



med waves

The Mediterranean
Action Plan
magazine
Special edition
MAP 30th Anniversary

How MAP evolved

Towards the Mediterranean
Environmental Summit in Slovenia

Strategies for Environment and Sustainable Development,
Land and Sea-based Pollution, Coastal Zones, Biodiversity

NGOs have their say

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UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME
MEDITERRANEAN ACTION PLAN

med waves

The Mediterranean
Action Plan
magazine
Special edition
52/53

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ISSN 1105-4034



MAP's 30th Anniversary

Next November's 14th Conference of the Parties in Slovenia will mark the 30th Anniversary of the Mediterranean Action Plan which was launched in Barcelona in 1975 as a regional arrangement to deal with common problems of marine pollution. A lot of water has gone under the bridge since then and MAP has gone from strength to strength.

Thirty years on and MAP is even more relevant today for the Mediterranean than it was when it was launched. It has proved to be the appropriate mechanism for the promotion of environment and sustainable development policies in the region.

Developed and developing countries, European, North African and Eastern Mediterranean, sit together to address regional environmental problems and help each other to resolve them. No other regional organization enjoys credibility and trust among the Mediterranean countries as MAP does. Its future role in the region should be built on this strength.

In spite of the various important political initiatives taken by the Mediterranean countries within the framework of the Barcelona process, in particular the adoption of the Convention for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea in 1976 and its various Protocols (the Convention was amended in 1995 and the amended version entered into force in July 2004) pollution problems in the region still persist and new challenges are emerging.

Following thirty years of experience in working for the good of the Mediterranean, MAP needs to assess its performance and define its future in the light of its achievements and failures while keeping in mind the political, economic and social specificities of the region.

This is one of the main objectives of the external evaluation of MAP, an exercise which was launched following the decision of the Contracting Parties during their Meeting in Catania in 2003.

One important issue that needs to be addressed is the status of ratification or the lack of ratification and implementation of the Convention and its Protocols by some of the Contracting Parties and the lack of a compliance mechanism.

MAP's future relations with the European Union also deserve special attention due to the fact that several Contracting Parties are now also EU members and more are expected to join in the future.

The implementation of the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development, which is expected to be adopted by the Contracting Parties, will be a milestone development for MAP and the region.

These are among the main issues that are expected to dominate the agenda of the next Contracting Parties meeting in Slovenia and which will influence the shape of things to come in the Mediterranean.

How MAP evolved

Mediterranean coastal states, meeting in Barcelona in 1975, adopted an Action Plan for the protection of the Mediterranean Sea and the coast. UNEP was entrusted with the task to take the initiative to coordinate the activities of the Mediterranean governments to develop and implement this Plan.

During the Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment in June 1972, it was recognized that marine pollution was a problem which called for international cooperation and that such co-operation could most usefully be focused on a regional level.

One of the concrete results of the Stockholm Conference was the establishment of UNEP. When the first Governing Council of UNEP met in June 1972 it identified marine pollution as a priority area for action. Within the overall programme for oceans, the decision was taken to concentrate on the Mediterranean as a region in which to assist States to develop a comprehensive, co-operative programme for the protection and enhancement of the marine environment.

UNEP, in co-operation with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the Inter-Governmental Maritime Consultative Organization (IMCO, now IMO), convened the Intergovernmental Meeting on the Protection of the Mediterranean at Barcelona, Spain, from 28th January to 4th February 1975.

The meeting was attended by representatives of sixteen of the eighteen coastal States and in conclusion, participants adopted an Action Plan consisting of four chapters:

1. Integrated Planning of the Development and Management of the Resources of the Mediterranean Basin;
2. Co-ordinated Pollution Monitoring and Research Prog-

ramme in the Mediterranean;

3. Framework Convention and Related Protocols with their Technical Annexes for the Protection of the Mediterranean Environment;
4. Institutional and Financial Implications of the Action Plan.

One year after the first Barcelona meeting, UNEP convened the Conference of Plenipotentiaries of the Coastal States of the Mediterranean Region on the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea, again in Barcelona. At this conference three regional agreements were adopted on 16th February 1976:

- the Convention for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea Against Pollution;
- the Protocol for the Prevention of Pollution of the Mediterranean Sea by Dumping from Ships and Aircraft;
- the Protocol concerning Co-operation in Combating Pollution of the Mediterranean Sea by Oil and other Harmful Substances in Cases of Emergency.

What made this Barcelona Conference particularly noteworthy is that twelve states immediately signed the Convention and the Emergency Protocol, and eleven states signed the Dumping Protocol.

The Convention was viewed as an all-inclusive legal umbrella providing a general obligation to take all appropriate measures to prevent, abate, and combat pollution of

the Mediterranean Sea area and to protect and enhance the marine environment. However, by ratifying a Protocol, states accept more detailed obligations to control pollution.

The Convention was deemed too general to provide meaningful protection on its own; therefore a provision is included in the Convention that no State may become a contracting party to the Convention without also becoming a party to a least one of the protocols (Article 29).

The Convention provides that it will enter into force simultaneously with the first protocol. The Convention and the Dumping and Emergency Protocols entered into force on 12th February 1978, a mere two years after they were first adopted.

In order to provide for the Centre referred to in the Emergency Protocol, the Barcelona Conference of Plenipotentiaries adopted a resolution calling upon UNEP in co-operation with IMCO to establish a Regional Oil Combating Centre for the Mediterranean Sea. The Centre was officially opened in Malta in December 1976.

The Conference of Plenipotentiaries also called upon UNEP and the World Health Organization (WHO) to jointly undertake preparations for an additional protocol to control land-based sources of pollution. The Protocol for the protection of the Mediterranean Sea against Pollution from Land-based Sources (LBS Protocol) was adopted on 17th May 1980 and entered into force on 17th June 1983. Amendments to the Protocol were adopted on 7th March 1996 but have not yet entered into force.

The integrated planning activities of the Mediterranean Action Plan have evolved under two main sub-programmes, both of which were approved by the governments of the region at a meeting held in Split, former Yugoslavia, between 31st January and 4th February 1977. The first main subdivision was known as the Blue Plan. It was meant to be a think-tank in order to increase the awareness of individual policy makers to long-term trends and to make them realize the effect that their decision will ultimately have on the environment.

In order to combine the principles of environmental mana-

gement with the knowledge and experience available in the region, a Priority Action Programme (PAP/RAC) was established in 1978 and is located in Split, Croatia.

Since then, other Programmes and Regional Activity Centres (RACs) have been established, including the Programme for the Assessment and Control of Pollution in the Mediterranean Region (MED POL), the centre for Specially Protected Areas (SPA/RAC) which focuses on biodiversity and located in Tunisia, the Environment Remote Sensing centre (ERS/RAC) located in Italy, the Cleaner Production center (CP/RAC) established in 1996 and located in Spain and the Programme for the Protection of Coastal Historic Sites (100HS) based in France.

Other important Protocols include the Specially Protected Areas and Biodiversity Protocol which was adopted on 10th June 1995, replacing the SPA Protocol of 1982 and entered into force on 12th December 1999, and the Offshore and Hazardous Waste Protocols adopted on 14th October 1994 and 1st October 1996 respectively but which have not yet entered into force.

One major development in recent years was the setting up in 1996 of the Mediterranean Commission for Sustainable Development (MCSd) as a think-tank on policies for promoting sustainable development in the Mediterranean Basin. Another, which took place even more recently was the entry into force on 9th July, 2004 of the amended Convention which is recorded as the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and Coastal Region of the Mediterranean.

