

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

# **STABILITY IN THE MEDITERRANEAN**

## STABILITY IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

By Pedro López Aguirrebengoa

### GENERAL POLITICAL AND STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS

The situation in the general area of the Mediterranean did not undergo any substantial changes in 1998, and evolved in a very similar way to that of the previous year. This was analysed in the 1997-98 *Strategic Panorama*.

It is necessary in Mediterranean geopolitics to bear in mind the realities that obtain in this area, which extends to the Black Sea, the Gulf periphery and the rest of the Arab world. The presence of global strategic forces that lie outside the region must also be considered.

On this plane, the United States is the major military power in the area, in which it has interests that it considers vital. Its attitude plays a key role in any negotiations on disarmament and security in the region, as well as in respect of the strategic resources of the Middle East where it has a dominant influence in the Peace Process. It can be said that this is also the case with Russia, whose presence and potential, however, have temporarily declined.

The United States has been taking a greater interest in the Euro-Mediterranean process. In this connection it is worth recalling the visit made by the Assistant Secretary of State for Economic Affairs, Mr Eizenstat to Tunisia and Morocco. He made a proposal on this occasion for an economic and trade partnership with the countries of the area. However, his scheme appears to be limited for the time being, and in Washington's basically

bilateral approach to its relations with the region (the strong points of which are Israel and Egypt), the horizontal viewpoint bears more weight than the vertical and multilateral dimension characterising the European perception. The United States' physical remoteness means that its problems are different from those of Europe (that are intrinsic to its proximity) although both coincide in the general lines of Western thinking.

For its part, the Russian Federation is following this process with attention, and has expressed the wish to see its role as a guest at the Euro-Med Ministerial Conferences enhanced.

In global terms, the conflicts and tensions that still persist in the area remain either active or dormant, and the processes for solving them have still not been channelled towards a definitive solution.

The Middle-East Peace Process (MEPP) has been at a standstill for the past 18 months, notwithstanding the efforts by the United States, seconded by the European Union and backed by Egypt and other countries of the area. Only in the Israeli-Palestinian track, with the Wye Plantation talks (15-23 October) and the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding and other associated documents, was it possible to achieve a significant relaunching, although it was differently assessed in Israeli, Palestinian and Arab circles. Its true importance will depend on the ability of the parties to implement and fulfil it.

Something similar is occurring over the Cyprus issue, while the volatility in the Balkans persists. The latter was demonstrated by the Kosovo crisis—which at last is fortunately being contained by NATO action—as well as tensions in Albania, which appear to have found a means to solution in the international conference held there on 30 October.

In the Maghreb, the development of the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU) has stopped short in its tracks. The Algerian situation and the underlying tensions with Morocco, together with the isolation of Libya, are not hopeful signs that it will soon start up again, although Tunisia and Mauritania are showing themselves particularly intent that it should. The process of the Western Sahara, as we shall see, continues its unsteady course in the implementation of the United Nations Settlement Plan, which was revitalised by the mediation of American ex-Secretary of State James Baker. Progress has been made in identifying voters with a view to holding the planned referendum, but the whole process is subject to worrying delays and is still beset by many unknown factors.

At the political and economic level, something to be borne in mind is that a drop in oil prices creates budgetary problems for the oil-producing countries of the area.

In the surrounding areas of the Mediterranean, the Iraqi question continues to generate tension and conflicting positions, although the Arab world is showing itself increasingly inclined to sever the links between the invasion of Kuwait and the subsequent conflict—i.e., compliance by Iraq with the resolutions adopted by the United Nations, on which the basic consensus is maintained and the policy of containment applied by the United States to Iraq, Libya and Iran.

The absence of decisive progress in the MEPP has rekindled Arab and Islamic mistrust of the United States and the feeling that it is carrying out a two-sided policy, being concerned first and foremost with upholding the interests of Israel. Although this was to a certain extent modified by the achievements of Wye Plantation, it continues to be perceived particularly in respect of the attitudes of the American Congress and Senate. In any event, the conviction persists that the role of the United States is still vital, both because it is currently the only superpower, and also because it is presumed to be the only one capable of persuading Israel.

The climate of Arab impatience in view of this state of affairs has added weight to the request for greater and more resolute political involvement by the European Union in the MEPP, since it is already the largest contributor to economic assistance for the Palestinians. But—and in this there is an element of realism on the part of the Arabs, as well as of paradox—the dominant feeling is that it should do so while collaborating with the American initiatives and its leading role in the process. The European Union, linked to the United States by the strong ties of the Trans-Atlantic relationship, backs this scheme, although it hankers after a political role more in consonance with its interests and efforts in the Peace Process. Washington and Israel, each for its own reasons, would like to see the European contribution enhanced in respect of the economic aspects and the process's multilateral tracks, but their reticence regarding a more active political role persists.

Another latent focus of attention, which has heated up, is that of the relations between Syria and Turkey. Together with historic factors and Syrian feeling about the amputation of the province of Iskenderut in favour of Turkey, conducted in 1939 under the French mandate following a controversial referendum, elements of the recent political past in the time of

bipolarity still weigh heavily (i.e., Turkey as a NATO outpost versus the Eastern bloc from which Syria drew support in its struggle against Israel), as well as basic strategic interests, such as water supply from the Euphrates. More recently, Turkey's rapprochement to Israel, which took the form of a military agreement in 1996, has intensified Syria's suspicions, and—to a large extent—those of the Arab and Islamic world. Jordan, which has been striving to maintain satisfactory relations with Israel after the signing of the peace agreement, has had, however, to keep its distance, following an initial apparent movement towards participating in designing this new regional axis, which, it is assumed, was inspired by the US. It is a reminder of the CENTO, although the objective this time is not to hem in the ex-USSR; rather, it is concerned with the Islamic East and the Arab South, and also—probably—the energy interests connected with the crude oil from the Caspian.

Against this background, Turkey is accusing Syria of providing shelter and material support to the Kurdish rebels of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). A similar imputation has in the past been levelled by Turkey against Greece, whose PASOK socialist government always maintained a relationship of affinity with Syria, ever since the beginning of the deceased Papandreu's time. It is believed that in both cases the Kurdish issue is exploited as a means of putting pressure on Ankara.

On 2 October last, President Demirel delivered a serious warning to Damascus, in which he accused Syria of inciting the Arab countries against Turkey and actively supporting the PKK. He did not exclude the «right to reprisals». This tension came to the surface at a time when the Kurdish question had once more become a burning issue after the agreement signed by the leaders of the Iraqi opposition, Barzani and Talibani, in Washington where, moreover, a bill was being tabled and passed in Congress (the Iraq Liberation Act) clearly aimed at bringing about the overthrow of Saddam Hussein. The Syrian reaction to Turkey has been one of temporising moderation, with a call for dialogue to resolve the pending bilateral issues and reiteration of its wish to maintain good relations with Ankara. Nevertheless it continues to ask it to reconsider its strategic ties with Israel. The signing of the Syrio-Turkish Adanha Agreement (20 October), supported by Egypt and Iran and in which Damascus met the demands of Ankara, especially with regard to the PKK, finally put an end—at least for the time being—to dangerous tensions which, if they had flared up, would have resulted in serious consequences for the whole region.

