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MEDITERRANEAN ACTION PLAN

Consultation Meeting on the application of the
ecosystem approach by the Mediterranean Action Plan

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Draft road map for the application of the ecosystem approach by MAP: proposed table of contents

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1. Background

In 1975, the Mediterranean countries and the EEC adopted the Mediterranean Action Plan (MAP) and in 1976 the Convention for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea against Pollution (Barcelona Convention). The Convention envisages the preparation of technical protocols. Six protocols of the Convention have already been signed by the contracting parties.

Although the initial focus of MAP was on marine pollution, experience soon confirmed that socio-economic trends, combined with poor management and development planning, are at the root of most environmental problems; and that meaningful and lasting environmental protection is inseparably linked to social and economic development. Therefore, the focus of MAP gradually shifted from a sectoral approach of pollution assessment to pollution control and integrated coastal-zone planning and management as the key tool through which solutions are being sought.

The Contracting Parties have designated the United Nations Environment Programme as responsible for carrying out the functions of the Secretariat to the Barcelona Convention. To ensure this function, the Executive Director of UNEP has established an office in Athens, Greece, to act as the Regional Coordinating Unit for the programme. A Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development (MCSO) was established as an advisory body to the Contracting Parties. In addition, six Regional Activity Centres (RACs) have so far been established to implement various components of the Action Plan. All but one of these centres are national centres with a regional role to play on behalf of MAP.

The Blue Plan Regional Activity Centre (BP/RAC) which is located in Sophia Antipolis (France) undertakes prospective studies of the development trends and their environmental impacts in the Mediterranean region. The object of the Regional Activity Centre in Split, Croatia, known as PAP/RAC (Priority Actions Programme) is to address immediate problems of a development nature and their effects on coastal environment and resources, through priority actions in a number of fields, with a view to inducing sound environmental management practices required for sustainable development.

The Regional Activity Centre in Tunis, known as SPA/RAC (Specially Protected Areas and Biodiversity) has been created to assist countries in the technical implementation of the Biodiversity Protocol. The Cleaner Production Centre (CP/RAC) in Barcelona is assisting states in the introduction of the cleaner production concept, its techniques and practices and its advantages in the improvement of the industry sector, thus achieving a reduction of industrial discharges and wastes.

The Regional Marine Pollution Emergency Response Centre (REMPEC), in Malta, is a UN Centre run by IMO and was created to assist the Contracting Parties in their commitments with the Emergency protocol. The Environment Remote Sensing Regional Activity Centre (ERS/RAC) located in Palermo, Italy, has now been transformed into a new centre based in Rome to deal with information issues (INFO/RAC).

The MED POL programme, which is the scientific and technical component of MAP, was initially the major component. Its first phase (1975-1981) played a leading role in upgrading the technical capabilities of most Mediterranean countries and in establishing a network of institutions undertaking marine pollution work and its second phase (1982-1996) assisted in developing and maintaining national monitoring programmes in the region. In its third phase (1996-2005), emphasis was shifted from pollution assessment to pollution control. MED POL is now entering its fourth phase.

The Ecosystem Approach was first adopted by the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity held in Nairobi, in May 2000 as the fundamental tool for delivery of the Convention's three primary objectives. It was endorsed by the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg (2002) and features strongly in the subsequent Plan of Implementation which encourages its application in the marine environment by 2010. Use of the Approach also links to commitments made by the European Union Heads of Government, at Gothenburg, to halt the rate of loss of biodiversity by 2010. The new European Water Framework Directive is highly compatible with the application of the Ecosystem Approach. The Ecosystem Approach has also been recommended as a strategic approach to implementing the requirements of the Ramsar Convention, as well as numerous other international agreements on the marine and coastal environment.

In general, the Ecosystem Approach is embedded in the concept of sustainable development, which requires that the needs of future generations are not compromised by the actions of people today. The Ecosystem Approach puts emphasis on a management regime that maintains the health of the ecosystem alongside appropriate human use of the marine environment, for the benefit of current and future generations.