The centre of MAP's activities is the MAP Coordinating Unit (MEDU), which has been based in Athens since 1982.

A breakthrough in pollution reduction

On the basis of the pioneering scientific studies carried out by a number of international organizations at the beginning of the seventies, the health of the Mediterranean Sea appeared to be at serious risk and needing concerted interventions.

Diffused urban and industrial pollution appeared then to be rather uncontrolled all over the region and no plans to halt and reverse the situation existed. It is at that time, in 1975 that the Mediterranean countries and the European Community adopted the Mediterranean Action Plan (MAP). Only one year later, the Barcelona Convention was signed together with a number of Protocols addressing specific fields of action.

The MED POL Programme, the marine pollution assessment and control component of the MAP, has been one of the Plan's main pillars since its very launch. Mostly conceived as a marine Convention, the 1976 Barcelona Convention has in fact entrusted MED POL with a large share of the coordination of activities related to its main objective, i.e. to assist countries in protecting the sea against pollution.

By the end of the seventies, the countries of the region had shown willingness to act against pollution and were in possession of a legal system to support their actions. But the capacity and the competence of many of them were not sufficient.

Strong support to countries

The experience of scientists was scarce, laboratories were poorly

equipped and in many cases there were no strategies or plans. As a response, during its first phase, MED POL fulfilled its role by launching and supporting a large number of national research and monitoring projects to quantify and qualify marine pollution, organizing a large-scale training programme, supplying laboratories with analytical instruments and setting-up a programme to improve the quality of data and of the laboratories' performance.

The second phase of MED POL started at the beginning of the eighties, coinciding with the signature and entry into force of the Protocol for the protection against land-based pollution (LBS Protocol) and focused on the need to organize national marine pollution monitoring programmes to help the countries in fulfilling the commitments arising from the Protocol.

During this phase, national programmes were prepared on the basis of national and local priorities and several pollutant-specific assessments, related to the substances to be eliminated or strictly limited, as listed in the Protocol, were also prepared.

Towards reducing pollution

By the beginning of the nineties, towards the end of the second phase of MED POL, the Programme had contributed to the coun-

tries of the region reaching an acceptable level of competence and capacity to monitor marine pollution and to finally be in the position to fulfill the LBS Protocol requirements, i.e. to start the difficult process of reducing and eliminating pollution.

In addition, it is at that time that the deliberations of the Rio de Janeiro Summit became a point of reference for any environmental initiative and consequently influenced the content and the approaches of MED POL.

It was obvious that after a few years of training, preparatory work, assessments, research and monitoring, the region had to focus on more concrete results, i.e. to actually control and reduce pollution. The MED POL Programme then enters its third phase, focussing on controlling of pollution, through new approaches and activities and offering concrete elements for countries to use in their efforts to achieve sustainable development.

A new momentum

The entire Barcelona Convention legal system was reviewed in order to offer the Countries a more up-to-date tool to address new needs and achieve new objectives. MED POL fully and promptly reacted to this new momentum and contributed to the preparation of an amended LBS Protocol –to include the hydrologic basin and coastal human activities in the Protocol's scope and to offer more concrete tools for pollution reduction– and of a new Dumping Protocol, more restrictive than the original one.

But the breakthrough in pollution reduction was marked by the formulation by MED POL of a Strategic Action Programme to Address Pollution from Land-based Activities (SAP) that was adopted by the Contracting Parties in 1997.

Despite some delays, the SAP is now being implemented and countries have up to now agreed on the major pollution reduction targets, calculated –source by source– the input of polluting substances into the sea, identified the related control measures needed and the costs that they imply, and agreed on a timetable for their implementation by 2025. The validity of the SAP has been largely recognized and external funds have been made available by a number of donors (mainly GEF and the FFEM) to give impetus to the effective launching of the activities.

Promising prospects

The prospects for the SAP's long-term success are now promising and MED POL is concentrating on the issue of the Programme's financial sustainability, in order to concretely assist the countries in the process of pollution reduction between now and 2025.

At present, MED POL is helping the countries prepare National Action Plans in which the national authorities are expected to clearly indicate, with an investment portfolio, what actions and interventions they intend to implement in order to fulfill the SAP targets for the next ten years.

In a relatively short time from now, with the substantial assistance of MED POL, the region could show that intentions have been substituted by actions and that one of the elements that constitute the process of achieving sustainable development has started providing its concrete contribution.

Now that a lot of preparatory and basic work has been carried out since the launching of MED POL in 1975, spanning from research and monitoring to capacity building and legal, technical and scientific assistance, the time has come to witness a progressive and stable reduction of pollution in the region, a process clearly confirmed by the 2002 Summit in Johannesburg as integral part of the efforts that countries should make in order to achieve sustainable development.

MED POL should continue to play the fundamental role that has until now, by continuing to demonstrate its sensitivity to global and regional changes and its ability to follow the evolution of regional and national needs.

The future direction is now to accelerate the process of integration with other programmes and initiatives and to propose, in 2005, a new harmonized MED POL Phase IV, through which the countries will be able to recognize pollution reduction as an indispensable step of their integrated efforts towards sustainable development, and MED POL as their main tool.

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Heading for Sustainable Development, the Mediterranean Eco-Region in Motion

"Mediterraneity" has indeed deep historic and cultural roots. Besides the tensions and imbalances, the economic and social development constraints, and their effects on the environment, the Mediterranean Region is characterized by a rich human, natural and cultural heritage that has permitted its people to find innovative solutions to its major problems and challenges encountered throughout history, thanks to a culture of dialogue and exchange.

The Mediterranean is the crossroads of three continents, but also at its own crossroads when considering the various major challenges and stakes for which the Mediterranean partners are expected to find adequate long-term solutions.

It is in this spirit that the Mediterranean countries and the European Community –Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention– have been working together with their partners from the Civil Society in dealing first with their environmental problems, then with the integration of environment and development, and finally in promoting sustainable development.

Embedded in the first decisions of the Parties when extending their concerns in marine pollution and the environment to their development inter-relations, the concept of sustainable development was explicitly included in the MAP agenda in the early '90s before being legally bound to the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development (MCSO) in the revised Convention in 1995.

Cumulative knowledge

Cooperating through UNEP/MAP, the only Programme of effective cooperation between "all" Mediterranean countries, the Contracting Parties have developed a remarkable cumulative knowledge and a great institutional and technical capacity that constitute solid foundations for an enabling environment for the promotion of sustainable development and the

implementation of its basic principles in the region.

As was already the case with UNEP/MAP and the Barcelona Convention, the Mediterranean Partners have acted as pioneers in reacting to sustainable development concerns at the Regional level, preparing an Agenda Med21 in 1994 and establishing the MCSO in 1996 as advisory body.

The composition, method of work and first results of the MCSO have prompted new lights on the Mediterranean as an appropriate bridge between global and national/local concerns. Its intensive programme of work has brought up key policy and strategic questions that contributed to the decision-making process for a more appropriate integration and improved management.

It has also promoted awareness on key stakes, challenges and risks that should be faced, to pave the way towards sustainable development and has boosted the participatory approach, activating multi-stakeholder consultations, as well as broadening and strengthening participation of the Civil Society, in particular the NGOs.

Thematic issues

Since it was established, the MCSO has been dealing with various types of issues: the "thematic" ones, related to Water, Coastal Regions, Tourism, Urban Development, and Industry and the "cross cutting" issues such as Indicators, Free Trade and Financing, and Cooperation.

