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Meeting of the Working Group on
MAP Information Strategy

Athens, 1-2 April 1999

**REPORT OF THE MEETING OF THE WORKING GROUP
ON MAP INFORMATION STRATEGY**

Introduction

1. At their Tenth ordinary meeting (Tunis, November 1997), the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention invited the Secretariat to “elaborate and present to the Bureau of the Contracting Parties a concrete action programme in the field of information within the MAP system”, and “to make MAP and its legal instruments better known in the Mediterranean region as well as outside the region”.
2. In order to implement this decision, the Secretariat has drawn up a draft report on “MAP’s information strategy” (UNEP/BUR53/4) which was examined by the Bureau meeting in Tripoli (Libya) on 16 and 17 November 1998. Having taken note of the document, the members of the Bureau approved the convening in Athens of a meeting of independent experts and experts qualified in the information field from the member countries of the Bureau for the purpose of reviewing the document and its recommendations and with the intention of submitting it to the forthcoming meeting of the Parties (Malta, October 1999).
3. The meeting of experts on MAP’s information strategy was held in Athens on 1 and 2 April 1999, at the premises of the Coordinating Unit for the Mediterranean Action Plan.

Attendance

4. The meeting was attended by experts from the member countries of the Bureau (Croatia, Greece, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Monaco, Tunisia and Turkey), three international experts, representatives of five of MAP’s regional activity centres (SPA/RAC, PAP/RAC, BP/RAC, CP/RAC, and REMPEC), and the MAP Secretariat. The full list of participants is attached as Annex 1 to this report.

Agenda item 1: Opening of the meeting

5. Mr. L. Chabason, MAP Coordinator, opened the meeting by welcoming participants. He began by commenting that we were faced with a “mismatch”. On the one hand there was the work which had been accomplished by the riparian governments, the Mediterranean Action Plan, which they launched in 1975, the NGOs and local authorities. The aim of this work was to protect the Mediterranean sea and coastline using tried and tested structures and procedures and a very comprehensive legal framework which had recently been updated. On the other hand there was the highly negative way in which the public tended to view the environment in the region, which was sometimes due to the persistence of old ideas- such as “the imminent demise of the Mediterranean”. It could also be attributed to the fact that work below the surface was often masked by more up-front phenomena caused by summer tourism - dirty, overcrowded beaches, the invasion of campsites, hotels, etc. This had given rise to a deep-rooted feeling within public opinion, which was further underscored by the media, that leadership was not really doing anything, either at regional or at national level. This was the mismatch which we should endeavour to eliminate. The meeting should do its part by examining how to promote information and public awareness raising. It was expected to provide both technical guidance- particularly concerning new means of communication- and knowledge acquired in the field. In the light of any comments made, the document before it would be revised for submission to the Contracting Parties.

Agenda item 2: Adoption of the agenda and organisation of work

6. The meeting adopted its agenda contained in document UNEP (OCA) / MED WG. 158/1, with the attached timetable.

Agenda item 3: Information strategy: MAP's introduction

7. Mr. A. Hoballah, Deputy Coordinator of MAP, responsible for information, in turn welcomed participants and made a number of points with the aim of more clearly defining the backdrop against which the meeting was being held. Given the major objectives ascribed to MAP to assist Mediterranean countries in protecting their environment and promoting sustainable development, information should be at the very core of our strategic management and, to this end, a communication culture should pervade all activities, not only within the Coordinating Unit, but also within all the Regional Activity Centres. Despite the broad-ranging network of activities, meetings, studies and publications built up over almost 25 years, we were still far from having achieved the impact needed if public backing was to be ensured.
8. Given its major role as a catalyst within the UNEP framework, MAP was responsible for encouraging increased awareness and facilitating effective cooperation with all the players involved in implementing Agenda 21, as was stipulated by the recent Nairobi Declaration. Even the initiative launched in the region with the setting up of the Mediterranean Commission for Sustainable Development, which was still the only one of its kind in the world, was not flanked as it should have been by an effective information strategy to get the results publicised. We may well have a clear vision of the future which we intend to shape for the Mediterranean, but as yet we still do not have a voice with which to herald it. Moreover, we already have a wealth of data, conclusions, documents, studies and achievements to our credit which deserve to be put to the best possible use: first and foremost this wealth should be organised according to priorities, in order to make it accessible to the various players and groups. Much could already be done, purely on the basis of existing means.
9. But the new electronic means open up vast horizons, as the meeting would no doubt establish, and the Unit should appoint a full-time information administrator who would be responsible for implementing the new strategy. Finally, apart from the MED Unit and the RACs, it was up to the Contracting Parties who initiated this whole process for improved information, to throw themselves fully into the ring, to ensure the necessary contacts, and to use every available opportunity to trumpet the success of their cooperation, thus giving root to the idea of a Mediterranean perceived as an "eco-region" within the international arena.
10. Having thanked the member countries of the Bureau for having approved and backed this meeting, the Deputy Coordinator organised a tour de table to allow everyone to briefly introduce themselves, stating their background. He also thanked the three international experts for having agreed to assist in better defining MAP's strategy in this field.

