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MEDITERRANEAN ACTION PLAN

Meeting of the Bureau of the Contracting Parties
to the Convention for the protection of the
Mediterranean Sea against pollution and
its related protocols

Athens, 14 - 15 March 1989

Report of the Meeting of the Bureau
of the Contracting Parties to the Convention
for the protection of the Mediterranean Sea against pollution
and its related protocols

Opening of the Meeting

1. The Meeting was called to order by Mr. George Ktenas, Alternate Minister for the Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works of Greece, President of the Bureau. Mr. Yves Rodrigue, Vice-President (France), Mr. Turgut Balkas, Vice-President (Turkey), and Mr. Yusef Elmehrik, Rapporteur (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) were also present. Two members of the Bureau were accompanied by advisers. The list of participants is contained in annex I to this report.

2. In his opening remarks, the President pledged the Greek Government's continued support for the objectives of the Mediterranean Action Plan. He referred to the increased attention being given to the quality of the environment and to its maintenance and improvement not only by the Governments of the Mediterranean countries but also by those of other countries, as was shown by the decisions taken at the Rhodes summit meeting of the EEC member States and at the Brussels meeting of the Ministers for the Environment of those States. That the condition of the environment was a matter of world-wide concern was also demonstrated by the pronouncements of the President of the United States of America on the subject. What the world was witnessing at present was a deterioration of the environment that was the regrettable consequence of irrational industrialization and that did not stop at national frontiers. A great deal of effort had been devoted to the gathering of data and to the elaboration of ideas and theories concerning the environment and its worsening condition.

3. He hoped that the present meeting would point the way forward to progress from theory to practical action, to action that could be supported by all Mediterranean countries.

Agenda item 1 - Adoption of the agenda

4. The agenda suggested by the secretariat (UNEP/BUR/34/1) was adopted.

5. The Turkish Vice-President and the Libyan Rapporteur suggested that there should be some discussion of the role of the World Bank in activities concerning the environment of the Mediterranean region.

Agenda item 2 - Progress report by the Co-ordinator

6. Mr. Manos, Co-ordinator of the Mediterranean Action Plan, introduced the progress report on the activities carried out since the meeting of the Expanded Bureau (November 1988 - February 1989) (UNEP/BUR/34/3). Before commenting on particular sections or paragraphs of the report he drew attention to a number of resolutions adopted by the General Assembly at its 43rd session (in particular resolutions 43/18, 43/84, 43/53, 43/196, 43/212) which were of relevance to the environment of the Mediterranean region and hence to the work of UNEP and of the Co-ordinating Unit.

7. Proceeding to comment on specific paragraphs he mentioned the EEC's fifth report on the implementation of the Council Directive concerning the quality of bathing waters (progress report, para 6) and preliminary contacts by the MAP secretariat with officials of the World Bank on the subject of the possible co-ordination of their activities in the Mediterranean region. He added that another financial institution - the Islamic Development Bank - had expressed willingness to consider co-operating with other agencies in activities designed to contribute to the protection of the environment of the Mediterranean region.
8. With reference to paragraphs 20 and 24 concerning the Blue Plan he stated that the French Government was proposing certain activities as a follow-up to the Blue Plan and had provided the members of the Bureau with certain particulars on the subject. He added that the data of the Blue Plan (see para 21) had been placed at his disposal and at the disposal of the Contracting Parties. In addition, the University of Genoa was proposing to make a contribution to the follow-up of the Blue Plan; liaison would be ensured with the secretariat of the Blue Plan.
9. With regard to paragraphs 35-38 of the progress report which were either self-explanatory or the subject of more detailed comment in the documents before the Bureau, he referred to the question of the legal status of the Tunis Centre concerned with specially protected areas; because the legal status of that Centre was unclear, the activity of foreign experts attached to the Centre was hampered.
10. So far as the Regional Oil Combating Centre (ROCC) was concerned (paras 43-52) he explained that the Executive Director of UNEP and the Secretary-General of IMO were conducting discussions concerning the post of the Director.
11. He informed the Bureau that he had received an invitation from the Government of Albania to visit Tirana; he considered that the invitation might indicate a willingness on the part of the Albanian Government to be associated more closely with the activities sponsored by the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention.
12. He described the status of the Trust Fund and of contributions to the Fund (paras 62-64 and Annex III). He pointed out that the table in Annex III had been prepared on the basis of the figures available at the time. Late in December 1988 further contributions or arrears of contributions had been received, and the table needed to be corrected accordingly; he gave particulars of the revised data. Nevertheless, the fact remained that towards the end of 1988 the secretariat had been under severe financial constraints. He explained in addition that in consequence of changes adopted by the General Assembly in the scale of contributions of Member States, it would be necessary to consider the possible implications for the contributions of the Contracting Parties.

