respect, we welcome the commitments made by countries represented at L'Aquila towards a goal of mobilizing \$20 billion over three years through this coordinated, comprehensive strategy focused on sustainable agriculture development”*.

The World hope and aspiration to achieve food security and sustainable management of natural resources has been emphasized. The political will to translate this aspiration to action is painfully lacking.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

In order to fulfill the aspiration of an integrated Mediterranean, with the prime objective that its people enjoy peace and prosperity, we need to foster a culture of parity and equality in our cooperative endeavors.

By your good will, you can enrich and enhance the work of CIHEAM to fulfill its noble action for a peaceful and prosperous Mediterranean Area.

Thank you all very much.