Agenda item 4: Information strategy: framework and technical presentations by experts

11. Mrs. Andriana Ierodiakonou-Berlind, information expert, ran through the various very general questions which she felt were essential in order to place the discussions within the correct context. Question one: what human and financial resources were at present available to MAP for information purposes? As they were rather limited, was there any intention to flesh out the team and to increase funding? A clear distinction should be drawn between two tasks. The first, which had already been tackled, needed building upon: it involved providing information to the enlightened public which was already conversant with MAP. It hinged on three means: a) the Internet and the website which should be professionally set up, easily accessible, and regularly updated; b) the library which should be better staffed and funded; c) the mailing list which should be reviewed and completed in coordination with the RACs. The other task involved stopping the gaps

noted in terms of public participation, a problem which MAP had been facing since the outset. Obviously, this could not be done from the Athens Unit alone, which should have an information "contact point" in each country, or should establish a network of "liaison officers".

12. The media, and television in particular, were the key instrument. We were living in the television age. But this channel of information was very expensive and the messages which it could transmit were in competition with other powerful messages which had the advantage of financing. Adverts were only feasible at certain times (summer season). As for the written press, in Athens the Unit could have access to the offices of the major international press agencies, foreign press correspondents, embassy press officers, etc. A selective approach would best be taken to the bodies of the international press which have a vast audience and are open to environmental problems, by directly contacting journalists specialised in environmental matters at their headquarters, if needs be. Press conferences should be used with caution since they have to provide new information directly related to topical issues, resulting in a solid "press dossier" to facilitate the journalist's work. The formula of the "press lunch" to which several journalists are invited helps to forge more personal links and to convey messages in an informal, more subtle way. Journalists should never be given the impression that we are on the defensive, nor should we believe that they always expect negative news from which they can draw "sensational" elements. We should work to highlight our successes. Providing lively, ready-made articles would be a solution for the local press (in each Mediterranean city, etc.).
13. Moving on to MAP's promotional material, such as brochures, pamphlets, stickers, etc., Mrs. Ierodiakonou-Berlind suggested some ways in which they could be more effectively circulated, particularly during the tourist season (hotel rooms, tour operators, stores, etc.), or in schools using "teaching packs" and by organising competitions (the results of which would be published during Mediterranean Environment Week). Finally, within our awareness-raising efforts there was another important group which should not be left on the sidelines- business, which we should strive to involve in activities within MAP which affect them directly.
14. In thanking the expert for her detailed presentation, which offered a broad range of suggestions and possibilities, the Deputy Coordinator recognised that MAP only had limited resources available to achieve them, that the experts within the Unit and the RACs did not have the necessary training in communication techniques, and that it was also true that they had a defensive, fearful attitude vis-à-vis the media. This could be explained, however, by the fact that very often information which they supplied was twisted in a negative way, a "dirty Mediterranean" obviously being a better money-spinner than a "clean" one. Right now, it would be wonderful if the Contracting Parties could approve the recruiting of an administrator who would be purely responsible for information within the Unit, and make the documentation officer's post a full-time one. Initially, it would be better to improve internal organisation by setting some priorities in line with available funds, to ensure that all members of the Unit and the RACs were versed in communication culture, and to avoid a repetition of the oversights which occurred with information on the MCS D.
15. Mr. Kevin Grose, Administrator within the Information support programme from the Secretariat of the Framework Convention on Climatic Change (FCCC) (Bonn, Germany), made a two-part presentation using overheads: 1) traditional media; and 2) Internet-related media, looking at ways in which they could be fruitfully combined.