Most of the MCSD activities, through specific working groups, have resulted in a series of recommendations and proposals for action. The working method –associating various experts from the countries and the Civil Society, through studies, working sessions, workshops and fora– has also contributed to improving and expanding the knowledge and expertise on key issues relevant to sustainable development in the Mediterranean at regional and national levels.

Strategic Review

In addition, in the year 2000, the MCSD conducted a Strategic Review for Sustainable Development in the Mediterranean Region, focusing on policy and institutional matters; undertaken in close cooperation with the Parties and Partners, this Review calls for necessary reforms in the countries and for the preparation of a Mediterranean and of National Strategies for Sustainable Development.

It also recognizes the need to strengthen the MCSD and enable it to adequately operate and advise concerned partners in coping with present, emerging and future challenges. In the preparation of the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (MSSD) since 2003, the three pillars of sustainable development –economic, social, and environmental– were given due consideration together with the critical issue of governance.

Key challenges

In this context, and besides the environmental challenge, the Vision and the Orientations for the MSSD identify five more key challenges (poverty, entrepreneurship, cultural diversity, governance and peace) and seven fields for priority action (water, energy and climate change, transport, tourism, urban management, rural and agricultural development and management of marine and coastal zones) on which the Strategy will be structured.

In further support to the preparations, the MCSD has elaborated a series of specific thematic notes.

The MSSD is expected to be approved by the Contracting Parties at their 14th meeting in November 2005; the Strategy will provide a coherent framework for MAP's programme of activities and is expected to improve and rationalize regional cooperation towards sustainable development in the Region.

The MSSD, being a partnership among parties concerned about the Region's future, has been registered as a "type II" partnership initiative as agreed upon at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg.

The MSSD process has also been a good opportunity to prepare a Regional Review of sustainable development initiatives, and to provide technical and financial support to the preparation of National Strategies for Sustainable Development.

Ten years later

Throughout its first ten-year period, the MCSD has benefited from substantial technical and financial support.

Despite its shortcomings and the general criticism on its achievements, it remains an exemplary initiative by the Mediterranean Partners that deserves more adequate attention and more appropriate means.

The MCSD activities in general and the MSSD in particular provide excellent opportunities for improving cooperation towards a common vision for a Mediterranean Region living in peace, sharing prosperity and valuing its cultural diversity. Beyond the Mediterranean Region, the MCSD could bridge and provide ground for an improved Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and also for a Euro-Arab Partnership.

If reformed and provided with relevant strategic and policy responsibilities together with adequate means, the MCSD could contribute to, prepare for, write and tell the stories of sustainable development in the Mediterranean.

Ten years after the Contracting Parties decided to create the MCSD, it is important to bring this important tool to maturity status.

In a time where the world is discovering the concept of a global destiny, it seems useful, even urgent and salutary, that the Mediterranean peoples and their partners look more seriously into their common public good and common destiny, through differentiated responsibilities and effective partnership. UNEP/MAP and its MCSD could contribute positively to that major stake.

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Blue Plan: From Environment to Sustainable Development

From the outset, the Mediterranean Action Plan has endeavoured to define the deep-seated socio-economic causes of marine pollution and has underlined the need to integrate environment and development in a rapidly changing region. A conference of Mediterranean countries –held in Split, Croatia in 1977 at the instigation of Mostafa Tolba, Executive Director of UNEP– defined and adopted the terms of reference for Blue Plan: “to develop a continuous process of concerted cooperation process in order to place at the disposal of decision-makers information enabling them to formulate plans for optimum socio-economic development on a sustainable basis without environmental degradation”.

During its first decade, Blue Plan explored the future, basing itself on several sufficiently diverse “scenarios”, to show possible trends and identify the margin of manoeuvre for those in charge of planning, development and environmental policies.

Trend and alternative scenarios explored the possible futures of the “Mediterranean system” in 2000 and 2025 (including population and spaces, agriculture and tourism, transport, forests and the sea). The findings of this prospective approach were published in 1989 in five languages under the title “Futures for the Mediterranean Basin. The Blue Plan”. The main conclusions still apply:

- Although development generally leads to environmental degradation in the Mediterranean, environmental degradation in turn tends to hamper or even compromise development as a result of the scarcity of water, intensified soil degra-

dation, the fragility of coastal ecosystems, the extent of natural risks and the concentration of pressure on the fragile coastal areas, which are the main sites of human activity and, above all, of tourism.

- The transition to a sustainable development scenario calls for radical changes in countries as well as extensive multilateral and bilateral cooperation, North-South with the European Community and South-South at the initiative of Arab countries. Without such an effort, countries in the southern and eastern Mediterranean will not be able to achieve a viable socio-economic situation by 2025 because of their high rate of demographic growth and their relatively low level of development.

Three years before the Earth Summit, this pioneering work had a resounding echo in Mediterranean countries, within the MAP and in the European Commission and the World Bank.

The Contracting Parties then entrusted Blue Plan with several tasks: setting up and acting as a "Mediterranean Environment and Development Observatory" (MEDO), boosted by the European Commission's implementation of the Euro-Mediterranean programme on environmental statistics; applying the prospective approach in coastal regions and further developing it in certain key areas; and assisting the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development as a key support centre.

The future, up to 2025

At present, Blue Plan's major task is to finalize the second comprehensive work on the future of the region up to 2025, which will be published in summer 2005. This new work, like its predecessor, is the result of collective expertise. It confirms the disturbing trends noted in 1989 and once again draws attention to the risks of ongoing trends. It also shows the radical changes under way (accelerated demographic transition) and that speeding up and generalizing the progress already being made would help to reverse the current trends in the direction of a win-win scenario (environment and development, North and South).

Obstacles and assets

It highlights the obstacles to be overcome and the assets to be put to use. It calls for action for sustainable development by showing the progress in governance that could be made both at the regional and country levels. It underlines, in parti-

cular, the need, the possibility and the benefits of "de-coupling" economic growth from pressure on the environment by improving demand management in key sectors. Lastly, it urges revival of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership in order to make the Mediterranean an example of sustainable co-development in the world.

Blue Plan owes much to people of great vision. Serge Antoine put the idea forward in 1975. Mostafa Tolba and Ismail Sabri Abdallah (then the Egyptian Minister for Planning) subsequently obtained its endorsement by Mediterranean States and turned it into reality.

Blue Plan would not have existed either without the commitment, talent and vast international experience of Michel Batisse, who died in September 2004. Let us hope that his convictions and his message of reason and hope are reaffirmed ever more convincingly and strongly by generations to come so that this crucial region has a future that measures up to its past.

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Michel Batisse (1923-2004), a French scientist, was one of the architects and promoters of the most important international research and environmental cooperation programmes. He joined UNESCO in 1951, where following initial experience in the field in the Middle East, he directed the programme of research into arid areas and helped to set up institutes, inter alia, in Egypt and Israel. He played a key role in water and desertification programmes. In 1968, he instigated the "Man and the Biosphere" Programme, which was at the origin of the concept of sustainable development, and promoted it tirelessly throughout the world. He was also one of the initiators of the World Heritage Convention and ensured that the natural heritage was included therein. Former Deputy Director General (Science) of UNESCO, Michel Batisse was President of Blue Plan from 1984 onwards. He devoted himself unstintingly to this work, giving up his summer in 2004 to reading over the Environment and Development Report, which was particularly dear to his heart. In 1995, he was also one of the main supporters of enlarging the scope of the Barcelona Convention to the land component of the Mediterranean Environment.

