

Middle East Mediterranean

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# **MEM Summer Summit 2018 Forum: our programme**

**Lugano, August 6, 2018 - The first Middle East Mediterranean Summer Summit will involve 150 young people from over 30 countries of the Middle East Mediterranean region and Europe. Organised by Università della Svizzera italiana (USI) with the joint support of the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs and the French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, the meeting aims to develop innovative solutions and concrete opportunities for dialogue and growth.**

**On 25 and 26 August**, at the end of an intense eight-day Seminar, the ideas generated and formulated by the young participants will be presented and debated in the framework of a Forum, open to the public. Forum attendees will include high-level political authorities, experts, intellectuals, and entrepreneurs of the Middle East Mediterranean region. The **Forum** will be held at *Palazzo dei Congressi*, Lugano, over two days, with a programme consisting of several thematic sessions, based on a structured presentation of key issues and points for reflection raised during the preceding Seminar. **Tunisia**, a major crossroads in the Mediterranean civilization, and clear political-constitutional example of a government's successful policy of integration and coexistence of differences, is the guest of honour at this year's Summit.

There will be opportunities to explore the geopolitics of the region, to outline scenarios for material reconstruction, and the development of cultural policies; to address the relationship between water, peace, and borders; and to discuss new models of citizenship, energy transition, and education and training as an engine of change. Also on the agenda: the question of infrastructure, of the need to rethink economics; examples of success stories on the ground; and how to promote new and positive narratives through literature and the arts. To register and find out more: [www.mem-summersummit.ch](http://www.mem-summersummit.ch)

## **Sessions and Main Speakers**

### **Geopolitics and the new configurations**

The Swiss Foreign Affairs Minister, **Ignazio Cassis**, alongside Prof. **Gilles Kepel** (USI) and Prof. **Safwan M. Masri** (Columbia University) will put forward a political and institutional analysis of the situation in the MEM region, examining the close and well-structured relations existing between this region and Switzerland. Particular attention will be paid to Tunisia, which stands out as "an Arab anomaly". The country's transition to democracy will be analysed in all the elements that have made its case unique. The head of the Tunisian government, **Youssef Chahed**, has been invited to address this uniqueness, with the challenges and goals achieved.

Participants will analyse the elements that have made its transition to democracy one of a kind. Strategic matters will be dealt with by influential protagonists and experts in the Middle-Eastern political scene: **Philippe Etienne**, advisor to the French President Emmanuel Macron; **Vitaly Naumkin**, director of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences and advisor to President Vladimir Putin; **Pascale Baeriswyl**, State Secretary at the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs. The speakers will outline the political and strategic situation, underlining their role as advisors to major political figures, liable to influence the region's delicate balance. While used to steering politics from behind the scenes, they will step on stage to give their version of the transition from strategy to political action.

### **A possible reconstruction, and cultural policies**

The Syrian conflict has left deep scars on people and their cities, wreaking havoc on homes as well as on any hopes for the future. Reconstructing a society means engaging in concrete action on the ground; but to piece together a peaceful and civilised coexistence requires an effort over the long term, including a programme of specific cultural policies. The Assistant Director-General for Culture of UNESCO **Ernesto Ottone Ramírez** and the President of Ninevah University in Iraq, Prof. **Al-Khyatt** will talk about the project designed to reconstruct

Mosul, promoted by UNESCO itself in association with the United Arab Emirates. **Jean-François Charnier**, Scientific director of Louvre Abu-Dhabi, will then illustrate the Museum's universal aspiration and ambition to suggest unprecedented cultural juxtapositions: it is the importance and value of diversity and plurality of languages and cultures that is stressed by the curators in their museum tour, which draws inspiration from the mythological Tower of Babel.

#### **Water and peace across borders**

From time immemorial, water supply has been one of the angles from which to interpret geopolitical tensions. The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs has promoted *Blue Peace*, an initiative designed to develop and set up a network worldwide for all sorts of operations concerning water, peace, security, and cooperation undertaken by actors such as universities, cultural and political institutions, diplomacy, civil society and the private sector. The project entitled *The Blue Peace Movement: Transboundary Water for Peace and Sustainability* will be introduced during a debate involving Prof. **Danilo Türk** (Director of the Global High-level Panel on Water and Peace and former President of the Republic of Slovenia), **Lindsey Aldaco-Manner** (President of the World Youth Parliament for Water) and Ambassador **Pio Wennubst** (Assistant Director-General Assistant Director General, Head of the Global Cooperation Department, SDC).