16. MAP's information strategy is first and foremost based on products: the institutional/legal framework, programmes and projects, data collected from around the Mediterranean (as with the network of MED POL stations), conclusions and results of studies and meetings, technical knowledge and know-how.... These various elements make up an impressive arsenal which should be passed on to the various target groups: political leaders, decision-makers, and managers who are seen as making up the main target group; the body of experts, researchers and scientists, who require more specialised information, and who in turn influence the political leaders and decision-makers; and finally civil society, which should be reached through partners acting as information relays. These various information flows need to be better coordinated through networking.
17. Regarding means of communication, Mr. Grose pointed out that they make up a highly complex mass which, for the sake of simplicity, could be boiled down into three cases. One person contacts another ("one-to-one"); this could take the form of a dialogue, a letter, a telephone conversation, a request for information from a documentation officer. One person contacts several ("one-to-many"); this applies when a document produced for a meeting is published, to a newsletter, a technical report, a television broadcast. And finally, several people contact several others ("many-to-many"); this applies to colloquia, seminars, meetings of the Parties, etc. These are the traditional media. The spectacular development over recent years of new communication technologies have meant that corresponding forms are now available in this camp: for "one-to-one", it comes in the shape of e-mail; for "one-to-many" there are "e-mail broadcast lists" where, having set up a list of e-mail addresses, the same message is sent to countless recipients, as well as "e-zines" or "electronic magazines"; finally, for "many-to-many", there are Internet discussion forums, "web conferences", "webcasting" or live transmission of meetings through the Internet in different languages, interactive "2nd generation web sites", "web conferencing", etc.
18. In cost-benefit terms, the new media are obviously much cheaper than traditional ones, e-mail being the prime example. As we gravitate towards Internet technology, the cost of the traditional media are transferred to it and, ultimately, to the user (who pays for the connection, does his own printing, etc.). Also, the scope and circulation broadens exponentially, reaching "virtual" communities. The drawbacks are linked to a lack of use of the keyboard, the privileged position of English, the difficulties of adaptation for certain cultures, and the initial installation and connection costs, which could discourage poorer authorities. But if, for example, we were to compare correspondence as it was ten years ago with what it has become today, we could only conclude that this is an irreversible sea-change which can only expand and consolidate in the future.
19. The last expert to take the floor, Mr. Vincent Jacques Le Seigneur, announced that he would be doing so in two capacities. Firstly, as an information expert, having worked for many years in environmental journalism, and then as an "information consumer" since in his present job as an adviser to the French Ministry for the Environment and Land Planning, he knew which bodies he could count on, and what obstacles he would meet when he wanted certain data and information.
20. The expert had only scant knowledge of MAP, and was therefore giving a completely "outside" view. He had, however, had the opportunity to visit the UNEP headquarters where he gleaned the impression that there was a huge mismatch between the organisation's resources and abilities, and its capacity to pass them on and share them with other countries. Even in his own country, the image of UNEP and MAP was very vague, which meant that the "lack of image" mentioned by all speakers really does exist. It could be blamed on various things: differences in communication and information

structures from country to country; the diversity of target groups which would require similarly diverse information strategies; cultural differences: information does not need to be translated into the "language" of the country to which it is being sent as much as into its "culture". In this respect, excessive use of the Internet would seem to be premature and detrimental, since many countries, including developed ones, have still not fully embraced it for reasons related to their national context. Two pitfalls should be avoided: over-centralisation of information, for example within the Athens Unit from the RACs, focal points, etc., since this would risk losing contact with the grassroots, and excessive decentralisation, because obviously the impact of communication decreases the thinner it is spread. Some of the operations mentioned in the document seem excellent, such as the Mediterranean Environment Week, but even if they are successful, we should not expect to reap rewards in terms of MAP's actual image, since this type of event is not usually followed by its promoters. In actual fact, the three sectors of "communication", "information" and "training" tend to get mixed up, which is a source of inefficiency, because they all involve different means and targets. Finally, the last important point, any communication strategy should go hand in hand with a specific timetable and include a "graphic chart" (logo, specific colour and characters for all the information material, etc.), to make the organisation "recognisable" to the outside world.

