**UfM Ministerial Conference on Sustainable Blue Economy**

**Tuesday, 2 February 2021, 09:00-12:00**

**Speech of M. Plácido Plaza, Secretary-General of the CIHEAM**

“Excellencies, Ladies and gentlemen, dear colleagues,

On both shores of the Mediterranean, Sustainable food systems are key elements for promoting growth, **blue as well as green and circular bioeconomy**, by building up innovation-based approaches to improve well-being and social equity while lessening environmental risks and ecological scarcities.

**In this respect, it is of paramount importance to safeguard fisheries and marine aquaculture value chains.**

There is a priority holding need to provide an active support throughout the whole supply chain

* at sea to local fishing, “from hook to plate”

*and*

* inland to local farmers, “from farm to fork”

**Traceability and certification should valorize products in the eyes of consumers.**

Enhancing sustainability and resilience of small-scale fisheries, fish farms and workers is essential to reduce poverty, improve nutritional status and create decent jobs for coastal populations.

However, food systems’ transition to more sustainable practices, away from “business as usual”, require significant technical expertise.

That’s why, the CIHEAM, the Union for the Mediterranean Secretariat and the FAO have joined forces to create and support the co-development of a SFS-MED Platform, within a tripartite MoU signed on January 14th 2021, with the purpose of:

* Providing to interested stakeholder a collaborative framework to foster progress on SDGs

***and***

* Supporting collaborative actions to streamline the shift towards more sustainable food systems in the Mediterranean

This Platform will support raising awareness on sustainable food systems’ central role in achieving SDGs for the Mediterranean, particularly regarding to the centrality of fisheries in the regional food systems.”