In Iran, on the other hand, the new leadership appears to confirm greater moderation and a more positive attitude in the country's relations with the Western world. However, the strained relationship with the Afghan Taliban could open up a new and dangerous breach in the stability of the area.

Nor must the factor introduced by India's and Pakistan's nuclear initiatives be ignored. If they are seeking parity between themselves, as well as India's strategic equilibrium in respect of China, they must also be viewed through the prism of the Middle East scenario, where the need to conclude effective agreements aimed at setting up an area free of nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction is becoming increasingly urgent. The Israeli attitude is determinant in this connection, given that its alleged potential—whether real or a ploy to be used as an instrument of dissuasion—together with its defensive doctrine (backed by the US) of maintaining strategic military superiority over its neighbours, constitutes an element conducive to the proliferation of conventional and non-conventional weapons in the region. Thus Syria's policy of pursuing parity by means of an arms build-up, which it has now had to renounce because the material support afforded it by the ex-USSR has come to an end, was prompted by the probably justified belief that any negotiation with Israel without this backing would be unbalanced. The danger of non-conventional weapons falling into the hands of radical groups exacerbates the terrorist threat and the concern about the future.

Nevertheless, it can be said that although not much progress has been made in stabilising the Mediterranean, the situation has not deteriorated significantly and, for the time being, there are no signs of new armed conflicts between states. The security risks are mainly centred on the subsisting focal points of tension and on South-South relations, as well as on the domestic situation of some countries of the area, while there is no perception of serious and direct military threats to Europe.

It can be concluded that the Mediterranean, as a unitary space that encompasses the two shores, continues to require a framework for stabilisation that provides security in a comprehensive form, bearing in mind the political, economic and social factors necessary to address the dangers stemming from the interactive nature of all of them, and allowing for in-depth progress to be made in confidence-building and the gradual construction of co-operative security and joint development.

The Barcelona Process and the principles incorporated into its Declaration constitute an innovative framework whose revitalisation, as we

shall see, offers renewed hope in the long term. At the same time, the different Mediterranean dialogues opened by NATO, the OSCE, the WEU and other institutions such as the Council of Europe itself, offer parallel and supporting courses, each one consonant with its own identity and specific perspective, capable of complementing the others and of contributing its own experience. The Mediterranean is, moreover, in our immediate vicinity and constitutes one of the priorities for the construction of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) of the European Union, although until now this policy has not achieved the necessary consistency and determination. The Union's coastal countries, including Spain, have as a result of their historic vocation, their proximity to each other and their shared interests, an important promotional role to play, as occurred with the inception of the Barcelona Process.

The OSCE, for its part, in its operations in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Albania, and its work in Croatia, has demonstrated its ability to respond effectively to large-scale political challenges, while NATO has taken on an important role that has been instrumental in organising the operations aimed at containing the Balkan conflict and restoring peace.

The Luxembourg European Council (12-13 December, 1997) took decisions of unprecedented magnitude for the future of the European continent, launching the accession process of 11 candidates, among which were the Mediterranean countries of Bulgaria and Slovenia. This will foreseeably enlarge the scope of the Barcelona Process.

## **THE WESTERN MEDITERRANEAN AND THE MAGHREB**

As this area forms part of Spain's immediate surroundings, interest in its stability has been a constant of our policy there, as is the case with France and Italy. This has led to growing dialogue and collaboration with our North African neighbours, thereby originating the process that finally brought about the broader framework of the Barcelona Declaration.

Our historic polarisation in the Maghreb has lost its exclusiveness, although its importance has greatly increased; our global co-operation has also expanded to the eastern Mediterranean and the Balkans; likewise our political potential in the entire Mediterranean basin was undoubtedly heightened and its future prospects confirmed at the 1991 Madrid Conference.

Today, the Maghreb is collectively immersed in a process of rapid change that requires urgent political, economic and social adaptation. Thus a period has opened up in which hope goes hand in hand with the uncertainty attendant upon any transition. We are confident that the former will prevail and that the latter will eventually disappear, as long as both shores show themselves to be equal to the challenge.

## **THE ARAB MAGHREB UNION (AMU)**

The AMU has been called upon to address the aspirations of all the Maghreb peoples and translate their aspirations into reality. It has the necessary potential to make a very valuable contribution to the Euro-Mediterranean Association if, with the backing of its members, it is able to complete the integration of its southern dimension.

This scheme of regional integration that includes Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya and Mauritania has been paralysed for the time being, for the reasons indicated. Such paralysis is good neither for the Maghreb countries, nor for the European members, given the integrating potential that the organisation could bring to the Euro-Mediterranean Association, in which the South-South facet is essential. The integration of the southern economies is an inescapable imperative, wherefore it would appear desirable that it be carried out by the signatories of the Treaty of Marrakech, completed by the dynamics of the Association in which each one is individually connected to the EU.

The relations between Morocco and Algeria have been at a low point ever since 1994, following the terrorist attack in Marrakech and the suspicions of Algerian implication. Rabat imposed visa requirements for Algerian nationals, and Algiers immediately responded by closing the land frontiers with Morocco—a situation that remains unchanged today.

## **MOROCCO**

In the nineties Morocco embarked decisively on a new and promising phase in its history: it widened the scope of its institutions to enable an increasingly plural society to make its aspirations known, and to consolidate the political regime on broader and institutionalised foundations. A basic element of this process was the constitutional reform—passed in a referendum on 13 September 1996—introducing the two-



house system. The reform also established a decentralised state, with the region as the main administrative body. The Regions Act of April 1997 set up regional councils (each a kind of regional parliament with important powers, including financial powers among others) for the sixteen regions into which Morocco was divided; of these, three are located in the Territory of the Western Sahara. Another of the basic goals of the constitutional reform is the incorporation of the opposition into the work of government. The election to the House of Representatives of 14 November 1997 was won by the Socialist Union of People's Parties. By blocs, victory at the polls went to the Kutla, followed by the Wifaq and the Centre, albeit by a narrow margin. In the election for councillors of the upper house, on 5 December, the Centre won. However, the complexity of the electoral process and the lack of adequate political education continue to cause voter dispersion, wherefore the political scenario is significantly fragmented.

The King entrusted the leader of the UFSP, the former opposition leader and political exile, Abderraman Youssoufi, with forming a government. The result was a coalition government basically structured around the Kutla (the UFSP, Istiqlal, PPS and the parties close to this coalition, the FFD and the PSD), reinforced by two centre parties (RNI and MNP). At the first cabinet meeting, on 25 March 1998, the criteria were laid down for priority action by the government: the strengthening of the foundations of the rule of law and democratic practice, with greater attention to be paid to human rights; the taking of action guided by ethical parameters; the pursuit of public administration efficiency; and the adoption of a development policy based on job promotion, an increase in investments and the establishment of true social solidarity. A more nationalistic component was also perceived, mostly in connection with the Saharan issue.

The Budget Act, passed in August 1998, is an interim instrument, inspired by standards of austerity. Its forecasts are that the public deficit ceiling will be 3% of GDP; growth for 1998 is estimated at 6.8%, and 7% for 1999 (as long as there is a good harvest); and the goal for inflation is 2%. Although emphasis is placed in the aforementioned Act on the fact that the fight against unemployment and social inequality will receive privileged treatment, with an increase in allocations to the social ministries of 10 to 50%, the monetary orthodoxy of previous financial years has been maintained.

