

Introduction

The Mediterranean is an original and unique eco-region because of its geographical and historical characteristics, its natural and cultural heritage and the feeling shared by its peoples of belonging to the 'Mediterranean world'. It cannot be simply defined. Fernand Braudel described it as '...a thousand things at the same time. Not just a landscape, but countless landscapes. Not just a sea, but a string of seas. Not just a civilisation, but many civilisations... The Mediterranean is an age-old crossroads. For thousands of years, everything has converged on this sea, disturbing and enriching its history...'

At the crossroads of three continents, the Mediterranean is also a north-south fracture zone, an arena for multiple international exchanges of strategic importance. Because of its special characteristics – a pattern of development highly conditioned by the natural environment, a region that brings together countries at different levels of economic and social development that share a joint heritage – it is a perfect illustration of the global problems of sustainable development. Will the region be able to show the way to a pattern of development that brings people together, which is more balanced and respectful of a heritage to be passed on to future generations? Or will it fall into an inequitable and short-term pattern that squanders the resources it has inherited? It all depends on whether it is destined to become a model for the regional regulation of globalization or to reinforce global instability.

The *Blue Plan*¹ in 1989 already highlighted the risks of a growing divide between the north and the south of the Basin and of continuing and sometimes irreversible environmental degradation. It pointed the way to a more equitable pattern of development, one more respectful of the environment, which would integrate development with the environment, and strengthen the institutional capabilities of states and cooperation between north and south and between southern countries. It already contained the principles of sustainable development, a concept that subsequently emerged as the search for a developmental mode that tries 'to meet present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'. Today, has this long-term vision been realized? Have we followed the paths it mapped out?

This report constitutes an indispensable tool for each and every coastal country, the European Union and all

those trying to build a Euro-Mediterranean zone of stability and shared prosperity.² It presents a new analysis of the dynamics at work in the Mediterranean area, linked as far as possible with the social dimension. The approach highlights the relationships between development and the environment and focuses on the strategic priorities for the region. Six issues are analysed: water, energy, transport, urban areas, agriculture and rural areas, and coastal areas. All are subject to public policies and social practices that call for major changes if we want to maintain our vast natural capital, reduce risks and disparities, and get a genuine economic development process under way.

The scarcity and irregularity of *water* resources and the wide range of *energy* resources in the region require particular attention if the needs of a growing population and economy are to be met while preserving resources and avoiding crises.

The *transport* sector, which is inseparable from energy issues, urban sprawl and the spatial distribution of activities, is growing more rapidly than gross domestic product. How can this demand for mobility, which is being increased by economic liberalization and changing lifestyles, be met while minimizing the expected growth of environmental and social impacts?

By 2025, three of every four Mediterranean inhabitants will live in *urban areas*. Lifestyles and consumption patterns change rapidly with increasing urbanization, and urban sprawl and car use become ubiquitous. With shortages of space and financial, human and natural resources in cities, will we find ways and means of avoiding major impacts on the environment and human health?

The very future of *rural areas* is intimately tied to that of cities. These areas, which often suffer from human and economic abandonment, are highly dependent on appropriate management and development to ensure the conservation of natural resources (water, soil and biodiversity) and landscapes, the reduction of some risks (floods and fires) and territorial disparities. In some countries agriculture, vulnerable to the shock of globalization, plays a major role. Will we be able to reinvigorate these areas and avoid their irreversible degradation?

Finally, *coastal areas*, the interface between land and sea, a unique natural and cultural space, are the fundamental and symbolic issue of the Mediterranean's future.

They are full of potential for economic development, mainly for tourism, but also subject to every kind of pressure. Will we discover how to enhance them sustainably and succeed, better than in the recent past, in achieving the necessary reconciliation between development and the environment?

To tackle these six issues, the report is structured as follows:

- Part 1 defines the prospective framework of how the Mediterranean area may evolve between now and 2025, by building a 'baseline scenario', which extrapolates the strong current trends while taking into account the major determinants of the future: climate, population, geo-political and economic factors, and regional and national governance.
- Part 2 analyses, for each of the six key issues, the possible environmental and social impacts of the baseline scenario up to 2025, some responses underway in the Mediterranean countries, and paths to alternative scenarios.

- Part 3 summarizes the main findings of the analyses, highlights the overall impacts and risks of ongoing trends up to 2025, and suggests alternative directions for shifting policies and actions towards more sustainable development.

