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Introduction

1. The meeting of the Bureau of the Contracting Parties to the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean and its Protocols was held at the Hotel "Mons", Ljubljana (Slovenia), on 6 and 7 April 2006.

Participation

2. The meeting was chaired by the President of the Bureau of the Contracting Parties, H.E. Janez Podobnik, Minister of the Environment and Spatial Planning of Slovenia. The following members of the Bureau attended: Ms. Soledad Blanco, Director of International Affairs, DG-Environment-Unit (European Community) (Vice-President); Mr. Mohamed Khalil, Executive Director of the Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency (EEAA) (Egypt) (Vice-President); Mr. Sedat Kadioglu, Head of the Department for External Relations and the EU (Turkey) (Vice-President); Mr. Chokkri Nessib, Official at the Ministry of the Environment of Tunisia (Vice-President); and Mr. José Fernandez, Director-General of the Ministry of the Environment of Spain (Rapporteur). Mr. Mitja Bricelj, Secretary of the Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning of Slovenia, also attended.

3. Mr. Paul Mifsud, Coordinator, and Ms. Tatjana Hema, MEDU Programme Officer, represented the Secretariat of the Mediterranean Action Plan.

4. The full list of participants is attached as **Annex I** to the present report.

Agenda item 1: **Opening of the meeting**

5. The meeting was opened by H.E. Mr. Janez Podobnik, President of the Bureau of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention and Minister of the Environment and Spatial Planning of Slovenia, who welcomed the participants on behalf of his Government. He said that it was the first meeting of the Bureau since the Fourteenth Meeting of the Parties in Portoroz, in November 2005, which had seen the adoption of the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development, the first regional strategy of its kind. The challenge was to implement it without losing the opportunity to benefit from the projects launched within the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, such as Horizon 2020. Slovenia was determined to take part in the collective effort, in particular in subregional cooperation on the "Adriatic" eco-region. It was also implementing its national action plan (NAP) to combat landbased pollution. In May 2006, Slovenia would host an international workshop on the application of the SPA and Biodiversity Protocol in the marine environment of the Mediterranean. From 5 to 7 June, it would also be staging an international conference on an "Adriatic strategy for sustainable development", to apply the EU Marine Strategy in the subregion.

6. The full text of Mr. Podobnik's opening statement is attached as **Annex II** to the present report.

7. M. Paul Mifsud, MAP Coordinator, thanked Mr. Podobnik and the Slovenian authorities for their warm hospitality and excellent organization of the meeting. Slovenia was known for the success of its past and present initiatives in the Adriatic subregion. Other parts of the Mediterranean could take inspiration from its example. He also welcomed the new members of the Bureau.

8. M. Podobnik said that, owing to official engagements, he would hand the chair to the Secretary at his Ministry, Mr. Mitja Bricelj.

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

9. The meeting adopted the agenda prepared by the Secretariat (UNEP/BUR/64/1) and the organization of work set out in the annotated agenda (UNEP/BUR/64/2). The agenda is attached as **Annex III** to the present report. The Secretariat announced that, according to customary practice, a list of recommendations, prepared on the basis of the deliberations, would be presented to the Bureau for approval at the end of the meeting. The report of the meeting would be sent at a later date to the members of the Bureau, for observations and approval.

Agenda item 3: Progress Report by the Secretariat on activities carried out since the last Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention (Portoroz, 8-11 November 2005)

10. The Coordinator said that the progress report (UNEP/BUR/64/3) to be examined under agenda item 3, was made up of two distinct parts: the first sketched the progress made in applying the programme approved at Portoroz; the second addressed specific issues that called for recommendations or guidelines to be issued by the Bureau. The activities would be examined section by section and important points would be highlighted so that the meeting could hold an exchange of views before addressing the specific issues on which the Bureau would be deciding.

Coordination

11. On the subject of ratifications, the Coordinator stressed that three ratifications were needed for the LBS Protocol to enter into force. The Secretariat wished to identify the difficulties for non ratification and try to overcome them by offering assistance to the countries concerned. He said that strong support had been expressed for the MSSD and its implementation, just after Portoroz, at the Barcelona Summit of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, and that MAP had decided to participate in the "Horizon 2020" initiative to depollute the Mediterranean. Help for countries with the elaboration of their NSSDs would continue, and four other countries would benefit thanks to funding from Spain's Azahar Programme. With regard to cooperation with partners, there was soon to be another very important initiative for the region, the new GEF Strategic Partnership; MAP's former focal point for Greece, Mr. Lascaratou, had been appointed as project director. MoUs had been signed with the main partners. Three MAP components were implementing important projects with EC support: MED POL on the application of the ecosystem approach, REMPEC for the SAFEMED project concluded between the EC and the IMO, and PAP/RAC for a series of workshops in countries on the southern shore of the Mediterranean organized under the SMAP programme. Regarding staff issues, French national, Mr. Frédéric Hébert, had been appointed as Director of REMPEC, and had taken up his position on 1 January 2006.

