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Inauguration of the permanent headquarters
of the Co-ordinating Unit for the Mediterranean
Action Plan in Athens.

Athens, 1st October 1982

NOTE BY THE SECRETARIAT

1. The Bureau of the Contracting Parties, at its meeting held in Geneva on 10-11 June 1982, endorsed the secretariat's proposal to mark the opening of the permanent headquarters of the Co-ordinating Unit in Athens by a suitable ceremony. The ceremony was organized in close cooperation with the Authorities of the host country, and was held at the seat of the Unit on 1 October 1982, from 6.30 to 8.30 p.m.
2. The Executive Director, Dr. Mostafa K. Tolba, expressed the satisfaction of UNEP at the opening of the new office and invited the Contracting Parties to pursue vigorously the implementation of the Mediterranean Action Plan. The text of Dr. Tolba's statement appears in Annex I.
3. Speaking on behalf of the Hellenic Republic, Mr. Antonis Tritsis, Minister of Housing, Physical Planning and the Environment, reconfirmed the commitment of Greece to support the work of the Co-ordinating Unit. The text of Mr. Tritsis' statement appears in Annex II.
4. The President of the meetings of Contracting Parties, Ambassador Giovanni Falchi, speaking in the name of the Bureau, stressed the difficult task ahead, which required close co-ordination of efforts on the part of Governments and the secretariat, as well as of non-governmental associations. The text of Ambassador Falchi's statement appears in Annex III.
5. The Contracting Parties were invited by the secretariat to be represented at the ceremony. In response to that invitation the Governments of the following countries designated their Ambassadors to Greece to represent them officially: Algeria, Cyprus, Egypt, France, Israel, Italy, Lebanon, Morocco, Spain, Syria, Turkey, and Yugoslavia. Malta sent a special representative. The European Economic Community was represented by the Director of its Information Office in Athens. In addition, the Director General for Environment, consumer protection and nuclear safety sent a congratulatory message in the name of Mr. Gaston Thorn, President of the Commission.

6. In addition to the President, two members of the Bureau, Mr. Serge Antoine and Mr. Joseph Naggear, were present.

7. Representatives of the United Nations Development Programme, of the International Atomic Energy Agency, and of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees were present. A congratulatory message was also sent by Dr. Leo A. Kaprio, Regional Director, WHO Regional Office for Europe.

8. The Secretary-General of the Interparliamentary Union, Mr. Pio-Carlo Terenzio, and representatives of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) and of the Inter-municipal secretariat for the protection of the Mediterranean in Barcelona also attended.

9. The ceremony was attended by numerous guests from the Greek Parliament, the Greek Government, scientific institutions, the foreign press and local press and television.

10. The secretariat was represented by the Co-ordinator and staff of the Unit, the Director of the Regional Oil Combating Centre, the Director of the Priority Actions Programme Regional Activity Centre, the Executive Secretary of the Blue Plan GCS and the Director of Medeas.

11. The ceremony was concluded at 8.30 p.m. and was followed by a reception hosted by the Executive Director.

STATEMENT AT THE OPENING OF HEADQUARTERS OF THE

UNEP CO-ORDINATING UNIT FOR THE

MEDITERRANEAN ACTION PLAN

BY

DR. MOSTAFA K. TOLBA

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME

ATHENS

1.10.1982

Your Excellency Minister Tritsis, your Excellencies, distinguished representatives of the Contracting Parties, distinguished members of the Bureau, distinguished guests, dear Colleagues, ladies and gentlemen:

The opening today of the headquarters of the Coordinating Unit for the Mediterranean Action Plan marks another significant step in the fulfilment of a historic responsibility; a responsibility to keep the Mediterranean, the birthplace of Western civilization, alive.

The Mediterranean Basin has seen the waxing and waning of great empires and cultures. But while the affairs of the Mediterranean peoples have been in a perpetual state of change, the sea itself has seemed a constant factor in nurturing man's political, social and economic development. Apparently unchanging and unchangeable, the Sea was a resource taken for granted.

No longer. The Mediterranean is under attack from pollution from land and sea, from the unsustainable demands of tourists who visit the area in their millions each year, from overfishing ... in short from development that destroys. Once a symbol of the sea's beneficial impact on man, the Mediterranean has become a symbol of man's destructive impact upon it. This Headquarters testifies to the determination of the Mediterranean nations to reverse the process and in so doing to restore the health of their sea.

And it is to the enduring credit of the nations sharing this great resource that a common endeavour has been made to safeguard their threatened maritime environment. That endeavour began in Barcelona in 1975 when 16 coastal states adopted a comprehensive Action Plan which laid the groundwork for what today amounts to a plan for the environmentally sound development of the whole Basin.

