

Foreword

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The year 2008 was an intricate mosaic of the different realities that make up the Mediterranean region. It was a year full of events that underscored, first, how the Mediterranean region has captured the world's attention and, second, how global events have a direct impact on the development of Mediterranean countries. These are the subjects that we sought to address and analyse in the sixth edition of the *Mediterranean Yearbook*.

Since its launch in 2004, the *Yearbook* has remained faithful to its goal of offering insight into the Mediterranean reality and providing its readers with crucial information and tools for understanding and analysing the region.

The year 2008 saw historic events for the Mediterranean region, which will shape its future and are the main themes of this year's *Mediterranean Yearbook*. The development of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership reached a decisive turning point through the creation, in July 2008, of the Union for the Mediterranean, which served to relaunch the Barcelona Process begun in 2005, and the establishment of a stable, institutionalised framework for Euro-Mediterranean cooperation. The implementation and relaunching of institutions and instruments intended to fulfil the objectives set out in the Barcelona Declaration represent a new stage in the relations between the European Union and the Mediterranean, which the *Yearbook* could not ignore.

In addition to this watershed moment in Euro-Mediterranean relations, the *Yearbook's* key themes also

include two events that, whilst not specifically Mediterranean, did have (and will continue to have) major repercussions for the Mediterranean region. First, the change in the US administration has brought changes in that country's influence in different spheres of the Mediterranean reality, in particular, its role in the conflict in the Middle East. President Barack Obama's arrival to the White House and the global repercussions of this change embody the hope that the world's most powerful nation has realised it must refocus its relations with the rest of the world, including the Mediterranean region. The *Yearbook's* articles draw attention to the potential scope of this transformation with regard to its impact on the Mediterranean.

Second, among other major issues in 2008, we could not ignore the first early assessments of the effects of the global economic crisis on Mediterranean countries. The economic crisis that violently erupted in the second half of 2008 has affected different Mediterranean countries at different levels and rates and will require a huge effort to overcome.

In both cases, it is still too soon to determine the full impact of the event on the Mediterranean region; however, in light of these change's current and future impact on the lives of the inhabitants on both shores of the Mediterranean, the *Yearbook* nevertheless offers some preliminary analyses of their repercussions.

On the cusp of 2010, the upcoming 15th anniversary of the Barcelona Declaration has set the agenda for the *Yearbook's* 'Dossier'. It was impossible not to take an in-depth look at the evolution of the Barcelona Process, going beyond recent events, which are discussed in other sections of the *Yearbook*, to offer a series of rigorous articles dealing with how the process has been carried out in the different

relevant spheres. The 'Dossier' likewise explores policy, security, macroeconomics, free trade, the role of civil society, culture, migrations, etc., within the framework of the Barcelona Process from 1995 to 2009, offering a comprehensive overview of the most important aspects of the evolution of a process that, whilst often criticised, is nevertheless critical to progressing toward an area of shared security and prosperity.

As in previous editions, the *Yearbook* also offers an overview of the year's most salient issues as seen by more than fifty authors from both shores of the Mediterranean. The plurality of opinions and diversity of perspectives used to address the wide range of subjects included in the *Yearbook* are the publication's most valuable assets. With the invaluable

support of another of the *Yearbook's* major assets, the extensive statistical, cartographical and chronological appendices, the 'Panorama' section offers an exhaustive overview of the Euro-Mediterranean reality.

The *Mediterranean Yearbook* is intended to serve as a quality resource, offering major players and interested members of the public alike crucial tools and information to understand and analyse the different Mediterranean realities. This is the commitment that the CIDOB Foundation and the European Institute of the Mediterranean undertook seven years ago. Today, they continue to offer a publication that, through its editions in Catalan, Spanish, English, French and Arabic, has emerged as a unique resource for the Mediterranean region.