

## Foreword

Firstly, I would like to congratulate the authors for selecting security and the environment as the main themes for this book, and for focusing on the Mediterranean as the geopolitical space for examining the interrelations between these two important aspects of development and stability. The challenges facing the Mediterranean are tremendous, particularly those highlighted in this book, and raising awareness of them is an essential step to manage them.

Throughout history, the Arab world and the Mediterranean region have interacted on many fronts. The political, economical, cultural, and environmental challenges seen by one have affected the other. The cooperation between the two, however, has been adversely affected in several areas as a result of the Arab-Israeli conflict, and until this conflict is resolved progress in the region will undoubtedly be hindered.

Dealing with environment challenges through regional cooperation cannot be achieved under conditions of military occupation. In fact, as this volume shows, conflict within the region has generated additional sources for environment degradation in the Eastern Mediterranean, especially in Palestine. In view of this we believe that the role of the European Union in the Middle East is crucial for the establishment of a regional environment security.

On its part, the League of Arab States has developed a significant interest in environmental issues in the Arab world and the Mediterranean region, mainly through the work of the Council of Arab Ministers responsible for the environment (CAMRE) and the environmental related activities of various Arab specialised agencies.

The League has also made significant contributions to the ongoing debate on regional security in the Middle East. I believe that security in the region can only be achieved through the honest and mutual implementation of the Arab Peace Initiative. This had already been unanimously adopted during the Beirut summit in March 2002, and supported universally. It called for the withdrawal of the Israeli occupying forces, the establishment of a Palestinian State, and a fair settlement of the question of refugees, as well as the end of the Arab-Israeli conflict and the establishment of relations of peace.

If this initiative were to be accepted and implemented, the Arab world would engage in an immediate peace agreement with Israel, and would strive to provide security for all the states in the region.

The League of Arab States has always attached great importance to its relation with Europe. The promotion of Arab-European relations constitutes a permanent item on the agenda of the Arab League Ministerial Council. In its ongoing efforts of reform, the League of Arab States is keen to promote the Euro-Arab Dialogue on a new basis. The objective of the dialogue is to formulate the elements of a new multi-dimensional

strategic understanding between the Arab world and Europe. It also calls upon both sides to begin thinking about the prospects of initiating a Euro-Arab partnership for sustainable development to be coordinated by the European Union and the League of Arab States. The rich experience of the European Union institutionalised relation with the regional organisations in Asia and Latin America can help in building the framework for such a partnership. In all cases, the League of Arab States will spare no effort in building bridges of collaboration and cooperation with our European partners for the mutual benefit of all.

Finally, I wish to thank the editors of the book for initiating such an important research project. This book will certainly play a vital role in giving politicians and researchers ideas on how to deal with the risks of environmental hazards and conflicts, and on ways in which regional collaboration can help abolish them.

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