Officer of the Légion d'Honneur, winner of UNESCO's Gold Medal and the John Philips Medal (IUCN), in 2000 Michel Batisse was awarded the prestigious UNEP Sasakawa Environment Prize.

Coastal areas: from management to governance

The recent tragic events in South-East Asia have been of cataclysmic proportions. However, they have also uncovered, in a most dramatic way, how deep the rift between fragility of coastal areas and universal human aspiration of settling along the coastlines is, particularly when it is not being matched with adequate coastal (risk) management measures.

The intention here is not to argue that human loss and damages in Asia could have been avoided, but it could be argued that with better coastal management they could have been significantly reduced. Also, it is not likely that catastrophe of such proportions could occur in the Mediterranean, but historic evidence exists that tsunami-related events have taken place here. This should be enough of a warning that in this region we need to take adequate precautionary measures.

ICAM, a precautionary measure

Integrated Coastal Area Management (ICAM) is widely recognised as such a measure. Since the early stages of its inception in the Mediterranean in the mid eighties, it has been conceived as a continuous, proactive and adaptive process of resource management for environmental sustainable development in coastal areas, focusing on the linkages between sectoral activities to achieve sustainable development goals.

ICAM facilitates horizontal and vertical dialogue, agreements and compromises among all parties involved in the use of coastal and marine resources. Being a participatory process, it involves strategic planning that considers local values,

traditions and needs in defining overall priorities and objectives for the sustainable development of coastal areas.

During the past two decades, MAP and its Priority Actions Programme Regional Activity Centre (PAP/RAC) in particular, have been very active in promoting ICAM and helping national and local governments to achieve progress in successful management of their coasts.

The practical implementation of ICAM has shown that its basic principles had been correctly defined from the very outset, and that its basic definition, throughout that period, could be changed very little.

The CAMPs

Fifteen completed or ongoing Coastal Area Management Programmes (CAMP), carried out by all MAP components in an integrated manner, are proof of the enormous interest the countries have shown in applying directly the ICAM methodology, and of their desire to produce tangible results.

ICAM has also been widely accepted all over the world, and until today more than 700 coastal interventions in more than 140 countries have been counted.

Pending problems

In spite of the many efforts made by the MAP and its PAP/RAC, as well as other international organisations and associations, national and local authorities, international and local NGOs, private sector and ordinary citizens, there are still too many problems that need to be tackled. Some of the barriers to more effective ICAM still persist, namely:

- Bureaucratic inertia, resulting in slower response by local administration hampering, thus, many development initiatives;
- Opposition to changes from multiple private economic interests, which favour achievement of short-term profits from coastal exploitation as opposed to long term need for sustainable use of coastal resources;
- Lack of adequate political will to start the ICAM process;
- Lack of minimal financial resources to start and maintain the ICAM process;
- Complexity of the legislative issues in defining the coastal zone; etc.

Mediterranean countries have made a major new step in creating better conditions for ICAM by adopting a decision to prepare the draft text of a Protocol on Integrated Coastal Area Management. The next meeting of Contracting Parties in Slovenia in November 2005 will discuss it and propose recommendations regarding future activities.

If the Protocol is adopted, signed and ratified, it will have a great impact on countries' efforts towards more effective management of their coastal areas.

Major directions

In the coming years, PAP/RAC will likely remain a significant regional and global "player" in promoting ICAM. The major directions of its activities will remain the same:

1. developing ICAM methodology, tools and techniques, and adapting them to the needs of the Mediterranean countries;
2. carrying out practical activities through CAMP and other means of direct interventions, together with MAP components and other major partners in the region.

New subjects

However, in addition to the expected adoption and implementation of the ICAM Protocol, there is a range of new subjects

that have emerged recently—particularly after the World Summit in Johannesburg in 2002— which deserve a more concrete reaction from PAP/RAC, namely:

- Improving integrated coastal governance, which will lead to new interwoven relations between public sector, private actors and NGOs, thus expanding the management focus towards negotiation and co-ordination, away from exclusively technical aspects of coastal resource management.
- Local management and sustainable development in coastal areas, which is becoming a key issue for the Mediterranean, particularly since there is a common agreement that ICAM is a highly localised affair, albeit operating within the national and international institutional and legal context.
- Coastal risk management, which includes the issues of sea level rise, coastal floods, earthquakes, industrial accidents, coastal erosion among others, requires a bolder and more organised reaction from the Mediterranean countries. In addition to technical measures, greater emphasis will have to be placed on awareness raising, early response measures, and economic instruments.
- Marine spatial planning will place a greater emphasis on sea use, integration of marine and terrestrial segments of coastal area, and reconciliation of the regulatory split which exists today between the respective coastal terrestrial and marine legislation.
- Integration of cultural identity issues, in particular coastal landscapes, in ICAM. Analysis of cultural values for sustainable development will bring further local dimension to coastal management.

ICT

Serving the Environment and Sustainable Development

Since it was set up in 1975, The Mediterranean Action Plan (MAP) has played a central role in preserving the rich human and natural resources of the Region. Its success in the last 30 years is due, among others, to the sharing and exchange of experiences, projects and activities.

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The MAP Environment Remote Sensing Regional Activity Centre (ERS/RAC) has been taking part in this process through its remote sensing activities and, more recently –thanks to the current process of refocusing it towards sharing environmental data– through the use of information and communication technologies (ICT).

Since the adoption by the 13th Conference of the MAP Contracting Parties in 2003 of the Italian proposal to refocus and strengthen ERS/RAC with human and financial resources for coastal and marine monitoring in order to provide the Contracting Parties with ICT assistance, the Centre has been established as a public law entity, a new Director was appointed and over 2,5 million euros have been made available by the Italian Ministry of the Environment and Territory for the Centre's activities during the biennium 2004–2005.

As a follow-up to the decisions of this Conference, several activities have already been defined, namely the contribution to the optimisation of the MAP website and the launching of the CAMPUS-ECOMEDIA project. The purpose of these actions is to ensure the widest involvement of all concerned stakeholder in the objectives and activities of the Barcelona Convention, by using innovative technological systems as an efficient vehicle for information and training activities.

The use advanced technologies will facilitate access to the outcomes of research and studies, and to data elaborated by the scientific community and all other parties concerned, and to make it available not only to the decision-makers but also to the civil society in general.

The technological platform provided by the ERS/RAC will serve as a tool for managing, monitoring and updating available data and disseminating it to all MAP components, such as the other MAP Regional Activity Centres, the MED POL Programme for the Assessment and Control of Marine Pollution, as well as the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development (MCSD).

Among other activities underway, the MED POL database, which is one of the basic tools for the implementation of the MAP Strategic Action Programme to Address Pollution from Land-based Activities (SAP), is now being developed with the

support of ERS/RAC, a task that will help set up an integrated, regularly updated information system.

Its proposed focus into the area of information and communication technology (ICT) represents a practical response to new global and regional developments and an opportunity to give fresh momentum and visibility to the MAP works in protecting the Mediterranean environment and promoting sustainable development in the region.

The evaluation exercise of the ERS/RAC role within the MAP allows the Centre to build up a new set of activities aimed at facilitating the process of integrating environment and development and the need to collect and share more data between all MAP components as well as all MAP partners and other stakeholders through the use of ICT.

The MAP covers a wide range of fields of activities over the whole Mediterranean region. The maintenance of a database containing the information and results obtained through these activities is key for the planning and implementation of future programmes and actions as well as for improving co-ordination between the MAP components and with the countries.