12. Ms. Soledad Blanco, Vice-President, representing the European Community, said that, over recent years, the EC had often been critical of MAP's information policy, but more recently, thanks to action by ERS/RAC (now INFO/RAC), there had been clearly visible improvements, especially in the dissemination of information.

13. Mr. José Fernandez, Rapporteur, representing Spain, fully agreed with the representative of the EC. With regard to the programme of the autonomously-run Spanish Agency for International Cooperation, he said that the request for assistance for the four NSSDs had been received too late for 2005 but the situation would be regularized in 2006.

14. Mr. Mohamed Kalil, Vice-President, representing Egypt, also welcomed the favourable developments in the area of MAP information issues. He was happy to announce that Egypt was about to ratify the Offshore Protocol. His country's Environmental Affairs Agency was also calling for the signature of the Hazardous Wastes Protocol and other instruments.

Legal Issues

Ratifications

15. The Coordinator presented the recommendations on legal issues. With regard to the ratifications, while the other legal instruments were important, it was undoubtedly the LBS Protocol that urgently needed to enter into force, since it would confer a legal base on the whole series of obligations already respected by the Parties, such as the monitoring of landbased pollution sources. He always took advantage of his visits to the countries concerned to urge them to activate their ratification processes, and would do so again the following week when visiting Lebanon.

16. The representative of the EC proposed that the President of the Bureau should personally send a letter urging the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of those countries yet to ratify the LBS and Dumping Protocols to do so, asking them also if they had any reason for non-ratification as was the case, for example, of the European Union with regard to the Offshore and Hazardous Wastes Protocols, on which it had issued reservations owing to their provisions on liability. The letter could also be sent to MAP focal points. In its bilateral relations with Mediterranean countries in the context of cooperation on the environment, the Commission always urged them to ratify the main Protocols. Since it was an important issue, she would like a paragraph to be added in favour of ratification of the SPA and Biodiversity Protocol by countries yet to do so, even though it had been the first of the new revised instruments to enter into force in 1999. The representatives of Turkey and Spain voiced their agreement.

17. The Coordinator thanked the Bureau for their constructive comments and, after an exchange of views on the procedure to be followed, it was agreed that the President's letter should be sent to the Ministers of Foreign Affairs, with copies to the Ministers of the Environment, and that the Secretariat would submit a draft to the President for approval.

ICZM Protocol

18. The Coordinator briefly outlined the background to the elaboration of a draft ICZM protocol. In Portoroz, the Parties had taken note of an unofficial preliminary draft protocol drawn up by PAP/RAC and asked for a working group of legal and technical experts to be set up to develop a new draft for its submission and possible approval at the Fifteenth Meeting of the Contracting Parties in 2007, followed by the holding of a diplomatic conference. The preliminary draft, reformatted by the Secretariat but without any changes to its substance, had been addressed to the Contracting Parties before the first meeting of the working group, due in Split on 27-29 April 2006, for them to make any remarks. Comments were submitted by eight Parties including the EC, which called, for a general debate on the aims, scope and structure of the protocol before any article-by-article examination of a given draft, under

consideration. The Secretariat has now proposed that the debate be held as the first agenda item before the draft was examined.

19. The representative of the EC confirmed that there were concerns about a draft protocol that might present difficulties for, not to say contradictions, with the EU's *acquis communautaire* on ICZM – i.e. a recommendation, a thematic marine strategy with its own draft directive, the forthcoming publication of a Green Paper, etc. That was the reason for the request for a general discussion prior to any examination of the draft. In principle the EC was in favour of a text that focused on integration rather than management. The representative of Spain agreed, remarking that his country could not manage its Atlantic coasts according to the EC recommendation and its Mediterranean coasts according to the provisions of the planned protocol.

