

## **Union will put Mediterranean firmly back on the map**

From Prof Stephen Calleya.

Sir, In his article "[Scepticism abounds over value of new club](#)", (July 11), Tony Barber is accurate in identifying the numerous geopolitical factors that have stifled closer cooperation between Europe and the Mediterranean during the past decade. However, his analysis, like so many other assessments published ever since Nicolas Sarkozy announced his Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) initiative, is too negative in outlook.

The reality is that the inclusive UfM framework is providing an opportunity for all those interested in promoting peace, stability and prosperity in the Mediterranean to adopt a collective approach and start addressing in a more immediate manner the multitude of security challenges facing all states in the Mediterranean area. The UfM offers Europe and the international community an opportunity to carry out a strategic re-assessment that will allow for more political attention and economic resources to be directed towards improving living standards and opportunities across the Mediterranean.

The key will be the value added benefit that the UfM brings to the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership. In addition to the projects already identified for implementation attention should also be given to the long list of other ventures that would trigger closer cooperative relations in the region including the setting up of a Mediterranean Development Bank, the creation of a Mediterranean energy agency, the introduction of visa facilities for research personnel, business people and officials, and the strengthening of University cooperation including student and staff exchange partnerships.

The UfM is to be credited for positioning the Mediterranean in the limelight after being overshadowed by other regions of the world where regional integration has taken leaps forward. Regardless of the ultimate format that the UfM takes, one factor is already crystal clear – there is a need for closer cooperation across the Mediterranean.

Financial Times, Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> July 2008, page 8.