The applications of remote sensing techniques are countless and, by providing up-to-date data on hotspots, oil spills, maritime traffic density, etc. will help countries in the formulation and implementation of pollution monitoring and

coastal area management programmes, including pollution control measures and the elaboration of environmental protection action plans.

In the spirit of the Barcelona Convention, ICT is considered to be a new opportunity, with the help of the proper practical initiatives, to spark off a virtual forum.

Innovative solutions will enable all concerned parties to explore, analyse, retrieve and produce maps and reports based on geographical data, which are progressively made available and updated.

ICT alone cannot reduce pollution and create opportunities for a long-term development but is an increasingly important catalyst that spurs on environmental protection, economic growth and social equity. Everybody should have the opportunity to acquire the necessary skills and knowledge in order to understand, actively participate in, and fully benefit from environmental protection and sustainable development through the objectives of the Barcelona Convention.

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Cultural heritage: the protection of coastal historic sites

The Mediterranean coast is home to the highest concentration of historic monuments and sites in the world, the magnificent heritage left by 5.000 years of civilization, trade, conquest and conflict. The "100 Historic Sites" Programme, based in Marseille (France), strives to protect the most important sites around the Mediterranean Basin that are of common interest. Underwater archaeological sites, and shipwrecks, are also among its priority fields. The Programme offers training on the proper management of these sites.

In 1985, the fourth meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention, in Genoa (Italy), adopted the Genoa Declaration on the second Mediterranean decade, which includes ten targets to be achieved as a matter of priority.

One of these targets is "the identification and protection of at least 100 coastal historic sites of common interest".

Since 1989, this task has been carried out by the "100 Historic Sites of Common Interest" Programme, acting within the framework of the UNEP/MAP and jointly with all Mediterranean countries, as well as UNESCO and International Council of Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS).

The Authorities responsible for historic sites of common Mediterranean interest held their first meeting in Marseille, France in January 1989 and approved a document entitled "Guidelines for knowledge, protection, planning and management of historic sites of common Mediterranean interest", as a working tool.

Guidelines for cooperation

In the chapter on "Guidelines for Mediterranean cooperation", the representatives of the sites recommended that all international and national bodies dealing with heritage matters rapidly take the necessary measures to combat all types

of pillage such as that of archaeological sites, museums, etc. With regard to shipwrecks, underwater sites and sites accessible by sea, they underlined the need to adopt a law or an international protocol within the Barcelona Convention framework along the lines of that of UNESCO.

Accordingly, the Bureau of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention (Athens, March 1989) proposed that one of the main activities of the 100 Historic Sites Programme should be the protection of underwater archaeological sites, including shipwrecks, and the conservation and prevention of deterioration of buildings, particularly those in stone.

These themes were endorsed at the sixth, seventh and eighth ordinary meetings of the Contracting Parties (1989, 1991 and 1993).

Historic sites and coastal management

Following the adoption of MAP Phase II in 1995, the role of historic sites in the environmental context has mainly been in the framework of Coastal Area Management Programmes (CAMP) in Fuka-Matrouh in Egypt, Greater Sfax, the island of Rhodes, the central coastal area of Algeria and southern Lebanon.

Since 1990, the Bureau of the World Heritage Committee has sought technical assistance from the Secretariat of the 100 Historic Sites Programme for sites included in both the MAP list and the World Heritage List.

The 100 Historic Sites Programme plays an important role in international programmes to protect the cultural heritage and in sustainable development programmes in the Mediterranean.

The Programme takes part at the local, national, regional and international levels in promoting awareness and in organizing activities related to cultural heritage and sustainable development. Some 60 publications have been issued since 1989 and constitute tools to enhance urban management and governance.

Activities under the 100 Historic Sites Programme have been implemented in around 30 countries either directly or for international organizations such as UNESCO, the Council of Europe, and the European Commission. These involve ongoing technical assistance, transfer of technical, legal, administrative, scientific, architectural or planning information.

The Programme's contribution concerns in particular urban management tools aimed at improving strategic planning in cities and making it sustainable. There are needs in many areas among others, understanding of the components of historic sites, their history, planning, legislation and management.

The need for an inventory

In this connection, it must be stressed that the lack of an updated inventory of the cultural heritage has a negative impact on the formulation of such strategic plans.

The importance of these themes for the administration and management of historic sites has led us to deal with them in accordance with the following priorities recently identified in the course of a survey conducted at the request of the Contracting Parties:

- Waste treatment in fragile historic centres;
- Water, energy and sanitation in fragile historic centres;
- Physical and legal protection of surroundings of architectural and monumental sites;

- Management of vehicular traffic near and on sites that are historic centres (roads, parking, pollution);
- Management of tourist flows (visitors) in architectural sites, monuments, towns and cities, museums (planning, reservations, charges, circuits, frequentation flows);
- Protection, restoration and enhancement of the privately-owned urban heritage for tourism purposes (private accommodation);
- Training of operators (tourism companies, local authorities) in the problems of protecting the heritage;
- Procedures for the socio-economic integration of the local communities in site protection and enhancement programmes (jobs, training, development aid);
- Functioning of international funding concerning issues relating to the protection and enhancement of sites with a view to sustainable development;
- Understanding and presentation of cultural identity (an extremely sensitive issue);
- Protection and development of cultural landscapes (a practice that is only in its very early stages at present).

After 15 years, the 100 Historic Sites Programme makes a regular contribution to the cultural dimension of the environment within the framework of the Mediterranean Action Plan.

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Biodiversity, on the right track

The Mediterranean Sea is exceptionally rich in living resources: 7,5% of all animal species and 18% of all marine flora, in a sea that represents only 0,7% of the total surface of the oceans. The Mediterranean's flora and fauna consist of both temperate and subtropical zone species, of which 30% are endemic. As far as biological diversity is concerned, it is one of the richest seas in the world.

Faced with many problems caused by a high number of human activities –both sea and land-based– generating pollution, the scientific community has assessed the fragility of the natural resources and the challenges to be met in order to ensure sustainable development in the region.

In 2003, the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention adopted the **Strategic Action Programme for the Conservation of Marine and Coastal Biological Diversity in the Mediterranean (SAP BIO)**, designed using an integrated and participatory approach, involving all relevant actors and stakeholders, as a response to its rapid and continuous decline.

The Specially Protected Areas / Regional Activity Centre (SPA/RAC) coordinated the preparation of the Action Programme, together with representatives of the Mediterranean countries, and regional and international institutions and organizations.

The SAP BIO aims to achieve a high level of sustainability in the use of biological diversity and is intended as a tool for the implementation of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity and the recommendations emerging from the Johannesburg Summit.

It advocates the updating of databases, intensified training programmes, and stronger cooperation with regional and international IGOs and NGOs. It provides countries in the region, national and regional actors with a rational basis of principles and measures that should lead to practical action applicable at the regional and national levels.

The major problems affecting biological diversity in the Mediterranean were identified on the basis of an assessment at the country level followed by consultations at the regional level with the Contracting Parties and international and regional organizations, during the years 2001 and 2002. This allowed the defini-

tion of the Programme's objectives and priority actions, and the identification of investment portfolios.

The threats to marine and coastal biodiversity have been identified. The coast is suffering from uncontrolled urban development and often not properly planned tourism facilities. Lack of controls on fishing is often prejudicial to sensitive ecosystems, posidonia meadows, coral formations, and accumulations of maerl.