Agenda item 5: Contribution by the representatives of the Bureau and the RACs on MAP's information strategy

21. Having thanked the experts, and feeling that the other participants would have an opportunity to react to their suggestions and comments as the individual points were tackled, the Deputy Coordinator invited the experts from the Bureau member countries to take the floor. They all felt that the Secretariat's document and its recommendations provided a good outline of the strategy and represented a solid base to fuel discussions. The focus should be on the school environment, libraries, and a solid network of information "contact points" or "focal points" in each country. Despite its cost, television should not be ruled out, because for the time being at least it was more widespread than the Internet, and a State or sponsors could assist in financing messages. Resources and the provision of competent staff were also important aspects. NGOs could also act as relays for the information sent by and about MAP.
22. One country expert felt that the Internet could not be avoided, particularly because it had become an essential source of information for the press, making it possible for journalists to avoid working through the usual channels of approach. Another possibility might also be to produce a video film about MAP, which would be broadcast by specialised television channels- more affordable- but with the proviso that it should be a quality product. Similarly, setting up an "image base" for the environment, which would be exempt of duty, could also prove a strong incentive for the press. In general terms, as was stressed by the experts and the document alike, a specific "information package" should be tailored to each target group (decision-makers, industry, schools, etc.). Finally, although the media would seem to have a preference for the negative aspects, this was not necessarily something to be regretted. The problems did after all exist, and by showing them we would be helping to solve them and to awaken public opinion so that it could in turn lobby the political leaders.
23. In the opinion of another participant, communication on environmental matters has developed tremendously since MAP was launched: now that we have the concept of sustainable development we no longer discuss with experts and scientists alone, but rather with the whole gamut of affected players from within civil society. The document lays too much store by the means and not enough by the objectives. As for the target

groups, when we think of “governments” we tend to think too exclusively of “environment ministers”. By very definition they are already won over to the environmental cause, and need the support of their counterparts in industry, agriculture or the economy, who therefore also need to be convinced. Finally, it is not enough merely to have a good website since the general public, which is passive by nature, needs to be spurred on by an “aggressive” information strategy.

24. Finally, one of the experts pointed out the importance of having the information supports translated into as many of the languages spoken in the riparian states as possible, apart from MAP’s three working languages.
25. Summing up the comments made by the Bureau representatives, the Deputy Coordinator stated that the first common elements were starting to crystallize out: the need to have an information “contact” or “relay” in each country, which could be a person or an organisation and might possibly be mandated; the clear need to increase the amount earmarked in the budget for information, and to flesh out the Unit team so that it could devote itself more fully to information. As for the Internet, which the developing countries felt it was still difficult for them to access, MAP’s mission was in actual fact to help them to acquire the hardware and the know-how which they would require before this new means could take off. The same applied to the libraries, since students from the region were trained in the Unit’s library: the problem consisted of not “abandoning” them afterwards, and helping to set up infrastructures in their countries.
26. At this point the librarian from the MED Unit took the floor. She expressed her view that it was not really correct to talk about “information failure” given the results which had already been achieved purely on the basis of the limited means available under the information budget line. At the outset the Unit’s library had had only a handful of volumes whereas it was now part of a network of seventy libraries exchanging information and references around the world. Under the term “information” a distinction had to be drawn between what was generic (brochures, pamphlets, etc.), and what was specialised and intended for the scientific community. For the latter group, the success of the MAP series of technical reports which now numbered around 125 volumes produced by scientists from all riparian states, spoke for itself, judging by the number of requests made by researchers, laboratories, and universities from the Mediterranean and elsewhere. The prospect of the Contracting Parties granting a bigger information budget should therefore make it possible to make headway. As for the information “contact point” planned for each country, this did not need to be a civil servant or a ministerial service. The role could very well be taken on by a university, for example.
27. The representatives of the regional activity centres then presented their views on the information strategy. They all also gave a brief run-down of what their centre had achieved in this field: the publication of brochures (SPA, BP), and technical reports (SPA, PAP, BP), thematic studies (BP fascicules, published commercially), country profiles (BP), a newsletter and technical data sheets for businesses (CP), magazine and press articles. Some Centres (REMPEC, SPA) were at present updating their long-outdated brochures and pamphlets, had created their web site (CP, BP), or were in the process of doing so (SPA, PAP).
28. The fact was, however, as the heads of the Centres pointed out, that information activity still left a lot to be desired. Could, in fact should, these efforts be pooled? This did not seem very realistic given that each Centre targeted a very different public. For example, although the Blue Plan sometimes appeared to purloin MAP’s image, repackage it and subsequently use it to the benefit of its own image, as was pointed out by the MED POL