#### **New models of citizenship**

As a result of the 2011 uprisings, we have witnessed a re-examination and reappraisal of the very concepts and models of citizenship, of the relation between state and society, of rights achieved and rights that are still denied.

A comparison of the various forms of democratic participation may be a useful tool for building a picture of the precarious situation of the different countries in the region and for identifying positive practices to be emulated and, if necessary, applied in different contexts. Prof. **Antoine Messarra** (a member of the Lebanese Constitutional Council) will present the case of Lebanon, a country with a multi-community society incapable of adjusting to the ideology of a nation-state, adopting instead a pragmatic, day-to-day practice of citizenship. Prof. **Jinan Limam** (University of Tunis) and Prof. **Liqbal Latifi Gharbi** (Ez-Zitouna University) will confront each other over a highly controversial topical issue in Tunisia, namely the reform of inheritance law, which is set to grant Tunisian women equal rights in matters of inheritance. Gender equality and equality between secularism and religion are central and crucial subjects in the process of identifying new forms of citizenship and for the new constitutions to be drafted. Prof. **Philippe Portier** (École Pratique des Hautes Études, Paris) and Prof. **Alessandro Ferrari** (Università degli Studi dell'Insubria) will tackle precisely this aspect.

#### **From petroleum to energy transition**

The big changes that have affected the energy sector, where renewable sources are increasingly taking hold, entail further challenges for the region, inextricably bound to the fortunes of fossil fuels. Similarly, these changes have upset the economic model of the so-called "rentier states" and have called for a diversification of their economic activities. The question of economic and energy transition will be addressed by **Kamel Ghribi** (President of GK Investment Holding Group), by **Stéphane Michel** (Total), **François-Aïssa Touazi** (CapMena), and **Paolo Scaroni** (Rothschild).

#### **Education as an engine of change**

The youth of the Middle East Mediterranean have had more opportunities to study than the previous generations. Yet, they do not seem to be able to find jobs in line with their qualifications. Therefore, investing in education is necessary, though no less important is the need to rethink the degree curricula themselves, furthering student mobility and academic exchanges. These aspects will be discussed by **Sheikha Lubna Bint Khalid Al Qasimi** (President of Zayed University, United Arab Emirates), **Cinzia Catalfamo Akbaraly** (FIFA,

Global Academic Network and Interagency Partnerships) and **Alessandro Del Maschio** (Rector, Vita-Salute San Raffaele University).

### **The future of global infrastructure**

The future of the region also depends on its infrastructure: some of the countries of the Middle East Mediterranean region are still inadequately provided in this sector, while others do have the necessary resources for undertaking great public works and projects. This vast region suffers from an imbalance, as it comprises, on the one hand, Gulf oil-rich economies and, on the other hand, countries whose natural resources are insufficient to meet the demands of their population (which is the case of Egypt, Morocco, and Yemen). These topics will be tackled by Prof. **Xiankun Lu** (China's One Belt Initiative, China-Switzerland), **Dr Marco Kampp** (Deutsche Bahn, Germany-Italy) and **Dr Almotaz Abadi** (Union for Mediterranean, DSG of the Environment and Water Division, OPT - Spain).

### **Reviewing the economy and business models**

Several factors and circumstances came together to trigger the 2011 uprisings, though the economic crisis and soaring unemployment rates no doubt played a decisive role. Which is why existing business models must be reviewed, starting from the sector's operators and professionals. This session will feature **Roberto Grassi** (Fidinam, Switzerland), **Bashar Azzeh** (AL Quds Holding Company, OTP), **Paolo Rotelli** (President, San Donato Group, Italy), **Bavaguthu Raghuram Shetty** (Founder and Director of NMC Health, NMC Health, United Arab Emirates), **Marouane El Abassi** (Chairman & Governor of Banque Centrale de Tunisie) telling their own experience.

### **Success stories**

While the initiatives undertaken by governments and international organisations do matter, we cannot do without, or replace, the projects and efforts of the NGOs and foundations operating on the ground. Positive models and success stories will be presented by some main actors who have taken up the region's challenges. These include **Franco Vaccari** (President, Rondine Cittadella della Pace, Italy), **Stefania Mancini** (Vice-President of the Fondation Assistance Internationale-FAI Lugano), **Wahid Ferchichi** (Tunisian Foundation for Individual Liberties).