The proliferation of species –mainly tropical, entering the Mediterranean through the Suez Canal or carried in the ballast waters of ships and discharged in the sea– has increased over the past decade and has been stimulated by the marked rise in water temperature. As a result, the presence of some algae or fish appears to upset the equilibrium of species and cause the diminution of fish stocks.

The construction of dams causes the alteration of water salinity in estuaries and deltas and renders these ecosystems even more fragile, thus affecting aquatic flora and fauna and birds living in or transiting these areas.

The various forms of pollution, agricultural practices with a negative impact on sensitive species and ecosystems, and trade in certain threatened species (sponges, sharks, turtles, sea horses, shellfish) also endanger our rich natural heritage.

The SAP BIO advocates concrete and practical measures that respond to these threats, trends and challenges, and identifies priorities to be addressed without delay, with the support of donors, in particular the Global Environment Facility (GEF). If they are successful, these measures could help protect against the adverse effects of human activities and promote sectoral policies, in particular, on fisheries, tourism, agriculture and industry. They will support scientific and applied research programmes

and contribute to the improvement of monitoring and follow-up activities, on the basis of relevant indicators. They will also serve as the basis for the adoption of institutional and legal measures and for decision-making at all levels.

The data compiled, the experience gained and the actions taken under the Programme will help to enhance training and support action to promote awareness.

The **SPA and Biodiversity Protocol** was adopted in 1995 as part of the amendments to the Barcelona Convention and entered into force in 1996. Through it, the Contracting Parties commit themselves to support actions aimed at protecting or enhancing natural and cultural heritage.

In view of the threat of a drastic reduction in biological diversity and the lack of any reliability regarding future trend estimations, the Protocol adheres to the precautionary principle for the creation of Specially Protected Areas and the protection of threatened species. There are two types of status for protected sites, which are the subject of protection, planning and management measures defined in the Protocol:

- **Specially Protected Areas (SPAs)** are ecosystems that are viable in the long term, habitats which are in danger of disappearing or critical to the survival of endangered, threatened or endemic species and, sites that are of special scientific or cultural interest.
- **Specially Protected Areas of Mediterranean Importance (SPAMIs)** are sites that are important for conserving the components of biodiversity in the region, that contain ecosystems specific to the area or the habitats of specific species that are threatened, endemic or endangered and sites that are of Mediterranean scientific, aesthetic, cultural or educational interest.

The Protocol also recommends practical measures for the protection of the components of biological diversity through Action Plans and technical inventory tools such as the Standard Data Format. It promotes the creation of transboundary protected areas in places where several States are sovereign and in international waters.

The SPA/RAC is entrusted with helping Mediterranean countries implement the Protocol by providing technical and scientific assistance and through coordination at the regional level in co-operation with scientific community and organizations.

Its main task is to promote marine and coastal protected areas, implement action plans and build national capacity for the conservation of natural sites and threatened species as common Mediterranean heritage. It creates and manages databases, exchanges and disseminates information, organizes training courses, especially in the context of Action Plans established for the conservation of threatened species and implemented by SPA/RAC.

These Action Plans are not legally binding but are regional strategies that define the priorities and the measures to be taken. They provide a framework for the exchange of experience, co-operation and mutual assistance with the objective to compile inventories and conduct studies. They provide guidance and co-ordination and reinforce the countries' efforts.

The **Action Plan for the conservation of cetaceans'** objective is to protect, conserve and rehabilitate the cetacean population. Currently, SPA/RAC is running a programme with countries and the Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and Contiguous Atlantic Area (ACCOBAMS) to develop a Mediterranean network on the beaching of cetaceans so as to learn more about their physiology and the causes of mortality and to evaluate the threats. The main axes are capacity-building and the development of a knowledge-base on beaching. The SPA/RAC has also developed activities to mitigate the impact of fishing.

SPA/RAC is involved in efforts and coordination at the regional level in the framework of the **Action Plan for the management of the Mediterranean monk seal**, the only phocidae in this sea, in order to prevent its extinction: once abundant in its waters, today its population is less than 500, which puts it high on the list of endangered species. In collaboration with the Bern and Bonn Conventions, and with the participation of Mediterranean countries, a strategy including action programmes and awareness-promotion campaigns will be prepared.

The **Action Plan for the conservation of marine turtles**, whose habitats and nesting grounds have been degraded, takes into account all available information, with a view to promoting measures that will ensure their survival and the reconstitution of their populations, and in particular the green turtle *Chelonia mydas*.

In order to be effective, such protection requires coordinated management and should be based on existing international and regional programmes and plans (MAP, GFCM/FAO, IUCN/SSC, ICCAT, CIESM).

Programmes under the Plan involve studies on the biology and behaviour of marine turtles, which are still not well understood, nesting monitoring, training and assistance.

Fruitful collaboration with the NGOs MEDASSET and ARCHELON has enabled several objectives to be achieved. A conference, scheduled for May 2005, is being organized jointly by the SPA/RAC, the Secretariats of the Bonn and Bern Conventions and the Turkish Government, in order to boost efforts and allow the exchange of scientific information.

The **Action Plan for the conservation of marine vegetation** deals with the conservation of typical vegetation. There are over 1,000 macroscopic plant species in the Mediterranean with a high rate of endemism (20% of algae species). Their function is crucial for the maintenance of marine ecosystems and thus, their deterioration leads to degradation in a number of areas: primary production, oxygenation, spawning grounds, nurseries, coastal stability, and has both an ecological and an economic impact.

The Plan assumes responsibility for studies and actions relating to posidonia meadows, which are particularly important for marine life, reefs, surface organogenic bodies and some cystoseira belts, as well as other formations. It includes the drafting and implementation of appropriate legislation and the setting up of monitoring networks.

Some countries have received assistance and training for the introduction of the new mapping technologies for posidonia meadows.

The **Action Plan for the conservation of cartilaginous fish** is aimed at conserving and managing the populations of sharks and other cartilaginous fish, taking into account the International Plan of Action for the Conservation and Management of Sharks (IPOA-SHARKS). It encourages the establishment of regional strategies that define priorities and actions to be taken at the regional and national levels.

The **Action Plan for the conservation of marine bird species** aims to maintain and/or restore the population levels of bird spe-

cies listed as threatened or endangered in the SPA and Biodiversity Protocol to a favourable conservation status and to ensure their long-term conservation. It is the result of initiatives taken by Mediterranean partners (BirdLife, WWF, IUCN, MEDMARAVIS and the Station biologique de la Tour de Valat).

The SPA/RAC makes every effort to prevent overlapping with other efforts at the regional level and to cooperate at the international level with the relevant conventions and agreements (Bonn, Bern, ECNC and AEWA) and calls on partners and experts for the Plan's implementation.

Regarding the **Action Plan on the introduction of non-indigenous species**, the SPA Protocol calls on all Contracting Parties to take measures to regulate the intentional or accidental introduction of non-indigenous or genetically-modified species to the wild and prohibit those that may have harmful impacts on ecosystems, habitats or species.

The Centre also coordinated activities under the **Regional Project for the Development of Marine and Coastal Protected Areas in the Mediterranean Region (MedMPA)**, which led to the formulation of management plans for protected marine areas and the identification of sites of conservation interest with a view to preparing national plans for their development. The project, which ended in December 2004, received financial support from the European Commission and was implemented in seven countries with the support of European scientific partners.

Another SPA/RAC activity has been the preparation and implementation of a **Mediterranean Taxonomy Initiative (MTI)**, in harmony with the Global Taxonomy Initiative, to assess needs and capacities, to help establish and maintain the systems required and facilitate access to taxonomic information and training.