Coordinator, this was because it dealt with matters (environment/development scenarios and themes) which could be more easily and directly used by the media, whilst REMPEC targeted oil and shipping companies, CP/RAC industrial companies, etc. It was more important to act in synergy particularly through the network of "contact persons" which was previously mentioned, and also to find partners for transmitting information; the special status which MAP granted the NGOs- particularly within the MCSD framework- could prove very useful in this respect.

29. One speaker echoed the previously mentioned importance of the media, with links being confined to one or two newspapers with nationwide circulation for each country, and bearing in mind that like all organisations, MAP as such was not likely to stir up much interest. They had to be fed attractive subjects, the real problems which existed in the Mediterranean, and it was only in the long term, by rallying journalists to the cause, that they would be awoken to MAP's activities. As for the political leaders, it would be better to go for direct contact, and provide them with brief, snappy messages which met their concerns. These messages, however, should be positive ones. As far as publications were concerned, self-publishing with sales on the market could be a solution worth serious consideration, to avoid always having to count on outside funding, but with no expectations of financial gain. It would be a good idea to "thematise" and personalise the websites (with the names and photos of experts, etc.).
30. One head of Centre picked out several of the recommendations contained in the strategy document which struck him as being particularly relevant. School children deserved special attention, particularly using cartoons and comic strips. One oil company, for example, had produced a highly successful cartoon on oil slicks.
31. According to another representative, information was something which his Centre was only just starting to think about at internal level. The reports which it published were highly technical, and although they dealt with crucial matters related to biodiversity, they could only be of interest to a very limited circle of experts. The problem was how to draft and present them more attractively, without of course undermining their solid scientific basis. In general terms, whenever they arose, these information questions revealed the lack of knowledge in this field and the need for each expert to be trained to better communicate. Maybe MAP could take the initiative to organise such "information training" within its framework.
32. Finally, another Centre representative asked a more specific question which was essential if information was to prove effective- what was MAP's margin of manoeuvre on highly topical issues, for example an accidental spillage at sea, disastrous pollution such as that caused by a mining company in Catalonia, etc. What was the position? MAP embraced the Mediterranean riparian states, and must handle the individual susceptibilities of each one, even when their liability was at stake. Was there not the risk of discussions becoming "sterile" as a result? The media and public opinion obviously expected something very different of MAP.
33. Raising the question of information in his field, the Coordinator of MED POL returned to the question of transparency, which he considered to be essential. When MED POL first began, the Contracting Parties clearly had reservations about releasing the pollution data which they had collected under the programme. But they gradually came round to the idea that it was in their interests to do so. Nowadays, 50% of the MAP technical reports were produced by MED POL, the data published in them coming from a wealth of studies and measurements carried out under contracts drawn up between the programme and teams of researchers. Maybe the Parties would do well to make this transparency official? After all, as MAP, MED POL or even a RAC, were we actually empowered to make concrete statements? It was up to the Contracting Parties to decide. This was an important question, because on it depended the feasibility of certain ideas put forward

here, such as sponsors, the messages to be put across, and TV ads. To say what? That MAP exists, that it does this, that or the other? To what effect? Or to speak out for the Mediterranean in general? This swung in directly with our links with the public at large, and with the press. And it explained our defensive or reserved attitude vis a vis the latter. We were aware of the fact that we represented 20 countries, and that comments could be deliberately twisted in order to create media impact. And that was precisely what lay behind the fears which were talked about.