13. With reference to the question of the security arrangements of the Co-ordinating Unit, which had been mentioned by the Co-ordinator, the President stated that the Greek Government observed high standards in ensuring the protection of the life and property of foreigners and citizens alike. However, for reasons of more effective operation of MAP, one possibility might be to relocate the unit in larger and more appropriate premises. The financial aspect of such a relocation would have to be examined.

14. The Turkish Vice-President of the Bureau, referring to paragraph 34 of the progress report, gave an account of the decisions taken at the meeting held at Split on 9-11 March 1989 to consider the Izmir bay pilot project. In this connection he mentioned the prospective involvement of the World Bank in the financing of that project, which was the subject of negotiations between the Turkish Government and the Bank. He added that the lessons to be learnt from the execution of the Izmir bay project might be instructive for planners of like projects in other countries of the region, e.g. the Kastela bay project.

15. He summarized the importance of the Izmir Bay pilot project in three main elements:

- The project will assist moving from the assessment stage to the implementation (management) stage;
- it will help in combining outputs of the two projects (Izmir and Kastela) thus it will create regional atmosphere for co-operation;
- it will assist in an interaction between scientists from both projects.

16. The President, speaking as the representative of Greece, stressed the need for exchange of experience on the pilot projects and for the rational use of international financial means, according to the Mediterranean priorities.

17. So far as the data stored in the data base were concerned, he considered that these should be accessible to all interested parties, and possibly relevant information should be published in Medwaves.

18. With regard to the Blue Plan and the proposals made, he suggested that all Contracting Parties should participate in the elaboration of the appropriate scheme for the effective use and updating of the Blue Plan results. For reasons of better co-ordination, he suggested that invitations for meetings on the 100 historic sites should be sent through official channels.

19. On the conclusion of the debate on agenda item 2, the Bureau took note of the progress report contained in Document UNEP/BUR/34/3 and of the supplementary oral comments provided by the Co-ordinator.

Agenda Item 3 - Revised paper on refocusing of the Mediterranean Action Plan

20. The Co-ordinator introduced the two documents relating to this item UNEP/BUR/34/4 and UNEP/BUR/34/5. The first of these documents contained the revised version of the Executive Director's paper on the refocusing of MAP; a final text would be prepared on the light of comments received from Governments*. The second document entitled "Integrated planning of the Development and Management of the Resources of the Mediterranean Basin" dealt essentially with the question of pilot projects. So far as this document was concerned, he hoped that members of the Bureau would comment more specifically on paragraph 15 which describes the procedure for the acceptance of pilot projects.
21. As it was not possible within the limits of available resources to deal with a large number of such projects or with projects lasting for a long time, it was suggested that four projects should be envisaged for a duration of say two years. He referred in this connection to the relevant proposal made in the budget document (UNEP/BUR/34/6).
22. In the ensuing discussion, the Turkish Vice-President expressed the opinion that the duration of pilot projects could not be restricted to two years; in his opinion at least five years had to elapse before the results of the execution of a project could be evaluated. He considered that the activities of MAP which at present concentrated on assessment should be oriented more to questions of management and implementation. He also suggested that the secretariat should give greater prominence to the evaluation of current projects. As concerning document UNEP/BUR/34/5, he suggested that it should be revised in conjunction with PAP/RAC, which has made a substantive contribution to the Izmir Pilot Project at little cost.
23. In the opinion of the Libyan Rapporteur what mattered was that priorities should be established for future work of MAP. He urged that greater emphasis should be given to the quality of the work and to certain specific issues, for example the question of land-based sources of pollution, public awareness and co-ordination. In the final analysis, it was the national capabilities that would determine the extent to which the desired objectives could be achieved.
24. The French Vice-President in referring to document UNEP/BUR/34/5 asked for some clarification of the proposals in paragraph 13 as regards the apportionment of responsibility between MAP and PAP. Referring to paragraph 15, he expressed the view that the action of MAP could not be rigidly limited to two years and in any case that action was concerned above all with the launching phase of pilot projects.

*Comments already received from EEC, Israel, Libya and Malta, as well as the written comments made available by the French Vice-President.

25. As regards paragraph 16, he suggested that certain other factors should be added to the check-list, e.g. the socio-economic prospects of a project site. He added that it was desirable to work out methods pragmatically in connection with the execution of the first pilot projects, without being bound by pre-conceived notions.

26. The President stressed that the Bureau should not engage in theoretical discussion, but should identify specific objectives, set priorities, proceed to practical action and go beyond mere research and diagnosis to actual treatment. As an example he mentioned the need to decrease some travel costs of small importance and to finance environmental protection measures as well as films for public awareness. The President referred to the Rhodes Pilot Project and the relevant activities so far. He mentioned the close co-operation between ministerial services and local authorities for the definition of appropriate priorities and the elaboration of an effective workplan. He agreed that a two-year duration might not be enough for the pilot projects to show results. He added that the Greek Government would submit comments in writing on document UNEP/BUR/34/4.

