

# A Changing Europe and a Changing Arab World Are Here Today

**Amb. Youssef Amrani**

Secretary General

Secretariat of the Union for the Mediterranean,  
Barcelona

A Europe with expanding membership and a visionary mission: to cooperate across borders and grow without barriers. A Southern Mediterranean with new horizons and growing hope: for democracy, peace among neighbours, opportunities for its people and a secure future for its youth. Between them, a partnership for peace, shared prosperity and dialogue: the Union for the Mediterranean.

With the changes taking place in the Mediterranean, it is possible today to think of a single region, one that stretches from north of the Baltic Sea to south of the Mediterranean, one that is shared by Europe and the Middle East. This is the basis for the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, our region-to-region platform for cooperation and development. It is a relationship with significant shared interests and unlimited potential, and it is up to us to develop it to its fullest.

Reforms and revolutions in the Mediterranean do not take place in isolation; they are the result of a long process of profound underlying social and economic changes. As the Northern neighbour, Europe shares an interest in overcoming many of the challenges that the countries to the south of the “big lake” are suffering from. For years Europe has been a genuine partner in the search for solutions, and it will continue to be one when it comes time to reap the benefits of success: a vibrant area of peace, democracy, equal human rights and fair opportunities and a prosperous future throughout a shared hemisphere.

These realities give the Union for the Mediterranean an important and prominent role to play in shaping

the prospects for change in the region. By responding promptly to the new reality, by reacting to what the nations in transition and reform are hoping for, the Union for the Mediterranean can become a key tool for regional cooperation and help to develop the full potential of the southern regional dimension of the European Neighbourhood Policy. Today, young Europeans are reaching adulthood who never knew a divided Europe. Many of their young Arab counterparts have no such positive experience; they have grown up in a world of division and conflict. Now, together, we have an opportunity to remove the barriers to their future and to leave the past behind.

Today, a renewed Arab Generation has begun. We have seen such beginnings fail in the past, but this time a unique confluence of events has created new openings for success. Now, together, we can, we must, fulfil the promise of democracy coupled with economic prosperity.

However, the first imperative is to understand and articulate the potential of peace. We must now begin to re-envision the future: a region where conflict gives way to cooperation, where a regional economy brings together the capabilities and resources of 43 countries – more than 750 million people, from the Atlantic to the Red Sea – and where cross-border partnerships advance economic development, protection of the environment and the dialogue between cultures. It is a future that empowers people to be full participants in global progress, and it will enable a new scope for the partnership with our European neighbours, in science, technology and trade. Achieving such a partnership will also make a substantial impact on other issues, from poverty to the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, from the need to promote regional integration to the necessity to facilitate mobility.