34. On the same point of relations with the press, Mrs. Ierodiakonou-Berlind stressed that there could obviously be no question of leaving the matter to the discretion of any old expert or MAP official. It would have to be entrusted to a professional recruited for this purpose, who knew how to use his judgement to avoid any misunderstanding on the part of the media, and to keep them in line. Other speakers touched upon the role of Medwaves, MAP's newsletter: should it remain completely internal to MAP, only reporting on activities under the programme, or should it open up to a wider audience and include dossiers on Mediterranean problems, which would mean that its subscriber list would have to be reviewed and extended. More particularly, this also raised once again the question about MAP's margin for manoeuvre as an inter-governmental body, in contradiction with the idea advocated in the strategy document of opening up to the outside. Regarding the MAP logo, which was recommended by several speakers as a way of making MAP more visible and identifiable, the Deputy Coordinator recognised that this was necessary, but pointed out that the question was being discussed as it needed UNEP's go-ahead. This, as yet, had not been given. Regarding messages and their content, he added that they depended on the target groups, which should be put in some sort of hierarchical order: was it feasible as of now to turn towards the public at large, for example, when it was obvious that the ministries of the environment in the riparian states, and even UNEP itself, which were MAP's leading backers (and contributors) often had very little relevant information themselves about the programme's functions and activities?
35. Finally, the Deputy Coordinator, returning to the question of transparency of information, recalled that by adopting MAP's legal texts, the countries had entered into a whole series of commitments. The NGOs and the public were just waiting to catch us out. Was MAP going to make do with simply being a postbox for the information which countries chose to send it, or should it, in the near future, answer the following question: commitments have been made; which countries have or have not respected them? Otherwise, things would just remain on the surface, we would lose all credibility in the eyes of public opinion, and we would be bucking the trend of the development of the Convention and its Protocols, which had been revised and updated for the very reason of providing for their effective implementation. The same applied to the state of the environment of the various countries, which should be publicised at intervals, since we published a "state of the environment" which should be regularly updated. Moreover, with the performance and environment/development indicators – the theme of an MCSD working group- we had a new tool available to us for this purpose.
36. Wanting to share certain impressions which he had gleaned from previous comments, Mr. Grose, an expert, felt that we should home in more on the "targets". The prime targets to be reached were undoubtedly the Parties, the RACs, the partner institutions and the scientific community which supplied the data. The general public only came in a second stage. Along the same lines, a clear separation should be made between the image-promoting products (logo, brochures, stickers, etc.) and scientific and technical documents. The media should be fed brief success stories, but without losing sight of the fact that MAP was a process, and that this process must be explained each time round. The need to set up a network of information contact points between the States was underscored by the representatives of five member countries of the Bureau. This system of contact points should be extended to other institutions.

Agenda item 6: Revision of the “MAP information strategy” document

37. The document “MAP Information Strategy” (UNEP/BUR/53/4) was submitted to participants, and at the suggestion of the Deputy Coordinator they were invited to examine the recommendations in the following chapters in the light of the comments which had already been made in the course of the meeting, or which would be repeated.
38. Mrs. Ierodiakonou- Berliand commented that one point which had been raised by delegates on several occasions was not in the report: this was the lack of information about MAP which had been noted within the ministries for the environment of the Contracting Parties themselves. In order to redress the situation, maybe the countries could organise MAP briefings within their own administrations? In response, the Deputy Coordinator pointed out that this point had already been dealt with at a meeting of the Contracting Parties, had not borne any fruits, and that only one country- Bosnia and Herzegovina- had set up a MAP information bureau using European Community funding, maybe because it was the most recent country to have joined the Barcelona system.
39. The meeting examined the document’s recommendations on targets. Several comments were made as to how they could be reworked. It was pointed out that in relevant publications on the region’s environment there was often no reference to MAP, and that at the very least every RAC publication should definitely refer to MAP. MAP should encourage and assist the national focal points to take steps within their own ministries to make MAP better known. Often, however, they were swamped with work, and it might be better to seek new channels such as the “information contacts” often referred to by delegates. According to one country expert, MAP should directly contact ministries’ libraries. Regarding the Unit’s library, the RACs were supposed to hand in all their publications-which they did not systematically do, with just one exception. Information work should possibly be taken from the interactive angle: the more the Parties and their ministries saw that MAP works professionally in this field, the more encouraged they would be to react favourably. Finally, each time a MAP expert visited a ministry or took part in a meeting outside MAP, it would be useful if he could devote some of his time and energy to informing his counterparts of MAP’s main activities, where it is going, and its prospects.
40. Opinions were divided on the set of recommendations on the Series of technical reports, some speakers asking for improved presentation, with others feeling, on the contrary, that since these were technical reports, they were doing a perfectly good job in their present form. The RACs should be encouraged to publish in the series, even though some of them had produced their own publications at a lower cost within their national context, and often in English and French (PAP). As the Unit’s data processing expert pointed out, seconded by one country expert, a new alternative was available with electronic publication on the Internet, which should respect certain very specific standards. It was a promising alternative to traditional publication, which would allow funds to be more easily drummed up.
41. Under the “Convention and Protocols” chapter, asked about the ways and interest of ensuring better distribution of the Barcelona system’s legal texts (for which the NGO networks are already proving an invaluable ally in the Mediterranean by reminding countries of their commitments), Mr. Grose pointed out that a distinction should be drawn between two aspects: making texts available, and the lobbying activity (in the positive sense of the term) which should go along with it if the texts were to have some effect. For the convention on climatic change, a very practical pocket version had been adopted (which meant that you could have it with you in meetings and could always refer to the

