

Foreword

Senén Florensa

Director General

European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMed),
Barcelona

Relevant events over the past few months have given rise to an international mood of concern. Hope for stability in the peace process and renewed impulse in Euro-Mediterranean relations through the Union for the Mediterranean have not produced results to meet expectations. On the economic level, moreover, we have seen the expansion and intensification of the economic crisis that emerged in 2008 and reached its height in 2009.

These developments have marked the election of the key topics for this year's edition of the Mediterranean Yearbook. As in the six previous editions, the Yearbook has remained faithful to its goal of observing, analyzing and informing of the most significant events and situations in the region.

The economic crisis, as the most important subject in the economic sphere, has been approached from different angles and with regard to its effects on two aspects as particularly sensitive in the Mediterranean Region as employment and investment. Aspects that will mark the Region's capacity in the long term to overcome a crisis that has taken on different paces in the different Mediterranean countries but that will require a great effort in all of them in order to be overcome.

The situation in the Middle East remains in the limelight of worldwide attention, and is therefore also a focal topic of the Yearbook. Unfortunately, this attention is due to the sensation that the solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict seems to be ever more elusive, due to both the internal dynamics of the

parties and the international community's inability to establish channels of negotiation. This situation of paralysis in progression towards a solution has particularly slowed down the institutional deployment of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM).

The latter has also been included as one of the Yearbook's key topics. Despite difficulties and the timid progress in establishing the UfM institutions, the corpus of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, i.e. the programmes, meetings, sectoral conferences, networks and so on, which are definitively the strike force of Euro-Mediterranean relations, has continually advanced over the course of the year. Although less liable to make headlines than Heads of State and Government summits or the establishment of a General Secretariat but no less important, these components of the process are what will certainly lead to attaining the objectives of the Partnership, and as such, must be analyzed.

We cannot, however, forget that the Mediterranean is more than just the Partnership, and that it continues to be the focus of interest of other international actors with a specific weight in global geostrategy. That is why articles on China's relentlessly growing presence in the region, US policy in the Maghreb or Iranian influence in the Region are also included as key topics in this year's edition.

The subject of the central Dossier in a Mediterranean Yearbook published in 2010 must perforce be Euro-Mediterranean economic integration, with particular reference to the free trade area. For a long time, the free trade area has been considered the expression of the primary progress made in Euro-Mediterranean cooperation. Recently, it may have lost attraction for the media; however, the pace of progress has remained stable, advancing step by step towards commercial integration. All countries

involved have negotiated Association Agreements and, with the exception of Syria, all of them are in effect and tariff dismantling is taking place according to schedule.

The Dossier examines the issue of Euro-Mediterranean integration from different perspectives and in relation to different aspects, from its relation to globalization or the North-South economic gap in the Mediterranean Region to an analysis of integration by economic sectors, as well as South-South integration. Hence, we have attempted to provide an in-depth view of this issue, which is possibly the line of action that has most progressed of all of those included in the Barcelona Declaration of 1995.

As in previous editions, the Yearbook does not just provide a summary of the year's international current events; it also offers an overview of the year through analyses of political and business aspects, cultural

and development issues, the security of the Partnership, cooperation in migration, and so on, with a diversity of perspectives provided by over fifty authors from both the North and South shores of the Mediterranean.

This edition has added some major changes. The Yearbook, however, remains faithful to its goal of offering insight into the Mediterranean Region and providing its readers with crucial information and a tool for analysing the region. And it also remains faithful to its other trademark – plurality. The plurality of authors and perspectives lend this work wealth and make it go beyond a mere compilation of events. Therefore, we would like to close this foreword with heartfelt thanks to all the authors and collaborators that have contributed to making this year's edition a success.