Today, all the Mediterranean countries with one exception, (which I hope will soon come in), and the European Community participate in the Action Plan. Given the wide political and economic differences which militate against regional unity, this is an achievement which has been hailed in the past, and which I unhesitatingly praise today. Governments have shown that a common concern can put the environment beyond the kinds of political disagreements which hamper the implementation of other international accords.

I believe that it would not be out of place if today I reserve special recognition for the role Greece has played in the evolution of the Action Plan. Greece has been a consistent supporter of the Plan since the beginning, and was unanimously chosen to host the Unit. Greece has extended full cooperation in helping UNEP to establish the Unit. In addition the Greek government made a generous grant of \$400,000 in drachmas towards the cost of this headquarters and pledged to do this annually. The high level and wide range of representation of the government and other important sectors of Greece here today is another clear expression of its good will. May I take this opportunity Mr. Minister, to extend to you, and through you to the government and

people of Greece our deepest appreciation and our sincere hope that in the exercise of its function this unit will continue to enjoy your fruitful and essential co-operation.

Your Excellency, distinguished Guests, the ultimate aim of this unifying Plan of Action is rational use of resources. Its development has paralleled a radical change in the way we perceive the environment.

The environment movement and the Action Plan itself have their origins in the desire to combat pollution in the narrowest sense of the term. But as our knowledge of the interlinkages in the environment expanded so we realised that we would have to tackle the root causes of environmental deterioration. Thus today in addition to the agreements to combat land-based pollution sources, to control dumping and to co-operate in pollution emergencies, we have a protocol on specially protected areas to preserve genetic diversity, a well developed pollution monitoring and research programme, a priority actions programme and a Blue Plan. The Priority Actions Programme agreed in 1977 exemplifies how far, and how rapidly, our perception of these interlinkages has evolved. It embraces, soil conservation; water resources management; development of aquaculture and renewable sources of energy; and human settlements and tourism.

As so often in its history, what has happened in the Mediterranean has been a model for elsewhere. Adapted and amended where necessary, the Mediterranean Action Plan has provided a blueprint for other regional accords among nations to conserve their shared maritime

environment. Nations in the Wider Caribbean, in West and Central Africa, in the Kuwait Action Plan area, in the Pacific and in the ASEAN regions have been inspired by the example of the Mediterranean countries. They all have now agreed on action plans. More are in various stages of preparation. Over 120 states now participate in our Regional Seas Programme which has been and still is considered by governments one of the most successful UNEP endeavours. With a limited number of highly devoted staff UNEP has played and is playing the role of honest broker in these developments. And I believe the Mediterranean Action Plan is a testimony to the effectiveness of our catalytic role. The implementation of this plan will continue to be a model and a very significant component of our regional seas programme.

Your Excellency, distinguished Guests, though loathe to do so on this great occasion, I must sound a sour note. Today, UNEP's role in the Mediterranean is a much diminished one. It is a sad irony that while our evolving perceptions of the environment in the Mediterranean and elsewhere have immeasurably extended the scope of action that we know must be taken, UNEP today is in a far worse position to stimulate that action. Expanding responsibilities and, in real terms, declining contributions to our Environment Fund have left us in 1982 in the unenviable position of having to reduce commitments across the board.

With so many priorities elsewhere, and for the most part in much poorer areas of the world, UNEP looks to the Mediterranean states, in particular the EEC nations and the EEC itself, to assume the burden UNEP shouldered in the 1970s.

Today I would like to appeal to all governments participating in the Action Plan to help UNEP plan future activities more effectively. This can be done by paying all contributions on time. To date about 60 per cent of this year's pledge has been received. For the 1983 commitment of just over two and three quarter million dollars, so far a tiny ten thousand dollar payment has been made. In these circumstances making financial and other commitments is extremely difficult.

And even sums in the low millions are inadequate when we consider that the implementation of just one agreement, the protocol on land-based sources of pollution is estimated to cost between 10 and 15 billion dollars in the ten year period after coming into force.

Thus the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention must pay on time; they must also pay more, much more. I am certain that the peoples of this region want to see the authorities make these kind of commitments.