## **CEUTA AND MELILLA**

The celebration of the quincentenary of Melilla in 1997 saw an increase in the number of Moroccan public claims to the two Spanish self-governing cities. Different demonstrations took place which, however, were not official, and nor did they get much popular support. The moderation of King Hassan II tempered the reactions of the political parties considerably.

The statements made by the new Moroccan Government on Ceuta and Melilla could indicate a reactivation of the issue in the future. At the 53<sup>rd</sup> United Nations General Assembly, the Moroccan delegation brought up its usual arguments in favour of opening a joint process of reflection with Spain.

The well-known Spanish position of principle goes hand in hand with the idea that, within the framework of fundamental, positive and intense bilateral relations (complemented by the fact that the two Spanish self-governing cities of Ceuta and Melilla are joint parties to the Barcelona Process and other initiatives within the Mediterranean framework), these two cities should not be a reason for conflict between the two countries, but rather a factor for co-operation. There are many contacts between both Spanish cities and the neighbouring Moroccan towns that are conducive to their development.

## **ALGERIA**

The process of institutional building carried out by the country's authorities has been taking place in a climate of intolerable violence that is disturbing to international public opinion. It casts a shadow over the implementation of the political project that Spain and the EU support and that has crystallised, for the first time, in a parliament where Islamists share the space with lay members and representatives of the traditional Algerian political class. At the same time, the government of this country has striven to meet its commitments to the International Monetary Fund, by promoting the opening up of its economy and a liberalisation whose results justify a degree of optimism when it comes to envisaging the medium—and long-term future.

However, Algeria's long-drawn-out internal problem has continued to run its zig-zagging course, with no prospect of a solution achieved through domestic consensus in sight. Its roots are complex, and throughout the past years of crisis have been subject to many different and contradictory

interpretations.

In synthesis, it has a common background with the identity crisis that has affected a large part of the Arab world in the wake of the post-colonial age. Already in 1975 Anwar Abdel-el-Malek pointed out in his work on contemporary Arab thought that all the emancipation rhetoric, laboriously formulated in the wake of national independence, had been discredited. The consequent social breakdown spread to politics and many marginalised segments resorted to Islam as a means of channelling their grievances and restoring their vanished sense of community.

In the case of Algeria, it can be surmised that its scant historic structuring as a state in comparison with that of its two Maghreb neighbours, together with the legacy of the French occupation that concluded with its annexation as a department at the beginning of this century without thereby integrating the Muslim population at an equal level of citizenship, contributed to deepening this identity void. The unity created by the war of independence in support of the FLN (National Liberation Front) and its nationalistic political doctrine, which at the beginning was markedly lay in tone, eventually became diluted by the change in the international environment in which Algeria moved, as well as its inability to provide a structured and effective response to the challenge of development. A return to the religious perspective, in a society in which religion plays a prominent role, gradually came to dominate the political philosophy of large sectors of the population. However, this use of religion by political groups in their struggle for power has undermined its value. Indeed, since the mid-eighties, political power in Algeria has entered a phase of spiralling decomposition.

The Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), which was initially backed by the government as a means of debilitating other political groups, turned against it. The 1991 elections were won by the Islamists, but the military did not accept them and the process of democratic transition was thereby compromised and fundamentalism strengthened. This gave rise to a spiral of violence, in which two forms of authoritarianism confronted each other, incapable of introducing a democratic power-sharing arrangement.

A retrospective view induces us to think that the only real power that has existed in Algeria since its independence has been that of the military establishment, which in the current crisis has shown itself to be opposed to any compromise with the radical groups. The response to its policy of eradicating them has been one of increasingly spectacular actions by the

GIA (Islamic Armed Group). The negotiations between the military power and the FIS (an organisation with prestige in wide-ranging segments of the population) were aimed at doing away with the political justification of the GIA's actions. The GIA itself has become fragmented as a result of the internal dissension that has arisen since 1996. Its powerlessness to attack military installations or lay ambushes for the security forces, as in the past, has led it to focus its action against the civil population, in a campaign of terror.

It may be asked whether the Algerian situation has politically benefited the relative position of other countries in the area, on decreasing the potential for foreign action and leadership formerly held by the Algerian government. But even if this were true, the difficulty of controlling it in the short term is a matter of great concern, as is the danger that it might lead to more widespread destabilisation if an internal negotiated solution is not reached with the sectors that reject violence. At the same time, it prevents the functioning of sub-regional co-operation through the Arab Maghreb Union.

The degree of normality that returned to Algeria this year, after a bloody month of Ramadan, was again disturbed at the beginning of the summer by indiscriminate violence in urban areas. This shows that, despite the effectiveness of police action and offensives by the army in rural areas, the terrorist groups, albeit increasingly isolated and fragmented, still retain sufficient operational capability.

The new Algerian parliamentary institutions must show proof of their democratic disposition in the coming debates on subjects as important as the Family Code and the Information Code, the reform of which is demanded by a society in rapid process of change and which expects answers from institutions that, for the first time, it has had an opportunity to elect.

A new and significant step in the process of political and economic reform carried out by the Algerian government this year has been the decision by President Zeroual to shorten his term of office, call presidential elections for the beginning of 1999, and not present himself as a candidate. The government proposal to provide greater transparency, without excluding the presence of international observers, and to enter into dialogue with representatives of different political parties, is a positive sign, notwithstanding the initial dismay caused by the president's announcement.

The dialogue between Algeria and the EU was practically at a stands-

till until the summer, for several reasons—among them the fact that the Commission for Human Rights in Geneva was addressing the situation in Algeria—an issue that arouses very strong feelings. If, on the one hand, the search for a solution to the violence in Algeria must be based on dialogue with all the political parties that reject violence, on the other, care must be taken to avoid any measures that would discredit the Algerian authorities in their fight against terrorism. Algeria participates actively in the Barcelona Process, and is currently negotiating the Association Agreement with the European Union.

Now added to the effects of the lengthy domestic crisis, are circumstantial or external factors that complicate the economic situation. It appears that the Algerian economy, contrary to all expectations, grew by only 0.5% per cent in 1997 (or showed negative growth of up to—1 percent; the facts vary according to the source), while unemployment, according to official figures, continues at 28-29 percent. Agricultural output dropped by 24 per cent in 1997, which was attributed to the drought that affected the country, while industrial output in 1997 fell by 7.2 per cent, except in the gas and hydrocarbons sector, which recorded growth. Nevertheless, the downward trend in the petroleum prices, as in other producing states, means that the future situation may be affected, ultimately hampering the process of economic transition.

## **TUNISIA**

With the prospect ahead of presidential and legislative elections in 1999, there is nothing to indicate that they will bring about major changes or alarms in Tunisian political life. Formally, there is political pluralism, and the regime has undertaken constitutional reform to increase the number of opposition seats.

