

Preface

When we thought of preparing this volume, our intention was to compile, in a single volume, the main results of our research on the Mauritanian continental margin in 2007–2010, carried out within the framework provided by the bilateral cooperation between the Spanish Institute of Oceanography and the Mauritanian Institute for Fisheries and Oceanographic Researches.

Originally, the four *Maurit* surveys were meant to prospect and evaluate deep demersal resources; however, the discovery of the amazing features hidden in the Mauritanian slope shifted the original goal towards collating integral information on the ecosystems and a better understanding of the processes that control the biodiversity and abundance of the fishing resources. We are scientists, and in the face of this challenge, we could not restrain ourselves. We hope that our Mauritanian colleagues will forgive us in the light of the results obtained!

Completing the edition of this volume consumed much more time than we expected at the beginning of this journey, when we presented the project and Springer accepted its publication. However, despite many obstacles, mainly due to difficult personal circumstances, we managed to finish this task with the same eagerness that we had three years ago, when this book was only an idea.

We did not have grand equipment or sophisticated technology on-board the R/V *Vizconde de Eza*, but we had a first-class work team, and, because of that, we are highly satisfied with our results. This book shows that with good planning and minimum additional cost, demersal surveys can become excellent platforms for expanding our knowledge on marine ecosystems in poorly researched regions, such as the Northwest African coast.

For those of us who love that continent and have devoted over 20 years to contributing towards the research of the African seas, it is extremely satisfying to introduce this volume on Mauritanian deep-water ecosystems, which undoubtedly will become an important reference for marine research in Northwest Africa.

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Ana Ramos
Fran Ramil
José Luis Sanz

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Ramos, A.; Ramil, F.; Luis Sanz, J. (Eds.)

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