The campaign to save the Mediterranean is moving into a critical phase. The protocols have been agreed, the solutions identified and an infrastructure established to apply the prescriptions. The Mediterranean states have also cooperated in the massive programme of research and monitoring to improve the knowledge of their environment. Already seven pilot projects of MED POL - the Mediterranean Pollution Monitoring and Research Programme - have been completed. These and other research activities involving more than 80 national research

centres in 16 states have radically improved our understanding of the causes of pollution and other forms of environmental deterioration. And, just as vital, are providing us with data on the effectiveness of protection measures. A regional oil combating centre has been established in Malta and is working diligently to perform its responsibilities; the Blue Plan is close to bear its first fruits and the Priority Actions Programme is about to become truly operational. It is up to the governments, first and foremost, to use all these tools to fulfill their responsibility to reverse the development process which has destroyed, and is still destroying, the Mediterranean environment. We may probably concur that pollution in the Mediterranean is no longer on the increase. However, the road to betterment and improvement is still very long and harsh. Much remains to be done. And essentially by governments. The UN System can only help. If governments' commitments do not weaken, in about 5 years we can have real improvement compared to the situation in the mid-1970s. But, I repeat, this will require hard work. It will require rigorous application of the various protocols; it will require regular monitoring of changes in environmental conditions of the Sea carried out by your own national institutions; it will require early application of corrective measures as soon as they become necessary; it will require strengthening of the Malta Centre; it will require the further development of the Blue Plan and the Priority Actions Programme to provide examples of sustainable development which is resource-based rather than demand-based and which is contributing to the quality of life in the Mediterranean Region. In brief, it requires imaginative thinking, bold initiatives and co-operation on an un-precedented scale but worthy of the historical leadership of this region.

In order to preserve their environment I believe the peoples of this region are prepared to adopt alternative less wasteful and less materialistic lifestyles. The public want the factories to be non-polluting; they want to see reserves established; they want to see the dumping of oil and hazardous wastes stopped; they want the Mediterranean to be free of untreated sewage ... in short, this generation does not wish to be held by posterity to be responsible for killing the sea that has nurtured the civilizations that have gone before.

And the people who live beside this sea which can replenish its waters only once every 80 years are impatient for results. The public wants to read accurate reports in their newspapers that the sea is getting cleaner; that fish stocks are being replenished and are safe to eat; that the developed countries are helping the developing states on the southern shoreline not to repeat their mistakes. They are expecting you to meet these aspirations.

To-date cooperation within the UN family of organizations has been commendable - I am sure they will continue to offer their invaluable services. Non-Governmental Organizations, especially the citizens action groups, and each and every single individual, be the tourist or resident, have, too, a vital role to play.

So also has the media, which has a duty to expose instances where the authorities are failing to take appropriate actions. But I hope too the journalists will report on the constructive action taken.

In recognition of the media's crucial role an important part of the brief of these new headquarters is to provide full cooperation and free access to information.

But in the last analysis, most responsibility rests with governments acting together and singly. I am sure they will not falter in their responsibility to preserve this great resource - the Mediterranean environment - for our generation, and the generations yet to come.

Welcome from Mr. Antonis Tritsis, Minister for Physical Planning, Housing and Environment at the inauguration of the Co-ordinating Unit for the Mediterranean Action Plan

Representatives of the United Nations, Ladies and Gentlemen, on behalf of the Government, the Greek people and Prime Minister Andreas Papandreu, I welcome the opening of the Co-ordinating Unit of the Mediterranean Action Plan.

It is indeed a distinction for our country to host this international organisation in Athens.

I cannot but be proud of this historical event. The Mediterranean, for us Greeks, it not just a sea, it runs in our veins and is the breath of our civilization. Its protection is an historical necessity.

Because of this, you, the responsible officials of this Project may rely in every way on the Greek Government. Already, we have undertaken our financial responsibilities. And we will continue to support in every way the efficient functioning of the Centre.

Your work and the work of each of the Governments of the 17 countries which surround our common sea, and who are taking part in this Programme, will not be easy.

Even though the Mediterranean is still a live sea as far as fishing, tourism and recreation is concerned, the problems have already started.

It is necessary to prevent the crisis and to improve with long-term planning today's situation of the Mediterranean sea and its beaches, especially in the built-up regions and estuaries.

This will demand firm steps much more widespread than the present technologies of anti-pollution. We have to get to the root of the problem. We have to take a look at the reasons that cause it.

Another attitude will be necessary for the development and use of natural resources, directed not only towards the benefit and profitable gain of the few but towards the need to benefit society as a whole and to respect nature.