The ecosystem approach being a management tool should be applied in the framework of a marine strategy, which would set up a number of goals and objectives to be achieved. It is the main tool for the application of such a marine strategy at any level, including the regional one.

2. Scope and purpose

The European Community signed an agreement with the Mediterranean Action Plan to contribute towards the implementation of an action entitled: "Implementation of the ecosystem approach in the Mediterranean sea. Development of Environmental Quality Objectives." According to the project document, the aim of the EC/MAP project is to facilitate the implementation of the Ecosystem Approach by MAP. To this end, the following operational objectives are defined:

- 1) To identify the implications of the implementation of the ecosystem approach upon the formulation and implementation of MAP policies, strategies and activities.
- 2) To identify the implications for the MAP working system and structure, in particular:
 - a) the allocation of tasks between MAP components
 - b) the definition of a road map for the implementation
- 3) To define instruments, tools and means to assure the implementation of this approach by MAP. In particular:
 - a) the need to consider the sub-regional dimension
 - b) the development of Mediterranean EQOs
 - c) the development of the concept of sciences for policy development and the links between monitoring, assessment and actions

In order to reach the above objectives, MAP secretariat proposes to carry out a wide consultative process to gather the opinion of experts within the region. Two meetings of experts will be held.

The results of the project are expected to facilitate the implementation of the ecosystem approach by MAP and its components. Three main elements will form the deliverables:

- Adaptation strategies to be implemented by MAP and Mediterranean countries.
- Road map for implementation, including timelines
- Proposal for the development of EQOs for the Mediterranean that may include specific objectives.

All the deliverables will be included in a document. The first meeting of experts will provide advice relevant to the contents of the document. The document will include a specific proposal for a vision, principles and strategic goals relevant only **to the quality of the marine environment**. It will not deal with any issue relevant to economic development. General objectives will also be proposed but not any other types of objectives. However, proposals will be made as to how to proceed further in establishing ecological or environmental quality objectives, indicators, limits and targets.

3. A vision for MAP

A short text on the vision will be prepared taking into consideration the various resolutions and decisions adopted by the Contracting Parties as well as the Barcelona Convention and related protocols.

The vision will reflect the desire of the Mediterranean states to protect the Mediterranean Sea so that present and future generations can enjoy and benefit from a clean, safe, healthy, productive and biologically diverse sea.

4. Global and MAP principles

Article 4 of the Barcelona Convention includes some of the principles that MAP is using. Others include:

- integration of environmental protection in the development process, with systemic analysis and consultation;
 - internalization of environmental costs (the polluter pays principle);
 - participation in and access to information and justice;
 - equity among generations;
 - the common but differentiated responsibilities of developed countries and those that are not yet developed;
 - prevention and prudence (the precautionary principle) in the absence of certainty;
 - the interdependent relations between the global and local levels (the principle of subsidiarity);
- and also:
- collective responsibility;

- broad-based participation, dialogue and participation;
- partnerships and corporate responsibility;
- access to basic requirements and access to financial resources.

In introducing the management tool of ecosystem approach more management principles will be added. The CPs of the Convention for Biological Diversity adopted twelve principles and five points were proposed as operational guidance. One of the points encourages the use of adaptive management practices.

5. The current situation

5.1 Existing policies (environmental and socio-economic)

The Mediterranean strategy for sustainable development (MSSD) as well as the Strategic Action Programmes spell out the policies adopted by MAP.

5.2 The ecosystem status

There is an increasing need to apply integrated ecosystem-based approaches for protection of the Mediterranean environment, which currently is being plagued by several pressures impacting coastal and marine habitats. The most important issues are:

- pollution related to urbanization and industrial activities;
- unsustainable exploitation of fisheries and aquaculture resources;
- inadequate regulatory mechanisms (mainly lack of law enforcement);
- lack of knowledge and appreciation of the biological and cultural value of existing habitats.

Many documents exist on this issue. Reference will be made specifically to the documents prepared jointly with the EEA and the TDA.

5.3 Human activities and needs

Human activities and needs have already been the subject of a number of studies. Root causes of major environmental issues identified in the region are very well defined in the TDA.