official text), and published in all languages. It could also be circulated on the Internet. These legal texts were, however, often completely impenetrable for the layman, so it would be a good idea to plan the publication of a guide which would "popularise" the content.

42. Regarding the cover page of reports from the meetings of MAP and the RACs (and their posters) there was a feeling that certain ground rules should be respected to provide for "identification of the MAP trademark" (or a family feel). This once again gave rise to the question of the MAP logo, although there were other visual signs which would allow an organisation to be identified (format, colour, certain type of characters, etc.).
43. Moving to the question of "Medwaves", MAP's newsletter, several comments were made. As far as the Secretariat is concerned, it is a sort of "standard-bearer" for MAP and as such should be made a little more ambitious, being restructured according to themes, and by involving the RACs, focal points and scientists from the programme in its drafting, and letting them really "take over". One Centre representative felt that, although its presentation had improved over recent editions, by virtue of its content it did first and foremost address the MAP family. It was the mouthpiece of a network- a perfectly valid role- it could even be published more frequently, even if that meant trimming it down or publishing it within the Unit itself, but under these conditions it was difficult to see how it could be improved for external consumption without confusing its audience. One expert confirmed this point of view, pointing out that the very title of "organisation newsletter" meant that "Medwaves" was of little interest to the media since it could not freely tackle the region's most hotly debated environmental issues- it was somehow "under the Parties' control". Another expert made the point that external articles should not be awaited at the end of the line, but rather at the beginning, in other words the editions should be programmed. It would also be a good idea to put the electronic version on the MAP web site.
44. As for the brochures and pamphlets, they should be produced in English, Arabic and French at least, with the other Mediterranean languages being planned for a later stage. Airlines and tour operators could help distribute them to tourists during the high season. Along the same lines, one expert said that it might be possible for airlines serving the Mediterranean to include articles on the environment in the region free of charge in the magazines made available to passengers in-flight. Posters and stickers, as always, were an excellent tool, as long as they tapped into the national culture (and language), but they should be simplified to the extreme- sometimes a design or a sketch could speak louder than words.
45. Regarding the MED Unit's library, it should be electronically organised to facilitate its management, and to boost the services rendered, as well as putting it on the MAP website. If its role and services were to be extended in this way, the library would have to be provided with a full-time documentation officer.
46. The Unit's data processing expert made a presentation of the on-going restructuring of the MAP website, with the aid of transparencies. Planning began in January 1997, and the site came into service in July of the same year. It was now updated every three weeks. Between August 1998 and today, an average of fifty visits per week had been recorded, which was a very low figure. The number of visits must therefore be increased, by indicating the site on every publication. Although it was first generation, the MAP site provided a regularly updated overview of the main MAP activities and meetings (which Medwaves, which takes three months to prepare, was unable to do, for example). There was still far too little text, and we should be thinking of switching as of now to a second generation site. Given the spectacular technological developments coming about in this

field, however, this was no easy task. Mr.Grose supported this presentation, and even suggested by way of a progressive transition towards the second generation, that Medwaves should become the site's "newsroom", and that a digital library should be set up. Finally, one Centre representative proposed the setting up of bilingual web sites (English, French).

47. On the question of relations with the media and other means of communication (TV/videos, Mediterranean Environment Week, awareness raising campaigns in schools, etc.), the main suggestions put forward on several occasions during the meeting were summed up so that they could be taken account of in the recommendations.

