

# Foreword

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It has now been five years since the Fundació CIDOB and the European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMed) initiated this Mediterranean Yearbook. The project represented a fascinating challenge for the two institutions, which committed themselves to providing a quality product for the whole Euro-Mediterranean area, in order to offer all the actors involved the materials they needed for information and analysis. Now, as we present the fifth edition of the yearbook, with a record of more than 2,000 published pages to provide a greater and better knowledge of the Mediterranean, we can assert that a double objective is being achieved, that of disseminating analyses on the Mediterranean and that of continuity. Five editions which have permitted the presentation of different perspectives and the display of the processes of transformation of the various Mediterranean realities.

2007 has been a difficult year for the Mediterranean region. The multiple challenges presented by the events of last year left behind great dilemmas which had to be faced with a view to building an area of peace and shared prosperity.

In this edition, the key themes turn on a double axis: the conflicts and the international strategies in the region. It seems impossible to speak of the Mediterranean without speaking of conflicts which, unfortunately, still occupy centre stage in Mediterranean

reality, and consequently in this yearbook. The situation in Palestine, the terrorist attacks in North Africa or the tragic jigsaw puzzle into which Iraq has turned and its influence in the complex Middle East scenario are the themes with which this edition opens. In 2007 the major international actors redefined their strategic positions in the Mediterranean area: from the role of the United States and its change of strategy, more of image than of substance, in the Middle East, to the effervescence experienced by the European project for the Mediterranean after the proposals of the new President of the French Republic, Nicolas Sarkozy. The media relevance of the French initiatives not only demonstrated the importance to Europe of its southern neighbours, it also promoted a resurgence of interest in the Mediterranean on the part of the most northerly European countries. The result of this effervescence has been to demonstrate to Europe that the Barcelona Process continues to be the cornerstone of Euro-Mediterranean relations. Besides this, 2007 has seen the emergence of new actors in the Mediterranean, which find an echo in the yearbook when it discusses the role of Iran on the complex stage of the Middle East or the growth of the economic interests of the Persian Gulf countries or of China in the region.

This year's thematic dossier pays a historic debt to the yearbook by focusing on the subject of water. Since the preparation of the first edition, the question of water has always been present as one of the major Mediterranean issues that the dossier needed to discuss. In this edition, the question of water is analysed from multiple points of view: from the management and planning of resources to its implications for the geopolitics of the region. The prospects, eco-

conomic value, co-operation, conflicts, case studies, political involvement and climate change are elements that the dossier also analyses in their relation to water resources in the Mediterranean.

As in the previous editions, a balance sheet of the leading topics of the year is offered by means of numerous articles written by more than fifty authors from both shores of the Mediterranean. This multiplicity of voices, reflecting the diversity of opinions and points of view, is the true mark of identity of this yearbook.

In the year of inter-cultural dialogue, this Mediterranean Yearbook represents a link in the necessary

and fundamental process of mutual recognition between the various cultural dimensions that share the Euro-Mediterranean space. With this in mind, we hope that the Arabic version of the Yearbook will be an additional element in advancing this process. We do not wish to conclude this presentation without thanking all the authors and collaborators who have contributed to the success of this edition. We also wish to highlight the commitment of the Fundació CIDOB and the European Institute of the Mediterranean to the work of continuing to rise to the challenge of improving this product in its future editions.