Another model of development should be considered under the social inspection and the active participation of local government. Other ways of handling the natural resources will be needed especially of land and irrigation projects, based more on maintaining the balance of ecology and less on chemical and technological laboratories. We have to change the balance of the present relations between natural resources, labour, technology and energy. Our country will live up to this historical challenge. For the Greek Socialist Government the protection of the environment is an instrumental and inseparable part of its progress. For us, no development

is recognized without the renewal of these developmental resources - otherwise we would undermine our national independence - and without the fundamental target of continuous evolution of the quality of life - otherwise we would betray the wishes of the People. Our government's responsibility is for the majority not for the minority. It is for the future generations not for the present. We must act, taking into consideration our history, which is part of the common history of the whole Mediterranean people.

As you are already aware, we have started for the first time in Greece, with limited economic resources, a dynamic programme of the protection of the environment, which is not only limited to the very difficult feat of cleaning up Athens and protecting its monuments but covers every part of the country.

I would like you to know that my Ministry already has started a two-year programme of study and planning of all the urban centres of the country which will include the inspection of the proper use of the land and building network and the finding and controlling of all polluting factors. The programme is completed with the systematic recognition of the sources of the pollution of rivers and lakes and the narrow gulfs of the country. Such targets of each study and programme will prevent the crisis and at the same time improve today's situation. We ask you to study, judge and follow our steps.

We see this effort as a close collaboration with the other Mediterranean countries.

We have already made known to you, my UN friends, that we intend to move towards the creation of a Mediterranean Centre of modern methods to control the environment which will be available to every interested country.

Finally, it is my duty to mention another, and perhaps the main, concern for the Mediterranean. The political initiatives of Andreas Papandreu for the formation of an active solidarity movement of the Mediterranean peoples to change the present situation from one of tension and dispute to one of peace, brotherhood and prosperity, were internationally known long before he became Prime Minister of our country - when he was President of the Panhellenic Socialist Movement of PASOK.

Statement by Ambassador G. Falchi (Italy), President
of the Contracting Parties to the Convention for the
Protection of the Mediterranean Sea against Pollution

On behalf of the Representatives of the Contracting Parties and in particular of my colleagues in the Bureau, I have to express our deepest satisfaction to see realised to-day a unanimous and very important decision of the Governments of the coastal States. The establishment in Athens of a permanent seat of the Coordinating Unit of the Mediterranean Action Plan-is in fact a striking and functional manifestation of their commitments; it is a guarantee of the continuity and strengthening of their efforts as Governments, for the ecological protection of our sea.

If this ceremony can be considered as a positive outcome of four years of preparatory work which resulted already in major and constructive developments, it must be the launching platform for an action which must become every day wider, more coordinated, and effective to save the Mediterranean.

The presentation by Professor Tolba of the first results, the needs and perspectives, has been so clear and full that it remains for me simply to thank him and address to him and to the United Nations Environment Programme that he directs, our appreciation for the support given to the Action Plan, especially during the initial phase and to express the wish that his personal interest which is so important will continue to give a large concrete support to the Action Plan in view of the new and wider responsibilities which it must face in the new phase which opens from to-day.

On behalf in particular of the Bureau of the Contracting Parties I wish to renew my confidence and my appreciation to the Coordinator of the Action Plan, Mr. Aldo Manos. We welcome the open and effective cooperation he has always been able to give to the Bureau.

The Contracting Parties are conscious of the importance of the problem and of the complexity of their task. The problems are both important and urgent.

The pollution of the Mediterranean if it is not brought under control will cease being a problem and will become a scandal. The scandal of accepting and allowing to develop such attacks less and less controllable to the health of populations, to their legitimate rights to rest, to the improvement of their quality of life and to cultural development, as well as dangerous attacks to fundamental economic interests starting from tourism and fisheries.

A close global cooperation will solve the ecological problem of the Mediterranean which is the result of decades of inactivity and ignorance on the extent of the risk of all the actual damage.

The Mediterranean Action Plan is naturally the pivot and the yeast so necessary for this close global cooperation. It allows to strengthen the structures and scientific capacity in each coastal State and to operate an effective transfer of technology and gradually to "ecologise", i.e. to help in depolluting relations between coastal States.

But the Mediterranean Action Plan is above all and must become every day more the framework in which the common action becomes legitimate and vital. Beyond the concerted initiatives of States this common action must mobilize and orient the active participation

of public opinion (growing circles of qualified public opinion, in particular the Press and the media), local authorities and particularly voluntary and specialized associations, the transmission chains of any great ecological campaign.

It must be hoped that Governments on the one hand, our Coordination Unit on the other (the unit stimulating Governments) develop a well planned action to increase the contribution (which will be decisive once it is well coordinated and oriented) of the large voluntary ecological associations to the main problems of the Mediterranean.