5.4 Important ecosystem properties and threats

MAP and EEA documents spell out the important ecosystem properties as well as the pressures and threats.

6. Strategic goals and associated objectives

Having in mind the vision and principles, a number of strategic goals will be formulated. Objectives will be derived from the goals having in mind the ecosystem approach to management.

The main objectives of MAP Phase II are:

- to ensure sustainable management of natural marine and land resources and to integrate the environment in social and economic development, and land-use policies;
- to protect the marine environment and coastal zones through prevention of pollution, and by reduction and, as far as possible, elimination of pollutant inputs, whether chronic or accidental;
- to protect nature, and protect and enhance sites and landscapes of ecological or cultural value;
- to strengthen solidarity among Mediterranean coastal States in managing their common heritage and resources for the benefit of present and future generations; and
- to contribute to improvement of the quality of life

The Ecosystem Approach strives to ensure that those human activities and demands that have an actual or potential impact on the marine environment are managed effectively. The Ecosystem Approach does not require control of the natural processes of ecosystems; only that these must be considered in managing human activities. The Ecosystem Approach to management is based on a long-term perspective, and highlights the dependence of economic and social sustainability on ecological sustainability. Ecological sustainability will be achieved by setting and achieving Ecological Objectives that protect ecosystem structure and function from serious or irreversible harm. Economic and Social Objectives should be met without compromising Ecological Objectives. Achieving the appropriate balance between Ecological, Economic and Social Objectives requires that Ecological Objectives, and the associated Operational Objectives, should be set on geographical scales comparable with Economic and Social Objectives.

7. Strategies to adapt MAP to the Ecosystem Approach

- 7.1 Convention and protocols
- 7.2 Components of MAP
- 7.3 Land marks and principal routes of the road map
- 7.4 Instruments, tools and means to ensure implementation of the Ecosystem Approach
- 7.5 Time frame for the implementation

At this stage a contrast will be made of the current situation with the Vision. The discrepancies in the ecosystem status will be addressed through taking an Ecosystem Approach to management which should be adaptive. The modification of article 4 of the Convention (and possibly other legal instruments) will be examined.

To pave the road to apply the ecosystem approach, it is necessary that MAP and the contracting parties would transform their management system to be in line with the ecosystem approach. This will be achieved by setting SMART objectives giving emphasis to M and T (measurable and time bound) to ensure an effective links between different orientations inside each of the MAP components and between these components. All ongoing activities have to be analyzed and classified into categories for each objective, such as: those contributing directly to the achievement of the objective, those falling into the assistance component e.g. training activities, writing of manuals, etc, those falling into the Information component and those falling into the category of monitoring, research, assessment, and studies. This should be complemented by a review of the managerial systems adopted by the contracting parties.

After the setting of ecological objectives, operational objectives with indicators and reference points will be derived. The different sub-regions in the Mediterranean may set different ecological and operational objectives as they may have different priorities based on different ecological conditions.

Once the suite of operational objectives, indicators, targets, and limits have been adopted, the management tools are applied to continually move the ecosystem closer to the targets and away from the limits. Monitoring and assessment of the current status of the indicators is important to see the progress achieved in meeting the objectives. Based on the outcome of these assessments, updates of the management measures should be considered and a new set of measures and actions, where and if needed, should be planned for the next cycle.

8. Implications of the implementation of the approach on MAP's

- a) policies, strategies and activities
- b) working system and structure

The setting of new objectives and the use of the Ecosystem Approach may have implications MAP's policies, strategies and activities. Especially the analysis and classification of the on-going activities (see above) may result in the initiation of new activities or the modification or abandoning of existing ones. Also there may be possible re-allocation of tasks between components and implications on work methodology.

9. Developing Ecological Quality Objectives (EQOs)

The present document will not go beyond proposing strategic goals and general objectives. The setting of ecological objectives will be undertaken by scientific groups and will be based on the analysis of the ecosystem properties and threats. A proposal will be prepared on how to proceed in the setting of unambiguous EQOs at all scales. A number of criteria will also be put forward.