20. The Coordinator said that he fully understood the constraints of the EC and its Mediterranean Member States during the negotiation of the protocol. At the meetings he attended, however, and drawing on his personal experience and the signals he received from many countries, he felt that the situation of the Mediterranean coast was critical (40 per cent was concreted over) and would only become worse unless strict provisions were applied. While the planned Protocol needed to be flexible regarding certain aspects, it should be legally more restrictive than the current provisions in force. The President of the Bureau added that the data communicated by international organizations and national reports insisted on the seriousness of coastal developments, making it a problem that needed to be tackled seriously and proactively.

Components

21. The Coordinator outlined the section of the progress report on MAP components. He made reference to the finalization by all countries of their national action plans for combating landbased pollution sources, and to the main agenda items at the following MCSD meeting in Cyprus, due to focus on the challenge of implementing the MSSD and its monitoring, the technical aspect of which would be the responsibility of the Blue Plan.

22. The representative of Spain said that his country had stepped up its participation in the various MED POL programme activities. It had high expectations of the programme owing to the gradual introduction of the ecosystem approach. The work done by the RACs was good on the whole: INFO/RAC had succeeded in a fairly short time to reorient its action around ICTs, and the CP/RAC in Barcelona had extended its range of activities, under its new Director. (to the fields of technical publications and training in cleaner production) His country would translate the Blue Plan's Environment and Development Report into Spanish.

23. The representative of Egypt said that the project on the ecosystem approach that was entrusted to MED POL with EC support, raised many questions. He could not see how the meeting of experts due to meet was empowered to take decisions on the subject. He added that the situation needed clarification. It was necessary to safeguard the structure of the region, the Cartagena Protocol being exemplary in that respect, and to tackle the problem of non-indigenous and invasive species.

24. Responding to the comments by Egypt, the representative of the European Community said that the project on the ecosystem approach has been launched with the participation of all activity centres and that, if there were any doubts or worries, referral should be made to the details of the project mandate. The meeting of experts due to be held on several occasions would bring the necessary clarifications to bear. Overall, the EC had no

objection to expressing views on the activities carried out by the different Centres, but they had to be properly interlinked and truly complementary, in particular with a view to "Horizon 2020". With regard to biodiversity, very important decisions had just been taken in Brussels in recent weeks concerning the CBD Convention and there should be the greatest possible synergy between activities undertaken under the Barcelona Convention and those carried out in Mediterranean countries under the CBD Convention.

25. The representative of Turkey said that, together with SPA/RAC, his country would be organizing the planned conference on the monk seal. In view of the challenges highlighted by the national plans, the main problem facing most countries was funding, as considerable sums were required to address such questions as monitoring and addressing landbased pollution problems in the framework of MED POL, in particular the hotspots. Each country had its priorities and, in Turkey, for example, there was a strong demand for training in GIS and ICZM. MAP should endeavour to respond more to those needs.

26. Speaking as the representative of Slovenia, Mr Mitja Bricelj who was chairing the meeting said that, in the perspective of the ecosystem approach, there was an asset that the region had in large quantities, namely the sizeable amount of scientific data amassed over the years by MAP, in particular through MED POL and the establishment of its database. Those data should now be used for preparing management plans.

27. The Coordinator thanked the members of the Bureau for their remarks, which the Secretariat would take into account. As far as the general need for closer cooperation between the RACs was concerned, he stressed that much progress had been made thanks to a number of initiatives; the most important was undoubtedly the GEF Strategic Partnership, for which all MAP components coordinated their activities with a view to playing a full part in it. Acting in complementarity was an excellent opportunity for them to demonstrate their effectiveness. It was true that MED POL's monitoring data were not only useful in the framework of MED POL in other areas too. INFO/RAC had held a meeting with MED POL on the MED POL infoSystem, and with the Secretariat on monitoring the implementation of the Convention, with the aim of creating an integrated database – (Infosystem MAP) – also in view of the reporting obligations of the Parties under the Convention and other international instruments. With regard to the Tunis Centre the Coordinator highlighted the question of identifying and designating Specially Protected Areas of Mediterranean Importance (SPAMIs), which would shortly be discussed at a seminar jointly organized by SPA/RAC and Spain. With respect to the ecosystem approach and the remarks made by the representative of Egypt, the Coordinator said that a meeting was held to launch the project, and a first meeting of experts on the subject was held at MEDU. This outcome would be communicated to all the Parties; implementation of the approach was by no means easy; MED POL was entrusted with coordinating this exercise, but it was for the whole of MAP to take part, since it would gradually apply to the whole Programme in the future. Concerning the needs for training and capacity-building rightly stressed by the representative of Turkey, he pointed out that one of the objectives of the CAMPs was that they should be developed in the countries that hosted them, and Turkey might possibly contemplate having a CAMP on its territory. Referring to the issue of liability and compensation, an obligation stipulated in the Convention that had been pending for many years, he said that the meeting held recently to revive the issue had demonstrated a desire to make progress. It might reasonably be expected that a legal arrangement could be set up in that area, along with a compliance mechanism, a subject entrusted to a working group of legal and technical experts.

