

## A year for optimism

I took up the office of president of the Almería Port Authority in March 2019, since when it has been both an honour and a responsibility to preside over the authority that manages two ports as important as those of Almería and Carboneras, and which last year closed the financial year with a net turnover in excess of 17.5 million euros (2.18% more than in 2017), and secured a profit of 2.6 million euros. These and other results maintain the growth trend of recent years and allow us to face the immediate challenges with optimism.

The 2018 reporting year has been satisfactory overall, both in terms of a 10.65% growth in freight volume, and an increase of 1.31% in passenger volumes, up to nearly 964,000 travellers. The balance sheet for Puerto Pesquero is also positive: 4,200 tonnes were handled in 2018, marking an increase of 23%.

In terms of freight volume, the most outstanding increase seen in 2018 was a 150% rise in container transport. This increase was the result of the operation of two regular container shipping lines between Almería and any other port in the world, via the container hub-ports of Algeciras and Valencia.

With respect to movement of passengers, the Port of Almería was placed second in Andalusia and among the top ten in Spain. Over half of this passenger traffic was produced during Operation Strait of Gibraltar Passage, which enabled nearly 560,000 people to cross between the two shores of the Alborán Sea during the summer of 2018. The Port Authority continues to work to improve our services and make the passage of travellers through our facilities as smooth and comfortable as possible, and we recognize the significant endeavours of the ferries operating out of our port, in both passenger and ro-ro traffic.

The balance sheet for 2018 also spotlights the progress made on the City-Port project with the presentation of the 'Master Plan', to be achieved through consensus between all the stakeholder institutions and civil society, which will define the Almería of the 21st century. The 2018 reporting year also saw the completion of the tendering process for works to restore the former loading dock known as the English Cable ("Cable Inglés"). These works will commence in 2019 for the purpose of recovering this cultural asset for the enjoyment of the public.

The Port Authority is firmly committed to boosting the competitiveness of our ports, through innovation and the pursuit of excellence in our services. To do so, we work in collaboration with the port community to ensure that any development is balanced and harmonious, financially and socially viable, and respectful of our environment. Indeed, the environment is and will continue to be a priority for us, and is the reason we are continually working to improve our equipment, monitoring and operations.

Time passes all too quickly and, as president, I wish to focus on some important issues we will hopefully be able to resolve in the short and medium term. We have many projects underway. To list just a few of the most notable of these, we have the connection to land of the exterior quay at the

Port of Almería; access roads from the A-7 motorway through Pescadería; connection with the rail network; the launch of the first phase of the City-Port project; conditioning of the anchorage at Puerto Pesquero; construction of a new security forces headquarters; installation of dust-control barriers at the Port of Carboneras; and the improvement of energy efficiency at the Maritime Station at Almería. Among these challenges, I am particularly happy to note that a regular maritime line for the transport of fruit and vegetables has at last become a reality; and the promotion of Almería as a port of call for cruise ships, contributing to the development of tourism in the province.

As the 2018 annual report indicates, the positive results achieved are attributable to the hard work of the businesses and institutions that make up the port community, as well as the dedication of the Port Authority's management and workforce teams. I thank you all for the welcome you have given me, and I firmly believe we will continue to work in the same spirit to ensure that the ports of Almería and Carboneras continue to grow and contribute to the economic and social progress of our province.

Jesús Caicedo Bernabé  
President of the Almería Port Authority