In the Mediterranean, we must take account of the CBD's strategic plan, which prescribes that, by 2010 for the land and by 2012 for marine areas, there should be a global network of adequate large-scale national and regional systems.

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MAP: The colossal challenge

Rarely has an organization had to operate in a more difficult and ephemeral environment than has the UNEP/Mediterranean Action Plan. It has been working for 30 years over three continents, with the European Union and 21 countries bordering the Mediterranean Sea, speaking more than 15 different languages overlaid with a number of dialects. Its aim to cope with environmental degradation in coastal areas and inland and to link sustainable resource management with development, in order to protect the Mediterranean region, is a colossal challenge indeed.

Add to this the facts that:

- Mass tourism provides 200 million visitors to the region each year, a figure that continues to rise.
- 48% of urban centres lack sewage treatment facilities
- 70–85% of waste waters are disposed of untreated
- 60 petrol refineries dump 20.000 tonnes of petrol into the sea per year
- Over 35% of the Mediterranean countries populations live on or near the shoreline.
- Shipping traffic through the Straits of Gibraltar and the Bosphorus is enormous.
- Every year approximately one million tons of oil is released into the Mediterranean Sea by accidental spills and by tankers illegally cleaning their tanks at sea.
- Coastal towns of the Mediterranean produce 30–40 million tons of garbage each year.
- Through the action of wind and currents the eastern Mediterranean shores are sometimes piled one metre deep in plastic waste arising from elsewhere.
- Over-fishing and bottom trawling have a disastrous effect on marine life.
- Agricultural chemical run-off causes eutrophication.
- 1,5 million tons of highly toxic cancerous chromium waste is heaped on a turtle nesting beach covered with a sheet of plastic.

All this with an enclosed sea that takes over a century to be renewed through the Straits of Gibraltar.

MAP is asked to work through collaboration with Mediterranean governments most of which give environmental matters a low priority, giving over-riding precedence to economic growth. MEDASSET's experience in working with MAP since 1985 can cite governments as:

- Failing to answer a repeatedly submitted MAP letter for a period of two years delaying publication of MAP co-funded research.
- Refusing to allow distribution of a MAP publication.
- Cutting off a phone line dedicated for Mediterranean wide marine life tagging response.
- Failing to implement Legislation and Conventions.
- Failing to make funds available for protected areas.

UNEP/MAP is to be congratulated on its many achievements accomplished despite such incredible odds.

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MAP and NGOs: good cooperation, but more is needed

The Arab Network for Environment and Development (RAED) with its permanent Secretariat in the Arab Office for Youth and Environment (AOYE) in Egypt, is a Non-Governmental Organization accredited as a Partner to the Mediterranean Action Plan.

Co-operation between RAED, AOYE and MAP has extended over a number of years in different fields and has moved on three main axes:

1. **Participation:** RAED and AOYE participated in MAP meetings and co-operated with the MAP Regional Activity Centres (RACs) and the Mediterranean Commission for Sustainable Development (MCSD).
2. **Support:** the MAP supported many activities carried out by RAED with a view to networking with NGOs and supporting their capacity building.

An example is the publishing of "Environment Forum", a monthly bulletin that tackles environmental issues and projects in different Arab states, especially the ones aiming at achieving sustainable development targets. This bulletin is distributed in most of the Arab states.

MAP also provided financial assistance to members of civil associations from the countries of the Southern Mediterranean to attend seminars related to the Arab region. Such was the case of the Workshop on Social Concepts to Achieve Sustainable Development, held in 1998, which aimed at linking society with sustainable development.

Support was also made available by the MAP in the field of information, through a workshop held in 2000 on Information and Participation in Environmental Issues and Sustainable Development.

MAP showed special interest for tackling the problem of water and its relation to poverty, through a Workshop on Water Valuing and Poverty, held in December 2001.

The MAP has also contributed to the organization of a sub-regional meeting on Water in North Africa and in the Arab Consultation as a follow-up to the Johannesburg Summit and the launching of the Arabic version of the "Water in the Mediterranean" educational package on 6–9 December 2004.

3. Partnership: In addition to all this, the MAP has implemented its principle of partnership through its co-operation with RAED, as a representative of the Arab civil society organizations, in coping with the challenge of achieving sustainable development goals in the Mediterranean.

Strategy for water management

The question of water is considered one of the most important issues and a key priority for action from the perspective of RAED. It is the cornerstone in achieving the millennium goals of development that include reducing the number of those deprived of clean drinking water by 50% by 2015.

This is a huge challenge, which requires intensified efforts in order to be met. Another challenge in the field of water is the development of an integrated strategy for water management, which should be part of all national strategies for development. Some Mediterranean countries have succeeded in achieving their targets for 2005, with respect to integrated management of water.

The issue of water does not only involve the availability of drinking water and the number of beneficiaries, but also the quality of water provided.

Based on the above, we call on the MAP to increase its activities aimed at coping with the problem of water and to raise awareness among the various sectors of society to reduce the waste of drinking water.

Environmental actions, civil society and the MAP

We suggest more environmental activities to be addressed by civil society with MAP's assistance, including:

- Increasing co-operation in educational activities in the field of sustainability through environmental scholastic and non-scholastic programmes.

- Increasing co-operation, through the MCSD, in the field of integrated water resources management and integrated coastal areas management in the Southern areas of the Mediterranean.

- Implementing joint activities regarding the conservation of Mediterranean cultural heritage.

- Implementing joint activities between the North and South of the Mediterranean in the field of renewable energy, particularly solar and wind energies as well as making use of energy efficiency technology.

- Implementing joint projects to strengthen networks, observatories and data collection systems as well as facilitating the access of people to environmental information and their participation in decision-making.

- Organizing workshops –jointly by RAED, as a network representing civil organizations in 17 Arab states, and the MCSD– on the implications of globalization that affect social cohesion, environmental quality and cultural identity within the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and the proposed free trade zone.

- Increasing the budget for the work undertaken by the MCSD in promoting sustainable development in the region and taking appropriate measures to implement its decisions, recommendations and plans of action.

- Preparing plans for the implementation of the initiative on Water, Energy, Health, Agriculture and Biodiversity (WEHAB) –announced by the UN Secretary General as environmental issues for particular focus in this decade– through the MCSD and the civil society.

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The case of the Adriatic Sea

The Mediterranean Action Plan (MAP) serves as a key tool for the preservation of the region's environment. Nevertheless, as each area of the Mediterranean is unique and special by its characteristics, different measures need to be taken, and to different extents, for their protection.

The Adriatic Sea is a very peculiar area. It is a semi-enclosed and mostly relatively shallow sea, where the impacts of human activities have the potential to cause severe damage.

Indeed, the Adriatic Sea, especially its northern part, is believed to be one of the most degraded areas of the Mediterranean Sea. Its semi-enclosed nature and shallow waters cause slow currents which means there is a low rate of water exchange and thus make it vulnerable to major pollutants, such as sewage waste and possible oil spills. On the eastern side, numerous islands, rich vegetation and a rich underwater world form a unique natural heritage.

MAP and the Adriatic

MAP has shown effect in the Adriatic Sea, however probably to an insufficient extent.

For example, the MAP's guidelines say that it is necessary to conduct certain research and monitoring activities. Some activities in these fields are being carried-out by national institutions. They are certainly of high quality and are important for future conservation activities, however they should be presented more widely and to a wider audience, the general public.

Moreover, some of these research and monitoring activities are not conducted by Governmental bodies, but some Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) are either performing these activities or at least trying to.