### **Art and literature across borders**

One of the chief objectives of the MEM Summer Summit is to encourage new narratives of the region. **Paola Caridi**, a journalist and an expert in the Middle East Mediterranean, will be in conversation with **Suad Amiry**. As a writer, architect, and founder of the Riwaq Center for Architectural Conservation in Ramallah, Amiry marries the imaginative and immaterial power of literature with the visionary and material power of architecture. Her best-known books include: *My Damascus* (2017), *Golda slept here* (2013), *Sharon and My Mother-in-Law* (2003). **Silvia Naef**, an expert in Islamic art, will be in conversation with Prof. **Nasser David Khalili**, scholar, collector and philanthropist who has devoted his life to studies, and to preserving and promoting Islamic art.

### **The role of young people**

The main idea at the heart of the MEM Summer Summit is the role of the new generations: each of these sessions will be steered by the active involvement of the young people who will have examined the discussion topic in great depth and detail during the preceding seminar. Their presence is expected at each of the panels, as they are to act as spokespersons for their claims/petitions and proposals. As was underlined by the Rector of USI, **Boas Erez**, at the press conference launching the Summit: "We have selected young people active in civil society – medical doctors, veterinarians, students, artists, entrepreneurs, researchers and bloggers, from different cultures and religions – with a view to working with them on innovative proposals. It is an original approach based on dialogue, which enhances the identity of Università della Svizzera italiana, highlighting its natural role of bridge between continental Europe and the Mediterranean.

## Four public events, free admission

### A meeting with Anissa Helou

Friday, 17 August, 18:30 Room 3, LAC, Lugano

With a Syrian father and Lebanese mother, Anissa Helou is a well-known writer, blogger and chef based in London. She specialises in Mediterranean, Middle-Eastern and North African cuisines. In her lecture, she will talk (in English) about the role of food as a meeting place.

### "Migrante" Jazz Concert

Friday, 17 August, 21:00, Piazza Luini, LAC, Lugano

A brilliant trumpet player, composer and arranger, Giovanni Falzone is one of the leading figures of Italian and European jazz. He calls himself a migrant, having left his home town in a Sicilian province to set out on a quest for a new life.

### Screening: "The Intruder", by Leonardo di Costanzo

August 18 - Auditorium, Lugano campus

The film, in Italian with English subtitles, tells the story of Giovanna, founder of a children centre where mothers bring their children to escape from the degradation and mentality of organized crime. The event open to the public will begin at 8pm. Registration required at [mem@usi.ch](mailto:mem@usi.ch)

### Screening: "Zindeeq " di Michel Khleifi

August 21 - Auditorium, Lugano campus

The film, in Arabic with English subtitles, tells the story of a Palestinian film-maker 'M' who returns to Ramallah to film witness accounts of the 1948 Nakba. The event open to the public will be begin at 8pm. Registration required at [mem@usi.ch](mailto:mem@usi.ch)

### "Mediterraneo" Jazz Concert

Friday, 24 August, 21:00, Piazza Luini, LAC, Lugano

The popular Sicilian songs of the *Giovanni Falzone Trio* will blend in with other songs from the other shores of the Mediterranean: from the voice of Sufi mysticism of Tunisian Houcine Ataa, to the African percussions of Dudu Kouatè, all the way to the mythical instrument of the Persian Santur of Iranian Alireza Mortazavi.

### Symphony for water and peace

Saturday, 25 August, 21:00 - 23:00, Internal Courtyard, Town Hall, Piazza Riforma, Lugano

The Blue Peace Orchestra will perform its Symphony for water and peace, composed by a collective of artists from all corners of the world: Mich Gerber (Svizzera), Alune Wade (Senegal), Tarek Younis (Giordania), Carlos Guzman (Costa Rica), and Serge Frasunkiewicz (Brasile).

The concert is organised in association with the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (DSC) and the City of Lugano.

**All journalists wishing to attend are invited to register here:**

[www.mem-summer summit.ch/media/](http://www.mem-summer summit.ch/media/)

**To keep up to date:**

Site: [www.mem-summer summit.ch](http://www.mem-summer summit.ch)

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