Economic and social rights are considered more important than political rights, in respect of which the regime's attitude leans very much towards a strategy of stability aimed at addressing the problem of Islamic fundamentalism. Therefore, the human rights situation in the country continues to be the main cause of friction with the EU. Tunisia's attitude is one of only wanting to touch on the general principles of human rights within the framework of the political dialogue under the Association Agreement with the EU—and not individual cases, which it considers to be internal affairs not subject to outside interference.

With an increasingly diversified economic structure and reasonably satisfactory macro-economic co-ordinates, Tunisia is an important trading partner for the EU in the Maghreb, and the greater part of this North African country's trade flows go to it. Moreover, Tunisia has a large middle class and the highest per capita income in North Africa, except for Libya. All this makes Tunisia a country with good expectations and very valuable political and economic stability within the context of the Maghreb. Tunisia, together with Morocco, is the only Maghreb country that until now has signed an Association Agreement with the EU (1995); this entered into force on 1 March 1998.

The consolidation of political pluralism and democratic values should enable its development to proceed with favourable prospects for the future.

The framework for Hispano-Tunisian relations is the Treaty of Friendship, Good Neighbourliness and Co-operation, signed in 1995 and secured with the strong anchorage forged by history, our current community of interests and a similar outlook towards the future.

The Tunisian Republic has set its course towards Euro-Mediterranean association with commendable determination that leaves no doubt about the position that it wishes to occupy in the international community of the 21st century.

## **LIBYA**

A global scheme for the Mediterranean region must count on the support and collaboration of all the coastal countries. In the long term the deficiencies of any integrating mechanism that does not include the Libyan component will become apparent. Its co-operation with the United Nations in favour of the resolution of the outstanding conflicts and the end of the international sanctions (which prevented Libya from participating in the Barcelona Process) would allow for Libya's rapid return to all the fora in which the fate of our region is decided.

Through Security Council Resolution 1192 of August 27, the United Nations accepted the proposal made at the time by the Arab League and Libya itself that the two suspects who perpetrated the bomb attack on the Pan-Am plane over Lockerbie should be handed over to a third country and judged in it by a Scottish court under Scottish rule of law.

The possibility of reaching an agreement over the holding of a trial of the Lockerbie bombing suspects in a third country amounts to a considerable change of course in the policy relative to this matter upheld until now both by Washington and London in recent years. It means a substantial relaxing of the demands (probably induced by the lack of results from this policy and the growing difficulties of maintaining the UNSC sanctions in the face of ever-growing opposition to them from the Arab and African countries, together with the greater flexibility shown by other Western capitals, within the bounds of full respect for UNSC decisions).

The Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Arab League (Cairo, 15 and 16 September) endorsed, less vigorously than expected, the Libyan demand for greater pressure to be exerted on the US and the United Kingdom. In any event, the Arab partners of the Barcelona Process have insistently repeated that Libya should be incorporated as soon as the international situation permits.

## **THE WESTERN SAHARA**

According to the United Nations Settlement Plan for the Western Sahara and the Houston Agreements (September 16, 1997), the voter-identification process was completed on 2 September last. 147,350 people were registered in the census, not counting applicants belonging to controversial tribes and several hundred people resident abroad. It is hoped that progress will be made in registering the latter, and that at the same time the applications of those belonging to non-controversial tribes will be processed. A compromise was reached in Houston: individuals belonging to controversial tribal groups (identified under the code numbers H41, H61 and J51/52) may come forward individually for identification even though neither of the two parties (Morocco and the Polisario Front) sponsors them, nor actively prevents them from presenting themselves to the MINURSO (United Nations Mission for the Referendum in the Western Sahara). Also to be borne in mind is the fact that an identified applicant does not automatically acquire voter status, but is interrogated by the competent Identification Commission in order to determine his eligibility to participate in the referendum.

The issue of the members of controversial tribes continues at a standstill. The Moroccan demand that the 65,000 members of these tribal groups be identified is interpreted by the Polisario, which is sceptical

about it, as a means of gaining time and perpetuating the status quo, since it would make it obligatory to conduct an exercise almost impossible to implement: that of splitting up the groups into hundreds of sub-fractions. The UN Secretary-General has expressed his concern about this matter in his latest reports to the Security Council, on account of the risk that it would entail of blocking the whole process if it is not resolved.

The conclusion of the voter-registration process will bring the most difficult moment for the parties nearer—that of undertaking the following stages of preparation of the referendum.

In the event that the difficulties surrounding the registration of controversial voters are overcome, the following stages will not prove simple either. The UNHCR is continuing with the preparatory work of repatriation of refugees in accordance with the Settlement Plan, although not without difficulties. The operation of repatriation, the duration of which was initially estimated as 15 months, could be prolonged for several additional months. Nor has the matter of settling the refugees once they have been repatriated been resolved. All this makes it probable that there will be subsequent delays in the deadlines planned for carrying out the referendum.

Insofar as the conflict in the Western Sahara is concerned, Spain has always maintained that it is a problem arising from decolonisation, which can only be solved definitively when the Saharan people are allowed to decide their destiny in a referendum on self-determination that is free, fair and subject to all due international guarantees. Spain upholds its position of total neutrality and unreserved backing for the work of the UN. This neutrality does not imply indifference, and therefore Spain remains willing to collaborate with the UN whenever requested to do so, as long as it has the agreement of both parties.

Different acts of collaboration have already been implemented (the sending of experts on an exclusively technical voter-identification mission last May, and the making of Las Palmas Military Hospital available to MINURSO members). Moreover, Spain has given \$4 million to the UNHCR as a contribution to repatriation work within the framework of the UN Settlement Plan.

In any case, the important thing is the complete implementation of the Settlement Plan, so that the referendum may finally be held under conditions of freedom, transparency and justice. The mediation of the UN secretary-general's personal envoy, James Baker, can only be meaningful if he is able to persuade the parties, with the support of the international com-



munity, to proceed with the application of the Settlement Plan and the Houston Agreements.

## GIBRALTAR

Notwithstanding Spain's reasonable proposals, the status of this conflict is one of virtual stagnation. The Spanish position is well known. Gibraltar's situation constitutes a colonial anachronism stemming from the dynastic wars at the beginning of the 18th century, to which we should put an end. Decolonisation can only be carried out, according to the Treaty of Utrecht and United Nations doctrine, by returning the territory to Spain. This is particularly relevant in view of the recent unilateral attempts to alter the current status of Gibraltar by amending its constitution, granted in 1969. Therefore Gibraltar is a destabilising element, not only for bilateral relations between the United Kingdom and Spain, but also within the EU itself. This is because of the continuous efforts by the Colony's local authorities to assume powers to which they are not entitled, under article 227,40 of the European Communities Treaty, thus attempting to become a quasi Member State. They also refuse to implement agreements concluded between the United Kingdom and Spain—for instance, concerning joint use of the airport.

In December 1997, Spain made a political proposal, within the Brussels Process, aimed at solving the dispute. The Gibraltarian local authorities rejected it outright. For London, however, it continues to be under review and a valid negotiating factor.