Given this situation, the most logic scenario would probably be that the Government should actively support such efforts. Unfortunately, this is not always the case and many actions performed by NGOs go unnoticed by the Authorities. Another problem that NGOs are facing is that they are considered non-scientific and non-expert, which is not always true.

Too often universities and natural history museums are thought as the only competent institutions to perform research activities. Nevertheless, in some cases, members of NGOs can be more experienced and competent in their fields of activity than members of Governmental Organizations who work in other areas of science.

More attention to NGOs

Therefore, NGOs dealing with research and science should be treated equally and considered scientific, if they prove so, of course.


There has been some progress concerning MAP guidelines as well. For example, MAP and the Barcelona Convention have proposed a Protocol on Specially Protected Areas (SPAs) and Biological Diversity in the Mediterranean, which suggests a programme of activities that will assist in protecting and sustainably managing the Mediterranean natural and cultural heritage, thus contributing to the sustainable development of the region. SPAs have indeed been established in various parts of the Adriatic.

Good examples

This is a good example of implementation of the MAP and the Barcelona Convention, however the monitoring of possible violations should be strengthened, as they occur quite regularly.

The EC Natura 2000 network is another case that probably deserves positive critique and seems to have been effective. It has also successfully conducted certain monitoring activities.

Regional and international cooperation is working well in many parts of the Adriatic, however some regulations sometimes make co-operations a bit difficult, especially in the case of international cooperation.



National and international restrictions, which are surely vital to the benefit of all countries concerned, can sometimes cause problems to scientists and activists who are trying to cooperate. One example of that can be some simple regulations at the national borders, which can sometimes cause difficulties to partners on both sides of the border in conducting research in the area, in the exchange of samples, etc.

It could be said that Governments too often support and allow projects of rapid socio-economic development, which bring short-term economic advantages, but have negative effects on the preservation of the Mediterranean, in the long term. When it comes to environmental issues, shortcomings in support, funds and capacities often become evident.

Governmentals and Non-Governmentals

Governmental bodies and NGOs should strive to strengthen the legal measures and enable the development of environment-friendly research and conservation projects.

However, legislation is not sufficient for an efficient conservation. Education and public awareness actions, which are already conducted by various organizations, should be expanded and strengthened.

The Public has a vital role in the long-term preservation of natural resources.

Specific problems, specific measures

Given the peculiarity of the Adriatic Sea and its vulnerability, certain area-specific problems should be identified and certain measures should possibly be addressed for this area specifically.

In conclusion, it has to be said that both the MAP and the Barcelona Convention serve as a good base for the conservation of the Mediterranean sea, but that conservation activities have to be continued and strengthened and that cooperation between Governmental and Non-Governmental Organizations is necessary, both at the national and international levels.

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The MAP and the EMP: Towards a future partnership

The Mediterranean is a fascinating part of the world. As someone working within a global organization –Friends of the Earth International has over 70 offices around the world– I have had the opportunity to compare it with other regions. The Mediterranean is such a fantastically diverse region, ecologically, culturally, politically and from the development perspective too. There seem to be so many contradictions that it is often bewildering for an outsider to get a full grasp of the complexities of the region.

Friends of the Earth –through its Mediterranean Programme, MedNet– has been active in the region for some 15 years. We quickly identified the work of the Mediterranean Action Plan (MAP) and the EuroMediterranean Partnership (EMP) as key areas where we wished to intervene and influence.

Different purposes, one overall goal

Analyses of both these regional processes show that MAP and the EMP have different purposes but both claim to share sustainable development as the overall goal of regional policy.

On the one hand MAP is a mature process (30 years) involving almost all countries in the Mediterranean basin in a Partnership focused on sustainable development originating from the environmental Convention to protect the Mediterranean Sea.

On the other hand the EMP is a younger process (10 years) euro centrist in nature, and originally conceived to stabilize the

EU's Mediterranean external border region. Its primary focus is security and its end game is to create a peaceful, prosperous region through closer ties and integration with the EU. The EMP aims to set up a EuroMed free trade Zone by 2010 as the vehicle to achieve its vision. From an NGO perspective environmental protection and sustainable development are paid lip service by the EMP, but no more than that. The EMP process is more influential than MAP as the EMP has high-level political participation of Foreign Ministers and the financial backing of the European Commission and the European Investment Bank.

Insufficient cooperation

Although there is some overlap between both regional processes and therefore opportunities for synergies; levels of co-operation remain insufficient. This represents a lost opportunity in a fragile eco-region where environmental and social pressures are becoming increasingly acute and potentially calamitous.

So what are the logjams, which prevent mutually supportive cooperation between MAP and the EMP? It is enlightening to look at the players involved in both processes.

From the MAP side the main players and active partners are from the environment world; be it from national environment ministries or environmental NGOs. The result is output, which provides clear expertise on issues related to environment and the environmental pillar of sustainable development. However, all this output and resulting recommendations are rarely –if ever– mainstreamed into developmental planning nationally, because environment has practically no voice in national planning. We the environmentalists are small fish indeed.

On the EMP side, the Partnership is run by the external affairs ministries and the European Commission DG for external affairs. Big powerful players, which have both financial and political clout nationally. When a minister for foreign affairs speaks, people sit up and listen. Unfortunately, the same can not be said for environmental ministers.

The EMP priorities reflect the mindset of external affairs ministers focusing on setting up a free trade area and modernizing partner countries administrations and economies i.e. the economic pillar of sustainable development. Unfortunately, the social and environmental pillars fall by the wayside, e.g. the Euro-Mediterranean free-trade zone was committed to without a preliminary sustainable impact study. Official documents make vague references to these issues of course. How many times have we read EuroMed foreign ministers “reiterated” their commitment to sustainable development? How many times have they “taken note” of civil society’s contributions on social and environmental themes?

What to do?

The question that comes to mind at this point is how can we bring the wise old head of MAP together with the youthful drive and ambition of the EMP for the benefit of Mediterranean citizens. Surely we can cleverly bring together the political and financial clout of the EMP and the environmental expertise of MAP to work towards the often commonly stated goal of sustainable development in the region. Would it not be now the most fitting time for this to happen as both regional processes

celebrate significant milestones –30 years of MAP and 10 years of the EMP?

Many NGOs argue that there has never been a better time. The Mediterranean Commission for Sustainable Development (MCSD) is currently hard at work drafting a Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (MSSD). It is a strategy that takes into account the Millennium Development Goals, the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, the evolution of Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and the Sustainable Development Strategy of the European Union (EU), adopted in Copenhagen in 2001. Furthermore, the strategy encapsulates all the much-vaunted environmental expertise of MAP.

Meanwhile, Friends of the Earth MedNet in collaboration with partner NGOs is working hard to mobilize Mediterranean civil society through consultation processes so that our views are reflected in the final MSSD documents.

The missing link

However, the missing link in this jigsaw is implementation. How can we take the MSSD from the drawing board and into the national development planning of Mediterranean states? Would it not make sense for the EMP to adopt the MSSD as the vehicle to achieve sustainable development in the Partnership? Surely this bold decision would add flesh and bones to often repeated commitments made to sustainable development and environmental integration in the EMP. Well, the heads of state summit in Barcelona in November 2005, to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the Partnership would, from an NGO perspective, be an ideal moment to make this decisive commitment to sustainable development in the region.

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The MAP is a regional cooperative effort involving 21 countries bordering the Mediterranean Sea as well as the European Union.

As Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols, they strive to meet the challenges of protecting the marine and coastal environment while promoting regional cooperation to achieve sustainable development.



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