Agenda items 7 and 8: Recommendations - Proposals for action

48. The Deputy Coordinator briefly ran through the main points which had been raised, and the recommendations and proposals which the two days of discussions had produced. It was decided that the Secretariat, assisted by the experts, would sort them out so that they could be integrated into the reworked version of the document on MAP's information strategy.
49. The recommendations and proposals for action which were made or revised by the meeting are as follows, as they were included in the text. They are also annexed to the strategy document:

Recommendations

Short Term (0-12 months)

- Create a full time Information Officer post at MEDU;
- create a full time Librarian post at MEDU;
- invite the Contracting Parties to appoint Focal Points on Information. The Focal Points should be staffed by appropriate, qualified professionals;
- enhance MAP's visibility by urging the existing MAP Focal Points to become more active in promoting MAP awareness within their own Ministries in particular, and governments in general;
- upgrade the presentation and the printing quality of MTS;
- recruit professional services for enhancing the MAP Web Site design;
- place electronic version of MedWaves on the MAP Web Site;
- assign responsibility for the contents and updating of the Web Site to the prospective MEDU Information Officer;
- each RAC to assign responsibility on information to a designated staff member;
- in cooperation with the prospective Information Focal Points and the RACs, ensure the proper review and the regular updating of the MAP mailing list for more efficient use;
- ensure the timely deposit of all RACs reports and publications with the MEDU library;
- develop a good set of transparencies and/or slides for the use of professional staff and the RACs.

**Medium Term
(12-24 months)**

- Design and use a common MAP template (MAP brand identification) in all MAP (MEDU, RACs) publications including a MAP logo;
- improve the design/layout of MedWaves. Appraise the feasibility of increasing the frequency of publication (6 issues per year) in conjunction with reducing the number of pages;
- allocate a one or one-half page for each RAC and one page for NGO-MAP Partners, and make these contributors responsible for the updating of the page;
- update the institutional MAP brochure as necessary, Languages: English, French, Arabic;
- create: a) a promotional, analytical, eye-catching, easy-to-read, easy-to-absorb brochure, b) a leaflet with focus on the Mediterranean environment. Languages: English, French, Arabic; all Mediterranean languages in the long term;
- organize the MEDU library's collection in electronic form in order to facilitate collection management and development, and enhance library services;
- enhance the MEDU library's presence on the MAP Web Site;
- make contents of the Web Site bilingual, English and French;
- improve liaison with mass media through the prospective Information Officer at MEDU;
- issue periodic MAP press releases and feature stories in English, French and Arabic;
- utilize prospective MAP Information Focal Points for the dissemination of MAP Information to the local media;
- prepare a press kit with basic information on MAP goals and activities for distribution at press conferences, during Mediterranean Environment Week etc;
- engage schools with a painting competition, the awards to be given during Mediterranean Environment Week;
- have MTS proofread and edited by a qualified editor, preferably with a scientific background, prior to publication.

**Long Term
(24-36 months)**

- Make MAP publications available in English and French and, if possible, in Arabic and distribute them at an information stand during meetings;
- create a special brochure for children and youth, possibly as part of a comprehensive educational pack;
- design a series of posters and stickers, as an excellent way to reach the general public, with the impact being mainly visual, and include the MAP logo. Where textual message exists, this should be in the local language;
- create a MAP library information network with the MEDU library serving as the Focal Point and the active participation of RACs for effective information sharing and dissemination;
- organize training programmes on information management and public awareness for nationals of developing Mediterranean countries;
- secure funds (external) for an updated video and for TV spots on the Mediterranean environment and the Mediterranean Action Plan, promoting MAP and its activities;
- consider instituting special awards, e.g. "Most Environment-Conscious Business Enterprise".

Agenda item 9: Closure of the meeting

50. Having thanked participants for their contribution to a very fruitful and exhaustive exchange of views, which represented the first step towards the adoption of a more efficient MAP information strategy, the Deputy Coordinator recalled that, as had been agreed, the recommendations would be reworked to take their comments and suggestions into account, no report would be adopted at the end of the meeting, but would be drawn up over the next few days and sent out to them. Mr. Hoballah declared the meeting closed at 14.00 p.m. on Friday, 2 April 1999.

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