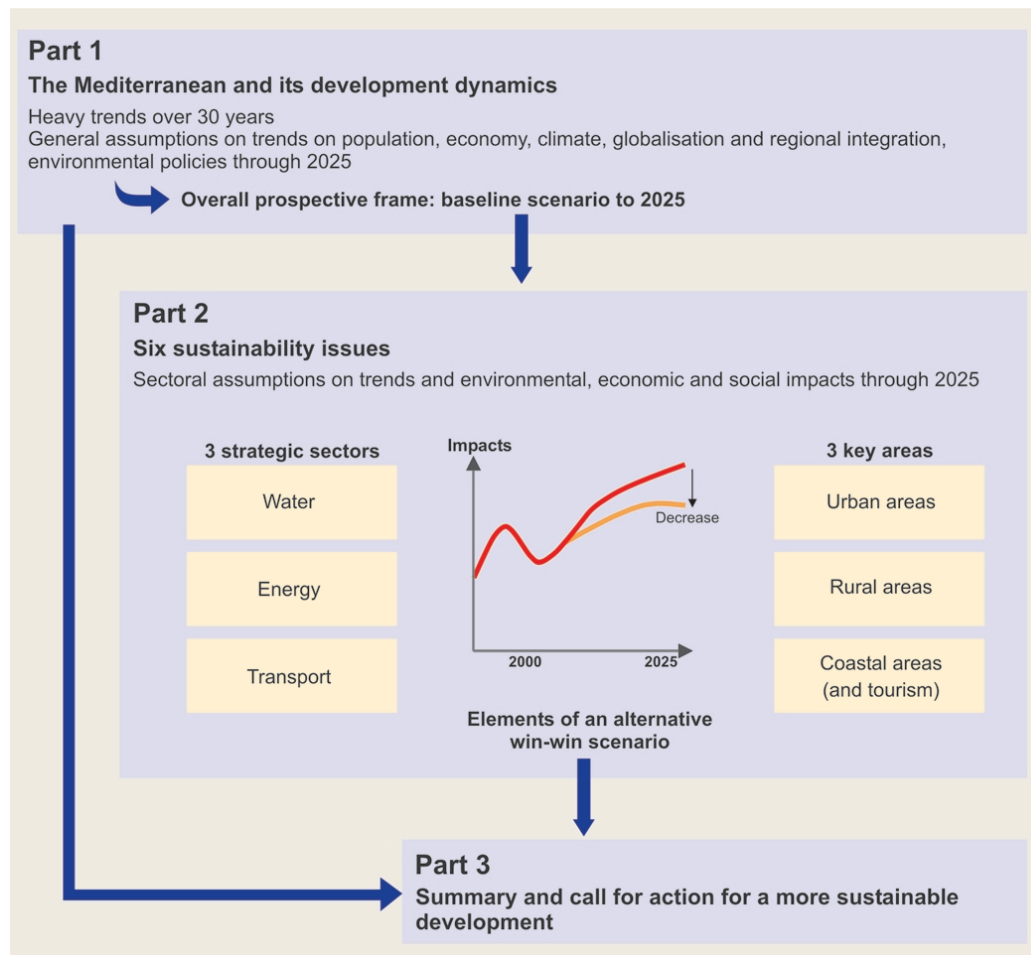
The overall approach is firmly action-oriented. The magnitude of the possible changes is of more interest than the accuracy of the projections. The challenge is to enhance the Mediterranean assets and find a better balance between the improvement of living standards and increased demand for motorized transport, water, energy and land. Although the future is not predictable, the report shows that progress should be possible through approaches that have already proved their worth in the Mediterranean.

The great diversity of the region and its multiple interactions with other regions lead to define the Mediterranean area in different ways, depending on the theme of each chapter. The political reference point remains the countries bordering the Mediterranean that

have signed the Barcelona Convention, but, as far as possible, the characteristics of the eco-region will be analysed on scales closer to the bio-climatic region and the coasts – coastal regions, catchment areas, agro-climatic region and coastal settlements.

The time horizon for analysing the past will also vary according to the issues tackled. Changes that have occurred over the past 20 years will be described and related to the long-term trends. Better understanding of what is happening may, however, be gained from looking further back in time. The development of international tourism, for example, has occurred over more than two centuries: starting in Italy towards the end of the 18th century; developing on the French Riviera in the early years of the 19th century; and

Figure 0 Structure of the report



reaching a huge scale on the Spanish, Greek and Croatian coasts in the 1960s. Regions where tourism is in full growth (Turkey, Tunisia, Malta, Cyprus and Egypt) or just emerging (Syria, Libya, Algeria and Albania) could profit from the lessons learned from this long history in order to avoid some of the past mistakes of other Mediterranean regions or benefit from the positive experiences.

The time horizon for exploring the future is 2025. This falls between the long time scales of global population and climate change and the shorter time scales of changes in consumption, production and distribution patterns. It takes a century to grow a forest, dozens of years to eliminate the commonest forms of soil or water pollution, but only a few years to destroy a landscape.

Exploring this future, which is not very far away, can point to paths that can be taken without delay, for the benefit of the Mediterranean of today and tomorrow. The imagination shown by the Mediterranean peoples at all stages of their history proves that such 'changes of scenario' are far from impossible.

Notes

- 1 Grenon, M. and Batisse, M. (eds) (1989) *Futures of the Mediterranean Basin. The Blue Plan*, Oxford University Press (shortened to *Blue Plan 89* for the rest of this book), also published in French by Economica, in Arabic by Edifra, in Spanish by the Spanish Ministry of Public Works, and in Turkish by the Turkish Ministry of Environment.
- 2 It responds to a request from all the Mediterranean coastal countries and the European Union, that is the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention 'for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean'.