28. The representative of the EC returned to the question of biodiversity and its crucial importance in the Mediterranean. In view of recent developments in the framework of the Convention for Biological Diversity (CDB) and the "biodiversity 2010 objective" set by the Parties to the Convention and the EU, with the very active support of IUCN, she proposed that a specific recommendation should be made and a strong signal be sent by the Bureau to the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention and to all Regional Activity Centres. They should also insist on the need to "improve the role and management of SPA/RAC and avoid any duplication of work with other activities being carried out individually by countries under the CBD. The President, speaking as the representative of Slovenia, supported the proposal, expressing the wish that it should be linked to the ecosystem approach.

29. The MAP Coordinator thanked the representative of the EC for her important proposal which could either be the subject of a specific recommendation to be adopted at the end of the meeting or be included among the Bureau's conclusions in the report of the meeting.

30. The MEDU Programme Officer said that the EC proposal might be taken up at the meeting on the implementation of the SAP BIO due to be held shortly in Tunis, with major organizations active in the field. It would be a good opportunity to examine how all actors in the Mediterranean would work together to meet the 2010 objective. On the subject of the ecosystem approach and to allay the concerns expressed by the representative of Egypt, Ms. Hema said that no decision had been taken in Portoroz regarding its application in the Mediterranean. The recommendation of the Parties was very clear: in the context of the project entrusted to MED POL with EC support, the stated aim was to study the effects of applying the ecosystem approach, without pre-empting the final decision of the Parties.

Specific Issues

Reports

31. The MEDU Programme Officer briefly presented the specific issues in the progress report, and the corresponding draft recommendations. Ms Hema said that some of the reports submitted by the countries on implementation of the Convention in 2002-2003 had missing data which they were asked to supply. Since the Convention had entered into force, the countries were obliged to submit their reports for the biennium 2004-2005. In accordance with the recommendations agreed at Portoroz, a database had been set up, with the help of INFO/RAC, including information contained in the reports. The Secretariat was now preparing a new template for the whole Barcelona system, SAP MED and SAP BIO included, for submission at the CP meeting in 2007.

32. The representative of the EC asked the Secretariat to ensure that the new template would not be an additional administrative burden on countries, and that it should be consistent with their obligations under EC directives and other international conventions. It would be useful for the following meeting of the working group on the reporting system to invite the European Environment Agency (EEA), which was also working on a unified system for the EC. Moreover, at Eurostat, there was a Medstat project for Mediterranean countries to produce statistics compatible with the EU's; its contribution could be valuable. On the latter point, Ms. Hema said that the Blue Plan enjoyed very active cooperation with Medstat, which for several years had been included in its work programme, and that it would take part in producing the new form.

Compliance

33. The MEDU Programme Officer said that far-reaching discussion of the issue had taken place at the two meetings of the working group held over the previous biennium but two questions remained unanswered, for lack of consensus among members: the role of the Secretariat and that of NGOs in the future Compliance Committee. Mr. Mifsud added that the Secretariat did not expect the Bureau to reach a decision on those two points but simply to issue guidelines for the working group. On the basis of the recommendation approved at Portoroz, the group would be open to all Parties and was due to finalize the compliance mechanism for its submission at the meeting in 2007; if adopted it would then become operational.

34. Following a discussion on the two outstanding issues mentioned earlier, there was consensus among the Bureau Members in favour of an active role by the Secretariat, which should not be a mere letterbox but should be able, on its own initiative, to undertake a procedure on the basis of reports, or well-founded complaints or referrals. In accordance with MAP's policy for several years, the NGO/partners could attend meetings of the Compliance Committee, as observers and not as members. The Bureau also asked the Secretariat to set the dates of the next meeting of the working group as quickly as possible so that the Parties could designate their representatives in good time.

Liability and compensation

35. The MEDU Programme Officer explained the conclusions of the meeting of the working group of legal and technical experts on liability and compensation which was held in Loutraki (Greece). Following years of reflexion on this issue, the representatives of the Parties had finally decided on a clear direction, calling for the elaboration of a soft law instrument in the form of guidelines. The guidelines would be elaborated by a Consultant and then examined by another meeting of the working group in 2007, before submission to the Fifteenth Meeting of the Contracting Parties for a discussion. The Bureau was asked by the Secretariat whether it agreed to the participation at the 2007 meeting of experts by representatives of industries and insurance companies.

