



**United Nations
Environment
Programme**



UNEP(OCA)/MED WG.147/3
21 October 1998

Original: ENGLISH

MEDITERRANEAN ACTION PLAN

Meeting of the Working Group on
MAP/NGO Collaboration

Athens, 9 October 1998

**REPORT OF THE MEETING OF THE
WORKING GROUP ON MAP/NGO COLLABORATION**

Introduction

1. During their last meeting, the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention and its protocols (Tunis, 18-21 November 1997), decided to “undertake a methodological reflection in relation to NGOs participation in MAP” and for this purpose, decided to “establish a Working Group composed of representatives of the Contracting Parties” to review this subject and propose the necessary recommendations.
2. At its last meeting (Tunis, 28 March 1998), the Bureau of the Contracting Parties reviewed the subject, made various comments and requested the Secretariat to convene the meeting of the Working Group and report to the next Bureau meeting, the results of the deliberation of the Working Group.
3. In conformity with those decisions, the meeting of the Working Group was convened at the MAP premises, in Athens, on 9 October 1998.

Participation

4. Due to the limited funds secured to cover the costs of the meeting, only experts representing the Contracting Parties members of the Bureau were invited to participate in the meeting.
5. Representatives from two main Networks of NGOs were also invited to participate in one session and give a presentation on the role of their Networks with regard to NGOs participation in MAP.
6. The full list of participants is contained in **Annex I** to this report.

Agenda Item I - Opening of the Meeting

7. The meeting was opened by Mr. L. Chabason, MAP Coordinator, who welcomed the participants. He noted the absence of the Deputy Coordinator, Mr. A. Hoballah, from the meeting, unable to attend due to the workload of the forthcoming fourth meeting of the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development (MCSD).
8. He also informed the meeting of the replacement of the Director of SPA/RAC, Mr. M. Saied, by Mr. A. Hentati, Official of the Ministry of the Environment and Physical Planning of Tunisia. Mr. Hentati assumed his function as the new Director of SPA/RAC, on 5 October 1998.
9. The Coordinator informed the meeting of the sad news of the sudden death of Mr. Joaquin Ros, Official of the Ministry of the Environment of Spain, and expressed the deep regret for this loss. He pointed out that Mr. Ros' long collaborations and contributions to MAP have been extremely important.
10. All participants also expressed their deep regret and condolences for this untimely and sad news of Mr. Ros' death.

Agenda Item 2 - Adoption of the Agenda and Organization of Work

11. The Secretariat introduced the Provisional Agenda contained in document UNEP(OCA)/MED WG.147/1 and informed the meeting that representatives of two Networks of NGOs would join the meeting after the coffee break, in order to make presentations on the experience of NGOs and the Networks and their views on

MAP/NGOs future relations.

12. The meeting adopted the Provisional Agenda and agreed on the organization of work as suggested by the Secretariat.

Agenda Item 3 - Framework for MAP/NGOs collaboration

13. Mr. Chabason, MAP Coordinator referred to the role of the Contracting Parties in encouraging MAP/NGOs collaboration including the request to review this exercise and make proposals thereon. He also referred to the distinction between international NGOs and Mediterranean NGOs and suggested that more attention and support is to be directed towards national and local NGOs in the Mediterranean, particularly those in the South, as we have to take into consideration people's views at local and regional levels, not only what international NGOs propose. He suggested that a capacity building programme for Mediterranean NGOs and Networks should be implemented. The programme would encompass, *inter alia* ways and means for promoting the policies, strategies and programmes derived from the Barcelona Convention and its protocols, and the decisions of the Contracting Parties; access to information and techniques for raising public awareness towards environmental and sustainable development issues; training programmes and workshops; financial assistance to NGOs which are responsive to local and national needs and to Networks for regional projects of benefit to a wider community, through a reasonable increase in the MAP budget line for assistance to NGOs, in conformity with UNEP/MAP financial regulations; legal assistance to NGOs; and encourage the establishment of new networks and strengthen the existing ones.

With regard to the role of governments, he pointed out that this issue is a delicate one and has to be handled with care. However, governments should create the sustainable working conditions for NGOs to assume their responsibilities as public awareness organizations, their ability to bring environmental cases to courts, the possibility to refer to MAP legal instruments and implementation in countries and their effective participation in projects dealing with nature conservation.