In his speech to the 53rd United Nations General Assembly, the Spanish Minister of Foreign Affairs recalled that the Organization's historic work of decolonisation cannot be considered complete while situations like that of Gibraltar still persist. Every year the General Assembly renews its ap-peals to Spain and the United Kingdom to continue their negotiations with a view to putting an end to Gibraltar's colonial status. The current negotiating process began with the 1984 so-called Brussels Joint Communiqué, in which the governments of Spain and the United Kingdom undertook to establish a negotiating process. During the 1997 Round of Negotiations, the Spanish side made a proposal that would enable Spain to recover sovereignty over Gibraltar, while maintaining the present advantages for its inhabitants, granting them a degree of political autonomy within the framework of the Spanish autonomous state, greater than that which they currently enjoy, and accepting—as an additional guarantee of

Spanish good faith—the maintaining of shared sovereignty by the United

Kingdom and Spain for a long interim period. This proposal should be able

to form the basis for an agreement that, once and for all, would settle this

painful dispute for Spain.

# THE MIDDLE EAST

## The Peace Process

At the 1991 Madrid Peace Conference, the principles which were to provide inspiration for the Peace Process were laid down. Among them were United Nations Security Resolutions 242 and 338, providing for Israeli withdrawal from the territories occupied during the Seven Days' War in 1967 and, in short, confirming the principle of «land for peace». Likewise, the architecture of the Peace Process was formulated, through the entering into of direct bilateral negotiations between Israel and each of the Arab States (Jordan, Syria and Lebanon) and between Israelis and Palestinians.

At the same time, a structure for multilateral negotiations was devised in order to address issues of regional interest in five working groups (security and disarmament, refugees, regional economic development, and water and the environment).

In this way the Israeli demand for bilateral channels was combined with international coverage. Although the central issues of the peace agreements had to be negotiated by the parties, the role of the joint sponsors and other international contributors, working in the multilateral track and acting as catalysts, was essential. It is fair to think that it would have been very difficult for the parties, on their own, to meet such a complex challenge, while sustaining its momentum. The philosophy of Madrid was based on a gradual approach that would allow for progress towards a final solution of the Palestinian problem and that, in the meantime, would promote confidence between the parties. The so-called «Oslo Agreements» (1993 Declaration of Principles and 1995 Interim Agreement) came into being in this way. They established a provisional phase, or one of self-government for the Palestinian Territories, during which the withdrawal of Israeli troops from these territories would take place and civil power would be transferred to the Palestinian Authority. According to the Agreement, this provisional phase would last for five years and the Final Statute would then be negotiated, covering such issues as the future of Jerusalem, the refugees, the settlements, and the borders.

The Middle-East Peace Process advanced rapidly during the first five years notwithstanding the intrinsic difficulties, thanks to the determination of many political leaders of the region, including Prime Minister Yitzak

Rabin, who paid with his life for his brave bid for peace.

Ever since the Likud Party Coalition came to power in May 1968, comprising nationalist and religious parties, the government led by the prime minister, Benyamin Netanyahu, has adopted a more rigid and intransigent policy that, until the recent Wye Memorandum, obstructed further progress in the Peace Process beyond the troop withdrawal from Hebron carried out in January of last year. The current Israeli prime minister insists on the absolute priority of guaranteeing Israel's security, on terms in which the territorial component takes precedence. At the same time his coalition rejects the possibility of a Palestinian state. Since last year, however, this option has not been ruled out by the Israeli Labour platform.

The EU has continued in 1998 to express its extreme concern about the lack of progress in the Middle-East Peace Process and the threat that this poses for peace and stability in the region. Through the efforts made by its Special Envoy for the Middle East, Spanish diplomat Miguel Angel Moratinos, as well as through its diplomatic relations with the involved and interested parties and its financial contribution, the EU has striven to support the relaunching of the process, by suggesting ideas and proposals. The contacts with the United States and the backing for its initiative, whose successive steps it has followed attentively, have been significant. Among other things, we should remember the London meeting in May and the visits to the Middle East by the Presidents of the Council and the Commission.

Parallel to the EU's political role, we should recall its essential economic and financial contribution to the Peace Process, as the main aid donor to the Palestinian people (approx. US\$1.437 billion over the past five years). This aid has an important political mission to perform in the case of the Palestinians, in the sense that it enables them to diminish their intrinsic inequality as a party vis-à-vis Israel, thereby giving them a stronger negotiating position.

The Cardiff European Council (15-16 June 1998) made a pressing call upon Israel to recognise the Palestinians' right to the exercise of free determination, without excluding the option of an independent state. At the same time it asked the Palestinians to reaffirm their commitment to Israel's legitimate right to live within secure and recognised borders. It also recalled the EU's opposition to Israeli settlements in the occupied territories and its commitment to co-operation in the matter of security, which must be total, constant and unreserved. It likewise expressed its concern

about the lack of progress in the Syrian and Lebanese tracks of the Peace Process, insisting on the need to reactivate them in order to achieve comprehensive peace based on the principle of land for peace and the pertinent Security Council resolutions. Although it welcomed Israeli acceptance of Security Council Resolution 425, it renewed its call for full and unconditional withdrawal of Israeli forces from southern Lebanon. Finally, it confirmed its intention to continue collaborating, through its Special Envoy, its diplomatic relations and its economic involvement, as well as through its relations of friendship with the parties concerned both within and without the region, with a view to restoring confidence and strengthening the Peace Process.

All eyes are now focused on the implementation of the Wye agreements, in the hope that progress will also be generated in other tracks of the process.

## **CYPRUS AND TURKEY**

The Cyprus dispute affects not only the European Union's relations with that country, but also the European Union's relations with Turkey, Greco-Turkish relations, and the stability of the Eastern Mediterranean. Therefore, Cyprus is frequently presented more as an object than as a subject in the disputes that polarise its surroundings. The historic and psychological factors that are involved, which at times are presented with passionate overtones that leave little margin for political rationale, merely accentuate the divergent profiles.

The European Union continues firmly committed to the goal of achieving a political and peaceful settlement of the Cyprus issue, on the basis of the pertinent UN Security Council resolutions, in order that an end may be put to the division of the island. The EU's position is that a dual-community and dual-zone federation of two politically equal bodies must be achieved. The accession of Cyprus is envisaged from this perspective of civil peace and reconciliation, as pointed out by the Luxembourg European Council. However, when the accession negotiations started in March 1998, the EU was forced to note regretfully that it had not been possible to draw closer to a mutually-acceptable solution. The Turko-Cypriot community responded negatively to the Cypriot Government's invitation to send representatives to the negotiations, although the offer remains open. At the same time, concern continues about the excessive number of wea-

pons in Cyprus, which contributes to raising the tension in the region. As a result, efforts should be redoubled to ensure that all parties concerned understand and appreciate the benefits that would be obtained if the unified island were to accede to the European Union. In the same way, there is no doubt that in order to further a solution to the Cypriot dispute, it is necessary to continue to stimulate relations between the European Union and Turkey.

With regard to Turkey, many people expect it to decide between its European or Asian, lay or Islamic, and Eastern or Western options. However, its specific nature as a bridge between different cultures must be valued, since this constitutes one of its major sources of wealth in all spheres. Likewise, its options aimed at consolidating its democratic system (an essential condition for its progressive integration into Europe, of which it is an ally within NATO) must be respected and encouraged. Its dual European and Asian nature gives it a strategic value difficult to equal. Turkey can play the part of a meeting place between Europe and the Near East and the Caucasus and Central Asia, as well as a central point radiating stability and prosperity—at a time when there is significant international interest in the Caspian oil resources.

