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(ANSAmed) - ROME, NOVEMBER 27 - "The Mediterranean Union is up and moving and nothing can stand in its way," said the Moroccan Foreign Minister, Taieb Fassi-Fihri, speaking in Tangiers yesterday evening at the opening of 'Medays 2008', a forum dedicated to themes around political, economic and social integration for the Mediterranean area. Details of the first three days' work have been reported by the AFP agency. In the presence of Ministers of Mediterranean countries and international businesses and entrepreneurs, Fassi-Fihri launched an "urgent appeal to the Maghreb countries, to political decision-takers, to economists, to enable a vision of the Arab Maghreb Union to be realised, to come forward and to progress".

Otherwise, said the Moroccan Foreign Minister, "the Mediterranean Union will be lamed by this absence and this division, whose symbol stands as the closed border separating two sister nations" he said, alluding to Algeria and Morocco.

Attendees at the forum, which has been organised by Moroccan Amadeus research institute, are making no secret of the obstacles lying in the path of a union of the area: "The biggest divide between global incomes" runs between the two shores of the Mediterranean and "the challenges weighing on economic development (in this region) are immense" said French Secretary of State for Economic Outlook, Eric Besson.

While Kamal Nasser, Egypt's Ambassador to Paris, speaking in the name of his nation, which shares the presidency of the Med Union with France, critically stressed how the EU allots only 2% of its foreign investments to the Mediterranean area.

Talks this morning, however, covered peace in the Mediterranean. Invited to take part were the General Secretary of the Arab League, Amr Moussa, the US Undersecretary of State, William J. Burns, Moroccan Interior Minister, Chakib Benmoussa and French Defence Minister, Hervé Morin.

There will follow an exchange of ideas on themes covering education and research, with a contribution from the Deputy Speaker of the Italian Senate, Emma Bonino.

Tomorrow's plenary session will, be dedicated to economic development, transport and energy in the Mediterranean area; among others, contributions are expected from Antonio Tajani, EU Transport Commissioner, who will hold talks with his colleague responsible for the EU's Economic and Monetary Affairs, Joaquin Almunia, as well as with Kema Unakitan, Turkey's Finance Minister. (ANSAmed). 2008-11-27 16:48