14. Mr. I. Dharat, Senior Programme Officer, referred to the main document before the meeting, namely, the Secretariat Note (UNEP(OCA)/MED WG.147/2/Corr.1) which is composed of an introductory section describing the history of MAP in relation to NGOs, the objectives of collaboration, the institutional framework and conclusions and recommendations for future involvement and participation of NGOs in MAP's activities.
15. In particular, he referred to the positive steps taken to improve MAP/NGOs relation, such as, the amendments to the Rules of Procedure of MAP meetings to enable NGOs to participate in MAP meetings, including meetings of technical committees, the establishment of a database for NGOs participating in MAP and NGOs participation on an equal footing in the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development (MCSD), which is a significant innovation in MAP/NGOs relations, even in the whole UN system.

All of these steps have improved the vitality of the MAP/NGOs collaboration.

16. He also informed the meeting that a questionnaire was prepared by a MAP trainee, under the Internship programme of MAP, which was sent to the 71 NGOs listed in the "MAP Directory of Non-Governmental Organizations - MAP Partners". Out of these 71 organizations, only 19 replies were received. On the basis of the questionnaire, and using the MAP files, the trainee prepared a report on "MAP/NGO Collaboration - An Overview". Contained in document: UNEP(OCA)/MED WG.147/Inf.4, which reviews

MAP/NGO relations, the legislative basis, the criteria for an NGO to become a MAP Partner, and analysis of the replies to the questionnaire and proposal for future collaboration.

17. It was noted from the various replies that:

- out of 71 NGOs, about 30 are effectively cooperating with MAP;
- cooperation is centred on attending MAP meetings, undertaking research on behalf of MAP, disseminating of information and providing limited financial assistance to NGOs.

18. The Senior Programme Officer also noted that it appears from the MAP/NGOs list that about 80% of the NGOs originate in the developed northern part of the Mediterranean. A matter which necessitates the encouragement of establishing more NGOs in the Southern and Eastern parts of the Basin and the need to upgrade the capabilities of the existing ones.

Moreover, there is significant evidence that NGOs participation in MAP activities has improved MAP's operations though assisting in identifying and assessing the nature and extent of both environmental and sustainable development issues in the Mediterranean region, particularly in raising public awareness about the Mediterranean environment.

19. Finally he referred to the various recommendations contained in the "Note by the Secretariat" and suggested them for the consideration of the meeting. He informed the meeting that the representative of Monaco was not able to attend the meeting due to other commitments. Nevertheless, he sent his comments on the subject which are contained in document: "UNEP(OCA)/MED WG.147/CRP.1".

20. During the ensuing debate, Mr. A. Boargob of Libya thanked the Secretariat for convening the meeting and presenting the background documents. He pointed out that NGOs are playing a very important role, in particular in the field of public awareness. In this regard, his country is supporting various new NGOs in Libya, through limited financial assistance to implement sound environmental projects. He fully supported the recommendations concerning the need for support to NGOs in the Southern and Eastern part of the Mediterranean. For this, he proposed that a budget line with a reasonable amount should be created in the MAP programme for such assistance. Due to the fact that there are thousands of NGOs operating in the Mediterranean region, he suggested that mainly environmental NGOs would be linked to MAP.

He also recommended that all Mediterranean countries should give the necessary support to relevant NGOs. As for the process of acceptance of NGOs to be accredited to MAP, he suggested that this exercise should go through the meetings of the national focal points for MAP.

With regard to the creation of Networks of NGOs, he felt that while we have to encourage the creation of Networks, nevertheless, these Networks should not acquire all the benefits deriving from MAP/NGO relation. More attention and assistance should be given to newly established and individual NGOs from the Southern part of the Mediterranean.

21. Mr. A. Lascaratos, the representative of Greece reemphasized what has been mentioned in the Secretariat report of the need to give more support to NGOs from the South and to encourage the creation of more organizations and networks in that part of the Mediterranean. In order to obtain positive results, and encourage them to apply to MAP accreditation, the Secretariat should make efforts in approaching the existing and

new organizations. He mentioned the need to strengthen public awareness and the diffusion of information from the part of NGOs to their constituents and the public at large, which he considers as the main function of NGOs. While encouraging the creation of Networks and strengthening the existing ones, nevertheless, he is of the opinion that they should act as focal points of the various NGOs they represent, they should be represented in the various MAP meetings by relevant experts and the Secretariat is to have guarantees that a Network is not a one-man show. He also supported the creation of a capacity building programme to remedy the existing imbalance in the South-North participation of NGOs in MAP activities. Any financial assistance is to be linked to a real productivity of the organization. Moreover, he was not in favour of giving MAP financial assistance only to Networks and leaving aside the individual NGOs. With regard to NGO/Government relations, he agrees with those who advocate that NGOs have to be free, and not to have clashes with Governments, but to cooperate for the benefit of the environment.