Finally it is necessary - in addition to a financial effort which should double in the next few years in order to respond to the real needs - that each Government should constitute an organ or authority for the overall coordination and promotion of national participation. Such an organ working closely with the Mediterranean Action Plan, the local authorities and national voluntary associations could develop and be responsible for any initiative required for the protection of this Mediterranean around which and from which we all live.

In conclusion the Bureau of the Contracting Parties expresses to Minister Iritsis and through him to his Government, the grateful satisfaction for the generous support that Greece is giving to the Mediterranean Action Plan, for the excellent offices of the Headquarters and for the hospitality which have found and will continue to find in Athens - birth place of the Mediterranean civilization - the Representatives and the experts of the countries participating in this great venture of solidarity and civilization that is our Mediterranean Action Plan.

DECLARATION OF A VOLUNTARY COMMITMENT

The oceans are the cradle of life but are seriously endangered by the actions of man. The most serious threat is pollution. Current environment controls and regulations are inadequate. Accordingly, new and special efforts are urgently needed to remove this threat and to save the seas; therefore,

Believing that protection of the marine environment and consultation of ocean resources are compatible providing man exercises care, restraint and understanding; and

Recognizing that maritime transport is an essential part of peaceful international commerce which is the life blood of the world;

We the Shipping Community of Greece, comprising shipowners, operators, managers and agents, masters, deck and engineer officers and seamen, sincerely believe that;

- (a) Although ship-generated marine pollution is only a component of the total marine pollution problem; it is one that can virtually be eliminated with sufficient care and effort;
- (b) Although international conventions and national laws and regulations designed to reduce and eliminate ship-generated marine pollution have contributed significantly to the abatement of such pollution, problems related to the monitoring and enforcement of laws and regulations persist;
- (c) Even the most widely accepted conventions, laws and regulations cannot be fully effective until every sector of the shipping industry is committed to the elimination of marine pollution;
- (d) Such full commitment can only be achieved if the regulatory level is complemented by a high level of environmental consciousness;

- (e) Such environmental consciousness can only be achieved through a concerted voluntary effort to educate and inform all sectors of the shipping industry, from shipowner to seaman.

Accordingly, we, the Shipping Community of Greece, comprising shipowners, operators, managers and agents, masters, deck and engineer officers and seamen, representing a historic industry presently operating and controlling some 50 million gross tons of commercial shipping, voluntarily commit ourselves to eliminate ship-generated marine pollution. We furthermore declare:

1. That we fully support the International Maritime Organisation's aim to achieve "safe ships and clean seas" ;
2. That we pledge our fullest support to comply with the provisions of all international conventions addressing the protection of the marine environment to which Greece is a party¹ ;
3. That we pledge to advise and urge the Government of Greece of the immense value of promptly ratifying and implementing other international conventions addressing the protection of the marine environment² ;
4. That we pledge our expertise and energies to raise the environmental consciousness of the Greek Shipping community so as to lead in an international effort to combine environmental regulation and voluntary will to eliminate ship-generated marine pollution. ;
5. That in order to accomplish these goals, we pledge to institute a "Marine Pollution Action Plan", forming Appendix I to this, our Declaration, at the earliest possible time and to support such "Marine Pollution Action Plan" to the best of our ability ;

5. That in order to attain viable results we have produced this, our Declaration, and the appended "Marine Pollution Action Plan" endorsed by a group of distinguished international organisations devoted to the protection of the world's environment whose views are fully reflected herein³ ; .

Declared at Athens, Greece, on the 4th June, 1982.

SIGNED AND SEALED BY :

ARISTOMENIS M. KARAGEORGIS
PRESIDENT, UNION OF GREEK
SHIPOWNERS

BASIL P. GOULANDRIS
VICE-PRESIDENT, UNION OF GREEK
SHIPOWNERS

GEORGE P. LIVANOS
SECRETARY-GENERAL, UNION OF
GREEK SHIPOWNERS

EMMANUEL SAITIS
SECRETARY-GENERAL,
PANHELLENIC SEAMEN'S FEDERATION

ENDORSED BY :

AUPELTO PECCEI
PRESIDENT, CLUB OF ROME

MOHAMED KASSAS
PRESIDENT, INTERNATIONAL UNION FOR
CONSERVATION OF NATURE AND NATURAL
RESOURCES

CHARLES DE HAES
DIRECTOR-GENERAL, WORLD WILDLIFE
FUND

ELISABETH MANN BORGESE
PRESIDENT, INTERNATIONAL OCEAN
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PROJECT DIRECTOR, INTERNATIONAL
INSTITUTE FOR ENVIRONMENT AND
DEVELOPMENT