The EU has reiterated its marked interest in the political, economic and social stability of Turkey, which it considers to be a stabilising factor in the entire area. The Luxembourg European Council (14, December 1997) confirmed Turkey's eligibility to become a member of the Union, based on the same criteria as those applied to other candidates, and drawing up a strategy to this end. The disappointment shown by Ankara is partly understandable. It led to the announcement by Prime Minister Yilmaz that, «there will be no more political dialogue between Turkey and the European Union», while at the same time adding that the process of integration of the north of Cyprus into Turkey would move ahead, in parallel with the negotiations on the accession of the Republic of Cyprus to the Union.

In March 1998, the Commission formulated different proposals to promote the development of relations on a solid and evolutionary basis. Notwithstanding the differences that arose concerning the future accession and the fact that Ankara declined to participate in the London Conference, which all the candidates had been invited to attend, there is a clear will to improve bilateral relations to the mutual benefit of both parties, although this also requires active co-operation by Ankara and a positive attitude of rapprochement over the Cyprus issue. The hope remains that Turkey will

agree to attend the second Conference, which is due to take place under the current presidency of Austria, and that it will reactivate its dialogue with the EU.

## THE BALKANS

### EX-YUGOSLAVIA

If, on the one hand, the process of separation and independence of Croatia, Serbia and Slovenia is gradually being consolidated, peace in Bosnia-Herzegovina is progressing slowly, and even with worrying uncertainties, within the framework of the Dayton Agreements. The results of last September's elections showed a strengthening of the ultra-nationalist political parties led by Radovan Karadzic. However, the re-election of Alija Izetbegovic as Bosnian representative in the collegiate presidency, which opens up a possibility of continuity in the implementation of the Dayton agreements, and the election of the moderate Zivko Radisic as Serbo-Bosnian representative in this presidency, together with the absence of Momcilo Krajisnik, are positive developments.

The consolidation of peace in the former Yugoslavia, including its institutional development, reconstruction and the return of the refugees, has constituted one of the EU's priorities over the past year. It was materialised in the form of assistance in an amount of 250 million ECUs. The EU's role as the primary contributor to international assistance was ratified at the fourth Conference of Donors to Bosnia and Herzegovina (Brussels, 7-8 May 1998). Humanitarian assistance has received special attention. However, despite some improvements, the events in the region—and especially the Kosovo crisis—could lead to more serious challenges.

In general terms, the EU's relations with the countries of the region (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Albania) have continued along the guidelines of the Conclusions of the April 1997 Council, ratified on 28 April 1998. At the end of this year a decision will be taken about the continuation in 1999 of the trade regime, bearing in mind compliance with the established political terms. Relations with the FRY have been dominated by the development of the Kosovo crisis and the successive attempts to persuade President Milosevic to put an end to the indiscriminate use of violence, as well as similar calls upon the Kosovo Albanian leadership. In

June 1998, the Cardiff European Council ordered President Milosevic to terminate the operations of the security forces against the civilian population and to withdraw the security forces used for repression; to facilitate international supervision in Kosovo, and the return of the refugees, as well as free access by humanitarian organisations; and to advance in the political dialogue with the Kosovo Albanian leadership. Otherwise, he was warned, the international community would have to opt for much tougher action.

At the same time, a number of complementary measures were adopted (a weapons and materiel embargo, the refusal to grant visas, the freezing of export credits and a prohibition against new investment, as well as the prohibiting of flights between the FRY and the EU). The EU is opposed to independence for Kosovo, but is in favour of a special status, with wide-ranging autonomy, within the FRY. As for Croatia, the EU's position continues to be based on the Dayton/Paris Peace Agreement, and with regard to Bosnia Herzegovina, on the objectives established at the Bonn Peace Implementation Council (December 1997).

## **ALBANIA**

With regard to Albania, the EU has reactivated its political dialogue with Tirana and has continued to provide aid for the purpose of overcoming last year's political, economic and financial crisis.

## **MALTA**

Following the suspension by Malta of its application for accession to the EU in 1996, which prevented its probable inclusion in the package of priority candidacies adopted at Luxembourg, a Partnership Council was held in April 1998 at which both parties agreed to continue the future development of their relations (Joint Declaration on Political Dialogue). There was a new government following the Malta general election, which once again included the submitting of an application for accession among its goals.

## **THE SECURITY OF EUROPE AND THE STABILITY AND SECURITY OF THE MEDITERRANEAN**



With regard to the potential for conflict in the Mediterranean, analysts coincide in the fact that, in the same way as in other parts of the world, a significant change of direction has taken place in this new era that has succeeded the cold war and bipolarity. The danger of armed conflict between states has also declined in the Middle East since the Camp David Agreements in 1979 and the Peace Treaty between Israel and Egypt, as well as the most recent treaty with Jordan and the agreements entered into with the Palestinians. However, the risk remains comparatively high, given the block-ing of the Peace Process. Likewise, there is increased danger of domestic conflicts which almost always have more or less far-ranging international repercussions. This constitutes a complex challenge to security.

In societies in transition, such as those on the southern shore of the Mediterranean, the old sources of conflict, such as the cultural, ethnic or religious antagonisms, are enhanced by new factors such as the lack of proper government, population problems, the scarcity or improper use of natural resources, environmental degradation, and weapons proliferation. The remedies to these problems are as complex as their causes. They involve the need for a continued effort that combines a variety of instruments. This is a task that requires the participation of international organisations, as well as multilateral and bilateral co-operation between states. The preventive dimension, directed at defusing tension, stopping the immediate violence and implementing preventive policies that address the underlying causes of conflict (peace building), is a key issue. Once they have erupted, conflicts are much more difficult to resolve.

Apart from intensified dialogue and classic security methods, the long-term building of stability and security requires elements such as co-operation, trade, backing for democratisation, good governance, and the strengthening of civil society. The diversity of instruments underlines the need for coherent and global approaches that integrate these different elements in a comprehensive and long-term perspective.

Short-term conflict prevention can include measures ranging from mediation/negotiation to diplomatic or economic pressure—supported, if need be, by the willingness to resort to military means (i.e., the strategy applied in ex-Yugoslavia). At the same time, prevention and the capability to carry out actions at short notice implies adequate early warning. That involves the study of long-term trends and underlying sources of violence, as well as the short-term monitoring of events likely to unleash it.

Deriving from its responsibility as one of the main actors in ensuring international stability (for obvious reasons, including that of its proximity) the European Union is called upon to play an active role in the Mediterranean, by helping to prevent or manage crises. This must be done in close contact with other countries of the region, with the UN, with other competent international or regional organisations that have a Mediterranean dimension or have established a dialogue in the area (the Council of Europe, the OSCE, the WEU and NATO), but also the Arab League and the AMU in the Maghreb. Close co-ordination with the United States, as laid down in the Trans-Atlantic Action Plan, is likewise essential.

To summarise, it can be said that the greatest difficulty for the countries on both sides of the Mediterranean is how to assure a peaceful and negotiated settlement of their differences, which is based on co-operation and the need to address a common destiny at a time of transition that, although to a different extent and in different ways, affects them individually a states as well as regionally and sub-regionally.