He suggested that a consultation meeting of NGOs listed in the MAP Directory is to be convened by the Secretariat in order to review MAP/NGO relations.

Finally, he proposed that in order for MAP to be aware of NGO activities, MAP should be invited to relevant annual meetings of NGOs.

22. Ms. K. Adanali, the representative of Turkey raised the issue of the relation between governments and NGOs. She stressed that there is no system on how they can cooperate, and how to disseminate information within the country. She requested that the Secretariat should encourage the exchange of information among NGOs and assist them to disseminate MAP information which is an important role to be played by NGOs. She pointed out her concern regarding the creation of Networks for particular agreements such as the creation of Networks for GEF and the imminent creation of Networks for METAP, which may create confusion.
23. Mr. A. Randic, the representative of Croatia gave information on the role of NGOs in Croatia and pointed out that public hearings are organized in his country to raise public awareness. He noted that the MAP/NGO Directory does not include any NGO from his country. He referred to an NGO called "Our Beautiful Home Land" which has a long tradition in Croatia, with 10,000 members and important activities in the field of biodiversity.

He pointed out that many new NGOs have been created lately. His government encourages these NGOs and participates in their activities. He promised to encourage them to request MAP accreditation.
24. Mr. A. Jeridi, the representative of Tunisia distributed a paper which contained the Tunisian experience with regard to NGOs and proposed recommendations on how to improve MAP/NGO relations. He informed the meeting that an NGO Unit has been created within the framework of the Ministry of Environment. The paper deals with various issues related to NGOs, such as, NGO classification, selection criteria and NGO input into MAPs process and action. He pointed out that with regard to classification, MAP has been faced with the difficult task of producing such clear classification due to several reasons, one is that the categories of NGOs are as numerous and various in size and scope, two is that the sustainable development is a comprehensive concept and field of action and three is that the classification is conditioned by the classifier's position and perspective.

Whatever the classification would be, the main and strategic objective of the MAP/NGO

relation is to establish a constructive and sustainable interaction with civil society. He suggested that MAP classification criteria should necessarily stem from:

- a. its legal and moral status as the leading environmental intergovernmental institution in the Mediterranean;
- b. its continued concern with sustainable development in the region; and
- c. its firm disposition to partnership with the NGO community.

He numerated four broad parameters in the light of which a classification of NGOs can be pursued:

- by geographical scope (legal, national, regional, international);
- by theme (environment, sustainable development, research, charity);
- by profile of leaders (researchers, activists, civil servants, business persons, experts);
- by range of activities (advocacy and lobbying, field projects, training and capacity building).

With regard to the selection criteria, he proposed a four-step process:

- the NGOs formal express of interest in cooperation with MAP (application + dossier);
- proof of the legal existence of the NGO;
- concord between MAP and the candidate NGO (dialogue, consultation, partnership);
- the contribution, effectiveness and impact of the NGO is certifiable and measurable.

At the end of his intervention, the representative of Tunisia proposed certain specific recommendations:

- make a database of the most active NGOs in the Mediterranean;
- establish a partnership tradition built over exchange of information and mutual support;
- conduct joint projects of awareness-raising among the populations and action-research in riparian countries;
- support NGO projects focussing on information dissemination and awareness-raising;
- work out objective criteria (indicators) allowing for a reasonable selection of NGO partners.

Finally, he pointed out that we should not exclude individual national and local NGOs from

the proposed capacity building programme. In fact, he continued to say that many NGOs at the local and national levels have more impact than certain networks.

Presentation of Networks

25. The Secretary General of MED FORUM, Mr. R. Madueno thanked the Secretariat for inviting his Network to participate and give its views on the subject of the meeting. He referred to the issue of classification of the NGOs as mentioned in the Secretariat report, which mixes different kinds of conceptions. In this connection, he cited the classification used for the membership of the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development as a pertinent one (local authorities, socio-economic actors and NGOs). Distinction should also be made between NGOs that are really international and those that have regional or national character. The word "International" should be restricted to only real international NGOs. He referred to the fact that there are organizations with international titles, but sometimes they work at the national level.