27. The Co-ordinator of MAP, responding to comments about the need for practical action stressed that a distinction should be drawn between the responsibilities of the Co-ordinating Unit and those of governments. The former is responsible for carrying out studies and proposing action, the latter were responsible for taking whatever action was needed on the basis of those studies and recommend actions. So far as pilot projects were concerned he stressed that the Unit was not in a position to tie up its resources for too long a period. As regards priorities, he hoped that the Bureau would provide guidance, whether for example greater importance should be attached to the issue of land-based sources of pollution, to the protection of historic sites or to information, etc. He added that criteria were needed for the purpose of choosing pilot projects, fixing the duration and the allocation of funds.

28. At the end of the discussion on item 3, the Bureau decided to request the secretariat to prepare a further revised version of document UNEP/BUR/34/4 in the light of comments made in the course of the debate and of written comments communicated by Governments with a view to the submission of the definitive text to the Contracting Parties at their October meeting.

29. As regards document UNEP/BUR/34/5, the secretariat was requested to revise it on the basis of comments made and to submit it to the two Committees.

Agenda Item 4 - 1990-1991 Programme and Budget Presentation by Objectives

30. The Co-ordinator introduced the document relating to this item (UNEP/BUR/34/6). He explained that the major objectives were set out under eight headings. He explained that the estimates of expenditure for the biennium 1990/91 took into account an adjustment for inflation of 5% - a figure which he considered reasonable in view of the great diversity of rates of inflation prevailing in the Mediterranean countries. He stressed that any adjustment of less than 5% would imply a reduction of the budget. In response to a number of requests he stated that full details relating to each proposed expenditure item would be made available to the Bureau and to the two Committees scheduled to meet in June 1989.
31. The Libyan Rapporteur expressed doubts about the usefulness of objective 2 of the programme and budget document concerning the legal component.
32. The French Vice-President stated that in his opinion the presentation of the programme by objectives could be made clearer, in particular by setting out the expenses of the preceding year and by adding a breakdown of the expenditure according to the traditional categories (salaries, travel, consultants, meetings, etc.). He suggested at that stage, among other measures, that the four information bulletins should be combined in a single one, to be issued in Arabic, English and French.
33. As regards the follow-up of the Blue Plan, which had met with a positive response at the meeting of the Expanded Bureau, he submitted and commented on the French proposals concerning future activities of what might be described as the "Observatory of the Mediterranean". With a small staff and a budget of \$300,000 the Observatory would concentrate on the updating of data, giving priority to the environment of coastal areas, technological changes, etc., and would assist governments at their request. France would submit an estimate of its contribution to the operation of the Observatory.
34. As regards the question of dissemination of information (Section 8 of the proposed budget), the French Vice-President considered that the Co-ordinating Unit did not possess the necessary resources to undertake such tasks, and he suggested that the question should be the subject of a further exchange of views.
35. The President, speaking as representative of Greece, stressed the need to ensure four major characteristics for the budget: transparency, justification of costs, priorities and action-oriented presentation. He suggested that operational costs might be presented separately from those relating to actual activities. He asked for the 5% increase of the budget to be approved, leaving it to the secretariat to justify it. To avoid problems due to arrears, he suggested that Contracting Parties should be reminded to send contributions by the end of April of each year. Further comments on the breakdown of the budget would be communicated to the Unit.

36. At the end of the debate:
- (a) The Bureau decided that the Scientific and Technical Committee and the Socio-Economic Committee should meet in a joint Session from 26 to 30 June 1989 in Athens.
 - (b) The Bureau requested the secretariat to submit the budget proposals in greater detail to the joint meeting of the two committees with a view to eventual approval by the Contracting Parties.
 - (c) The Bureau agreed that a 5% adjustment of the budget to take account of inflation should be reflected in the 1990-1991 proposed budget, subject to the reservation expressed by the French Vice-President regarding the customary justification.
 - (d) The Bureau recommended that any funds received in excess of the approved programme should constitute a reserve on which the secretariat would be able to draw for carrying out the approved programme. Any additional expenditure from such a reserve to deal with emergency situations would require the approval of the Bureau.
 - (e) The Bureau urged all Contracting Parties to pay their contributions not later than the first quarter of each year.
 - (f) With respect to the French Government's proposal concerning post-Blue Plan activities, the Bureau recommended that budget proposals should take into account the estimated expenditure related to those activities. Furthermore it took note of the French Government's undertaking to make a counterpart contribution in the form of the establishment of an observatory at Sophia Antipolis.
 - (g) The Bureau further recommended that all existing information bulletins should be incorporated in a single publication of Medwaves to be issued in Arabic, English and French.

Agenda Item 5 - Date and place of the next meeting of the Bureau

37. The Bureau decided that its next meeting would be held in Athens on 2 October 1989 prior to the meeting of the Contracting Parties.

Agenda Item 6 - Other business

38. No other business was considered.

Agenda Item 7 - Adoption of the report of the Meeting

39. The Bureau adopted its report on 15 March 1989

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