Interest in security and co-operation in the Mediterranean has developed considerably in the past few years, giving rise to different Western-European initiatives. All of them strive to find the means of making a specific contribution to the stability of the neighbouring regions.

This must consist of a gradual rapprochement that takes into account the sensitivities of the countries on the southern shore. They are suspicious of what could turn out to be an attempt by Europe to project its own schemes in this area, and would like such initiatives to lead to true dialogue, aimed at building together a system of stability and security in the region. At the same time, their interests and commitments in the context of other regional institutions to which some of them belong, such as the Arab League or the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), would have to be taken into account.

The overall perspective from which the countries of the southern shore view the stability and security of the area must be appreciated and understood. For many of them, as shown in their positions within the framework of the different Mediterranean dialogues now under way, socio-economic, cultural and environmental factors, for example, constitute harsh realities that must be addressed. They also endanger their internal security and sub-regional relations, and constitute risks which are as great, if not greater, in the immediate term than the traditional risks. They insistently ask not only

that Europe bear this duly in mind in such dialogues and in general co-operation with them, but also that it do so within its own European security scheme.

## **THE BARCELONA PROCESS AS AN INNOVATIVE INITIATIVE FOR SETTING UP AN AREA OF STABILITY AND SHARED PROSPERITY IN THE MEDITERRANEAN**

In the *1997-98 Strategic Panorama* produced by this Institute, a more detailed analysis was made of the Euro-Mediterranean Process that led to the Conference and Declaration of Barcelona of 27 November 1995. Taking that analysis as the point of departure, the time has come, in this new edition, to evaluate it together with the prospects of its immediate developments.

By way of synthesis, and as a reminder, it must be pointed out that the European and Mediterranean countries of the EU, among which Spain cannot be discounted, played a key role of promotion. This was the consequence of the maturing, since the seventies and eighties, and in conjunction with the incipient European political co-operation (now the European Security and Co-operation Policy—better known as the CFSP-PESC), of the need for a comprehensive and multilateral relationship that would complete the traditional framework of bilateral relations between the EU countries and its associates of the South. Its window of political opportunity arrived with the profound changes in world policy and the European scenario which prevailed in the first half of this decade, followed by the Kuwaiti crisis and the advances in the Middle-East Peace Process (MEPP) following the 1991 Madrid Conference and the Oslo Agreements between Israelis and Palestinians. The goal was to promote peace and stability in the Mediterranean, in the wake of the aforementioned geopolitical changes and the emerging new challenges, through an innovative partnership capable of contributing decisively to resolving the many and complex regional issues. Its rationale lay in the fact that the political, economic and social co-operation leading to development, modernisation and the creation of an area of shared prosperity, would constitute the building blocks of stability and would bring peace to the area.

Based on this philosophy, Barcelona was conceived in relation to the Middle East as a *post pacem* process, at a time when the MEPP appeared to be channelled in the right direction, with a solution just around the corner. The purpose of Barcelona was that of helping, through the creation

of positive synergy, to settle the conflicts and tensions in the regions, but it was not an attempt to replace the already-existing processes. At the same time, it was assumed that the sheer magnitude of the Barcelona Process and its importance for all its members would in some way place it above the parties.

The negative effects on the Barcelona Process of the stagnation in the Middle East Peace Process became clearly visible, especially in the political chapter of Barcelona, but also in respect of other aspects, such as the possibility of carrying out sub-regional co-operation. The reasoning behind the position of Barcelona's Arab members was that their agreement to participate in it with Israel was the result of the progress achieved in the MEPP and that the co-operation which it brought in its train constituted a compensation. When the MEPP came to a standstill, it was not fair that Israel should receive that benefit. This same reasoning was applied to the MEPP's multilateral tracks, such as the MENA Economic Conference.

The second Euro-Med Ministerial Conference in Malta (1997) was for this reason, as well as the mistaken decision to use it to relaunch the MEPP, a chilly occasion, but notwithstanding its difficulties, it provided an opportunity for reflection. An awareness began to develop on both sides of the Mediterranean of the dangers inherent in converting the Barcelona Process into a permanent hostage of the MEPP. Without ignoring the inevitable connection, its comprehensiveness and range should place it on another plane, in order to enable the shared principles and goals formulated in the Declaration and the Working Programme to be implemented. The *ad hoc* Ministerial Conference of Palermo, held in June 1998 and entrusted with evaluating the course of the Process, showed a clear and shared political will to maintain its progress and to further its subsequent development. Common, comprehensive and long-term interests gave the process a basis of renewed strength.

Barcelona's *raison d'être* combines a wide range of elements incorporated into its three Chapters and its Working Programme. These are interdependent dimensions that must be mutually reinforced. Together, they must afford greater confidence, a gradual convergence, and the foundations on which to gradually build—among all its members—a specific Euro-Mediterranean system of stability and multilateral or collective security that is able to benefit from other previous positive experiences, such as those deriving from the European process and from a new concept for the inter-regional relationship.

In this sense, the Association Agreements between the EU and the Southern countries, which Barcelona sets out to complement by means of multilateral co-operation, constitute a powerful instrument for promoting such convergence.

There are still major difficulties and uncertainties, and a long road still lies ahead, but it can be said that, for its members, the Barcelona Process is the best option available. During decades of instability in the region, nothing similar has been possible or was attempted.

The goal is not only to promote a comprehensive North-South relationship, the immediate ambitious intention of which is to set up a free trade area by the year 2010, constituting a key instrument in creating a Euro-Mediterranean area of shared prosperity, albeit not its ultimate objective. Also envisaged is a sub-regional partnership, the need for which becomes more or less acute according to the existing asymmetry between it and Europe, as well as its evolution and new realities. One of them is awareness of the essential indivisibility of the political processes: security and socio-economic development, both national and international.

In order to meet this challenge, the basic ideas incorporated into the Barcelona Declaration require:

- a sufficient degree of consensus on the universalisation and consolidation of democratic values;
- a new global concept of security in the region based on peaceful relations, co-operation and a system of reciprocal guarantees and controls;
- a social policy oriented towards liberalisation and tolerance of other people's values, together with the search for a common denominator;
- the reduction of the existing asymmetry between the levels of integration and socio-economic development of the North-South and South-South axes;
- a positive synergy and convergence between the processes existing in the area, while working towards the attainment of greater co-operation and the integration of policies in the different fields.

The concept of stability invoked at Barcelona has a dynamic rather than a static sense, associated to the guidelines incorporated into it. Among them, it should be recalled, are: mutual respect and the obligations deriving from international law and the regional instruments to which the members are a party; sovereign equality, territorial integrity and non-inter-

vention in internal affairs; people's equality of rights, including the right to self-determination; the rule of law and the essential democratic principles as well as the fundamental political and civil freedoms, which cannot be dissociated from a more balanced model of development for the region; diversity, pluralism and tolerance; and the peaceful settlement of disputes.

From this perspective, Chapter I of the Barcelona Declaration incorporates major goals and the means for enhancing the political dialogue and achieving peace and stability. However, a common strategic language in the region is still lacking, wherefore a joint conceptual basis needs to be developed to deal with the main elements.