He gave a briefing on the status of the NGO organization Eco-Mediterranea which is a Spanish organization, but is active in other countries while WWF is an international organization, but it has various activities in many countries. He pointed out that MED FORUM is a real international network with branches in 23 countries and with 60 effective members. The implementation of his Network disseminates information to many countries and collaborates in various projects in many Mediterranean countries.

Referring to the Network issue, he was of the opinion that Networks should encompass activities done at the regional level, while a national NGO is active only in one country. An NGO to become a regional one, should be represented in four or five countries. Therefore, it would be preferable to concentrate MAP's relations on the regional level (Networks) and with international organizations established in the Mediterranean. He also suggested that the MAP Secretariat signs formal cooperative partnership agreements with Mediterranean Networks which, in his view, truly represent the Mediterranean region.

He informed the meeting that MED FORUM organizes meetings and workshops on specific topics, for NGO members of the Network. For example, he pointed out that the 5th Forum of MED FORUM on "Environmental Forum of the Mediterranean", will be held in Barcelona, on 19-21 November 1998. Moreover, information is disseminated by the Network to all NGO members of the Network. The Network is also working in the consultancy field.

With regard to the funding issue, which is the most important component for Networks, he pointed out that the Network is making all efforts to raise funds from EC for the benefit of its members.

26. The Chairman of MIO-ECSDE, Mr. M. S. Scoullos thanked the Secretariat for inviting him to attend the meeting and gave a briefing on the importance of NGOs in the Mediterranean. He pointed out that the NGO issue is a much more complex phenomenon than most people believe. In fact, many environmental NGOs pre-existed MAP. He gave more details on the objectives, structure and activities of the MIO-ECSDE Network which has 74 NGO members from various parts of the Mediterranean. The Network disseminates information to 400 organizations. He pointed out that the Network carries a continued capacity building programme for NGO members of the Network in the form of training courses, workshops and financial assistance to attend regional and international environmental meetings. In this connection, he suggested that MAP could assist in this exercise by providing moral, technical and financial support in order to move in areas of key interest, such as tourism, water and communication. He informed the

meeting that EC covers 50% of regional projects undertaken by MIO. In this regard, he suggested that financial assistance from MAP should be given to Networks to implement regional activities and not directly to individual local and national NGOs, confirming that Networks will, in turn, provide assistance to their member organizations.

He stressed that the funding issue is the most important problem for all NGOs, not only the Southern ones. However, there should be a rational way to distributing these funds. In order to organize and run the various activities smoothly, Networks should have a medium-term planning programme securing sustainable flow of funds, with a kind of agreement to be signed with MAP to finance regional projects. In many cases, the Network acts on behalf of the local and national NGOs for soliciting outside funds.

With regard to relations with governments, he noted that the Network maintains good cooperative relations with the various Mediterranean governments.

The Chairman of MIO suggested that governments should improve the national and regional legal framework under which NGOs are working.

Finally, he informed the meeting that on 17-18 December 1998, a follow-up Workshop on the Promotion of Educational Public Awareness for Environment and Sustainability in the Mediterranean, will be held in Athens.

27. At the end of the discussion, the meeting went through the draft recommendations proposed by the Secretariat in document UNEP(OCA)/MED WG.147/2/Corr.1, and made the necessary modifications and added more recommendations as proposed during the debate.

The proposed recommendations of the Working Group are contained in **Annex II** to this report.

Agenda item 4 - Adoption of the Minutes of the Meeting

28. As agreed, the minutes of the meeting were prepared by the Secretariat after the meeting and sent to the participants for their comments before its finalization and distribution in the present document.

Agenda item 5 - Closure of the Meeting

29. The Coordinator thanked all participants for their constructive views and comments and declared the meeting closed on Friday, 9 October 1998 at 17.30 hours.

ANNEX I

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ANNEX II

Proposed Recommendations

The main objectives of MAP/NGO cooperation are:

- to advance the general purposes of MAP and to promote the policies, strategies and programmes derived from the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols and the decision of the meetings of the Contracting Parties;
- to secure expert information, opinion and advice and technical cooperation and assistance from international, regional and national NGOs;
- to enable NGOs which represent important sections of public opinion in the Mediterranean to express the views of their members on environmental issues, raise public awareness and influence public opinion and behaviour for the benefit of the environment.