The plan for/objective of a security and stability charter must be conceived as a flexible framework, based on a shared perception of the principles and aims agreed at Barcelona. This must constitute a voluntary political instrument of an evolutionary nature that, without carrying with it any legal obligation, implies a moral commitment destined to develop such principles, while providing the appropriate structure for the progressive construction of the partnership in this sphere.

The task is not easy for several reasons, ranging from conceptual plurality to the political situations or conflicts still persisting in the region, whose solution depends on reconciliation.

Another obstacle has historic, psychological, socio-economic and cultural roots that require the gradual building up of the partnership, in the search for a confluence of perceptions about the main risks for stability and the creation of common security, while bearing in mind the diversity of traditions and values that make up the respective identity of each country. Among the aforementioned risks are: terrorism, organised crime, political and social violence, economic problems, cultural conflicts (including religious issues), and migratory tensions. Some cases will require waiting until the political conditions prevail that will make convergence possible. It will also be necessary to make the commitments of the member countries of Barcelona compatible with their membership in different regional organisations with influence in this sphere. Finally, greater transparency, information exchange and confidence building are necessary, given that a suspicion sometimes persists in the South that Europe is trying to plan and impose its own security schemes, rather than, together with them, evolve a new scheme, adapted to the specific circumstances and needs of the Euro-Mediterranean region.

Only from this participatory and collective perspective, which provides a multilateral framework, will it be possible to conceive the future of the Mediterranean with any degree of optimism, in the hope, of course, that it will be peaceful and harmonious. Only through it will it be possible to predict with a certain amount of confidence the necessary convergence of the different ideological systems, attenuate insofar as possible the major socio-economic disparities, temper the excesses of exalted nationalisms and their aftermaths and, in short, face up to the multiple sources of conflict that endanger the peace, stability and prosperity of the whole region.

After the critical moment represented by the Second Euro-Med Ministerial Conference (Malta, April 1997), the Barcelona Process was revitalised at the *ad hoc* Ministerial Conference at Palermo last June that, according to all the European and Arab member countries, reaffirmed the spirit of Barcelona and gave fresh impetus to the Partnership.

It was possible at Palermo to focus the concepts of security and stability from an overall standpoint, including in them the ideas of economic and social stability. Moreover the complementarity of the Barcelona Process and the MEPP was clarified once more, in the sense that they would be considered parallel but interactive, with the former exerting a positive influence but without holding the latter hostage.

It was also possible to take specific decisions that were unanimously considered encouraging (e.g., dialogues on migration and terrorism, progress in the work on drawing up a Charter for Peace and Stability, approval of the Spanish idea for a Conference on Regional Co-operation, among other subjects), both by the partners of the South and by the European countries most involved and interested in the effective development of the Euro-Mediterranean Association.

With regard to the immediate prospects, the third Euro-Med Ministerial Conference is due to be held in April 1999 in Stuttgart. It is also very important because it will coincide with the renewal of the MEDA budgets which, according to the priorities laid down to date, must strengthen the overall concept of security and stability, thereafter developing the substantive contents of the Euro-Med Association.

Added to the confirmation and consolidation of the positive general climate emanating from the *ad hoc* Palermo Conference, which was directed at stimulating the greater, balanced and interactive development of the three Chapters of the Barcelona Process, is a renewed spi-

rit of participation and less distrust on the part of the Partners. At the same time there is a greater willingness to enter into true dialogue, as well as sensitivity on the part of Europe concerning the issues brought up by them. A more flexible and pragmatic Arab attitude can be appreciated: without renouncing the connection of the Barcelona Process with the MEPP, nor the upholding of their position in this respect, they are anxious to preserve all the common prospects and interests deriving from the Barcelona Process.

## **THE MEDITERRANEAN FORUM**

A precursor on a minor scale of the Barcelona process, the Mediterranean Forum groups 11 countries (Spain, Italy, France, Greece, Portugal, Malta, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt and Turkey). The Ravello Ministerial Session (1996), followed by that of Algiers (1997), confirmed the importance of preserving it as an informal and flexible forum and a laboratory for Mediterranean ideas, since then oriented towards a more substantive contribution to the Barcelona Euro-Mediterranean Process without undergoing dilution of its specific nature. Spain held the presidency of the Forum from the time of the Algiers meeting until the Palma de Mallorca Ministerial Session (April 20-21, 1998). During that period important work was achieved within these general guidelines. This helped to transfer initiatives such as the start of dialogues on terrorism, migration and the movement of people, as well as conceptual contributions to the tasks concerning security, stability and different areas of co-operation in the economic and socio-cultural areas, to the framework of Barcelona. That contribution, ultimately reflected in the Palma de Mallorca Conclusions, was incorporated into the aforementioned *ad hoc* Euro-Med Ministerial Meeting of Palermo, and continues on the agenda, under the current Maltese presidency of the Forum, with a view to the third Euro-Med Ministerial Conference at Stuttgart.

## **THE OTHER «MEDITERRANEAN DIALOGUES»**

Most of the members of the European Union are at the same time members of NATO and, together with the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe, the Council of Europe and the Western European Union, they participate in the Mediterranean dialogue to a greater or lesser extent. In the South, the institutions to which the coastal countries



belong cannot be overlooked—especially the Arab League and the Arab Maghreb Union, although the latter has sunk into a state of lethargy, for well-known political reasons. Finally, in the economic field, within the specific framework of the Middle-East Peace Process, there is the Economic Conference for the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). Nor, in the field of regional security, can the connections with weapons control and disarmament agreements be forgotten. These are: the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), the Chemical Weapons Treaty (CWT), the Biological Weapons Treaty (BWT), and the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (NTBT).

This poses the question of what the contribution of these and other bodies or international organisations (e.g., UNESCO and the Inter-Parliamentary Union) will be to the Mediterranean dialogue and what their connection will be with the Barcelona Process, bearing in mind the different features and substance of these bodies.

From the standpoint of the European Union, it is the latter which, on account of its global nature, must co-ordinate the efforts of the Mediterranean dialogue. However, all contributions are useful, as long as the principles of complementarity and coherence are observed regarding initiatives that are sometimes similar in content but have different components and institutional commitments. In other words, they must support each other mutually, but refrain from interfering.

In this sense, Spain itself has provided strong inspiration to the Mediterranean dialogue of the New NATO, from the time of the alliance's Strategic Concept, adopted at the 1991 Rome Summit, and the 1994 Brussels Declaration, to the agreement on this matter adopted at the Sintra Ministerial Council and then endorsed at the Madrid Summit. The level of this dialogue was raised with the setting up of the Mediterranean Co-operation Group. Its first contacts with the six countries (Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia, Jordan, Israel and Mauritania) which currently participate in the 16+1 dialogue have been encouraging.

However, it is necessary to bear in mind the sensitivities that, for different reasons, persist in the Arab countries regarding the Mediterranean initiatives by the Western-European security organisations. In this context, and with a view to diminishing such misgivings, Europe has undertaken the task of explaining aspects such as EUROFOR, EUROMARFOR and the Hispano-Italian amphibian force set up at the bilateral summit of 10 September 1997.