With a view to attain these objectives, the following specific recommendations are suggested for the consideration of the Bureau of the Contracting Parties:

A. At the Contracting Parties level

1. At the regional level, the Contracting Parties shall endeavour to create the appropriate working conditions for NGOs and to facilitate their involvement and active participation in tasks for which they are specialized, or have expertise, through a capacity building programme involving financial assistance, legal assistance (such as bringing cases to courts), preparation of environmental projects and techniques of raising public awareness.
2. At the national level, encourage partnership between Contracting Parties, the private sector and relevant NGOs, which could produce positive results in dealing with specific environmental and sustainable development issues.

At the national level, encourage NGOs role in organizing and supporting "public hearings" towards particular environmental issues.

B. At the NGOs level

1. NGOs shall fully cooperate with the Mediterranean countries and MAP Secretariat for the furtherance of the objectives of the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols.
2. NGOs shall provide the MAP Secretariat regularly with information on their activities and changes in their structures.
3. NGOs shall build and strengthen national and regional networks, with wider representation of Mediterranean NGOs in the Networks.
4. NGOs shall cooperate individually on collectivity (Networks) in the implementation of MAP programmes and shall prepare qualitative inputs to policy and research projects of MAP.

5. The sharing of experience and lessons, communication and exchange of information within the various NGOs shall be strengthened
6. Encourage Networks of NGOs to be present in MAP meetings by relevant experts.
7. NGO Networks shall guarantee that they would act as focal points of the various NGOs they represent.
8. NGOs shall disseminate information on MAP activities through their Newsletter, Internet web pages and through other channels in order to make MAP's efforts and importance in the Mediterranean more known to the public at large.
9. NGOs shall be encouraged to invite MAP representative to participate in their Ordinary meetings.

C. At the Secretariat level

1. The MAP Secretariat shall strengthen and upgrade its support to NGOs from the Southern and Eastern parts of the Mediterranean region, which aims at upgrading their capabilities and encouraging their active participation in MAP activities.
2. The MAP Secretariat is to play a facilitating and enabling role to help NGOs build on and strengthen existing mechanisms of collaboration and networking.
3. The Secretariat shall prepare a Capacity Building Programme for Mediterranean individual NGOs and Networks of NGOs accredited to MAP which would encompass, inter alia, the following:
 - a. ways and means for promoting the policies, strategies and programmes derived from the Barcelona Convention and its protocols, and the decisions of the Contracting Parties;
 - b. access to information and techniques for raising public awareness towards environmental and sustainable development issues;
 - c. training programmes and workshops;
 - d. financial assistance to NGOs which are responsive to local and national needs and to Networks for regional projects of benefit to a wider community, through a reasonable increase in the MAP budget line for assistance to NGOs, in conformity with UNEP/MAP financial regulations;
 - e. legal assistance to NGOs;
 - f. establishment of new networks and strengthen the existing ones;
 - g. entrust NGOs to act as executing agencies of relevant MAP projects, in particular, in the field of management of biodiversity conservation projects.
4. Establish a small Advisory Group composed of representatives of the Contracting Parties, the NGOs incorporated in the MAP list and of the Secretariat, to meet annually with the objective of addressing and supervising MAP/NGOs cooperation.

5. Review and update on a regular basis, the MAP/NGOs profile database.
6. Devote one-page in MAP Bulletin "Medwaves", to NGOs activities.
7. Explore the possibility of a multi-patriate collaboration of NGOs, international and regional financial institutions, the MAP Secretariat and the Contracting Parties, in the form of joint projects.
8. The MAP Secretariat is to designate a MAP official with overall responsibility towards NGOs.
9. The MAP Secretariat is to provide information to NGOs on projects being financed through the Mediterranean Trust Fund (MTF) or through joint projects of MAP and regional and international financial institutions.
10. Encourage a broad participation of NGOs in MAP activities, not just a selected few.
11. A selection of NGOs to be incorporated in the MAP/NGO List of Partners shall be based on the real profile (competence in the thematic field) of the organization which will be illustrated in a Dossier to be submitted by the NGO in question containing information on:
 - main objectives and field of competence of the organization;
 - NGO constitution, terms of reference, or articles of association;
 - activity and financial reports;
 - bulletins and media articles published by the organization.
12. The selection of organizations to be incorporated in the MAP/NGO list of partners is to follow the same criteria used in the selection of the members of the MCSD, namely selection of organizations representing three categories: Local Authorities, Socio-economic Actors and Environmental NGOs.
13. The selection process shall start with an official request of the organization, a proposal by the MAP Secretariat to be reviewed by the meeting of the MAP National Focal Points for subsequent approval by the Ordinary Meeting of the Contracting Parties