36. Some members of the Bureau advised caution on such a sensitive issue, in view of the possible overlap with arrangements established by other international conventions, such as those of the IMO. The guidelines envisaged should not be binding: the EC had not ratified the Offshore Protocol precisely because of the issues of liability raised by its Member States. That said, the Bureau agreed to the participation of representatives of industries and insurance companies.

37. The Coordinator said that he fully agreed with the need for caution, recommended by the members of the Bureau, and that the Secretariat's intention was to make very gradual progress on the matter, carefully gauging the reactions and taking the advice of professionals, such as the insurance sector. In the long term, however, there should be a binding legal instrument, in keeping with Article 16 of the Convention.

Evaluation of MAP

38. The Coordinator recalled the circumstances leading to the evaluation of MAP in 2005 and to a series of findings and recommendations, some of which had major implications for MAP's future strategically, institutionally and legally. The Secretariat had therefore decided to submit the recommendations to the Parties for discussion at an extraordinary meeting of the

MAP focal points in September 2006. One of the three consultants responsible for the initial document was working on a revised version of the recommendations, due to be ready for dissemination to the Parties by the end of July 2006. The Secretariat had also launched an internal debate on the recommendations in January 2006, at the customary meeting of Directors of RACs and MEDU, and in March at the meeting of all the RACs in Rome. The conclusions of those discussions would be integrated by the consultant in the recommendations and presented at the meeting of focal points as the Secretariat's position.

39. According to the representative of the EC, the external evaluation of MAP was important for the Parties; it belonged to them and should be addressed by them. They therefore had to be genuinely involved. Firstly, the proposed timetable would not allow them enough time to reflect and consult internally, for such a decisive examination and debate. Secondly, she said that the Secretariat should distribute to the Parties not only the documents mentioned, namely the draft Ministerial Declaration and a list of recommendations that had emerged from the Evaluation, but also the elements needed for a serious examination, such as the observations of the consultants on the feasibility of their recommendations, the full original documents, etc.

40. The President and the representatives of Spain and Turkey supported the EC position. They pointed out that between late July and the month of September, when all administrations took their holidays, there could be no process of consultation and decision-making. There was therefore a risk that, owing to a lack of preparation, a September meeting might not lead to conclusions and further meetings would have to be held, implying extra financial costs.

41. The Coordinator replied that the full report of the External Evaluation had been given to the focal points at their meeting in September 2005. In view of the highly detailed nature of the document and its importance for the future of MAP and its components, it had been decided to hold an extraordinary meeting to address the recommendations. The Parties had already been able to react in a fairly formal way to some of the recommendations. The aim of the extraordinary meeting was to determine a common position on a number of recommendations and, if any were still pending, they would be addressed at the focal points meeting in September 2007, before submission to the Fifteenth Meeting of Parties in 2007. The September 2006, meeting was not necessarily expected to be entirely conclusive, and two years seemed enough for the internal reflection and consultation requested by the members of the Bureau. That said, the Secretariat had no objection to postponing the meeting by a month, apart from the administrative difficulties of setting new dates acceptable to everyone, changing contracts for interpreters, etc.

42. On a proposal made by the President, it was agreed that the relevant recommendation be revised to allow for two alternatives: either to maintain the September dates and advance by at least one month the distribution of the documents, or delay the meeting until October/early November. Moreover the meeting should agree not to adopt the report at the end of the meeting; instead the report would be sent to the Parties later for approval.

Cooperation with the EC

43. The Coordinator highlighted the importance of the proposed draft recommendation:

- to increase synergy between the two institutions with respect to the coordination and implementation of a joined work programme;
- to ensure the active participation of MAP in the Horizon 2020 Initiative;

- to organize regular meetings between MAP and the EC officials in view of ensuring monitoring and evaluation of common activities;

44. The representative of the EC said that the existing instruments for funding the various activities undertaken with EC backing would come to an end on 1 January 2007 and would be replaced by a single "neighbourhood" instrument, giving increased responsibility to the European Parliament in its management and a probable increase in its overall amount. With regard to the Horizon 2020 initiative, the EC representative clarified that following the Barcelona Summit of 28 November 2005, the initiative became a Euro-Mediterranean Partnership process, with financial obligations not only on the EC but also on all the partner countries, international organizations, MAP, and others. With regard to the proposed meeting between the President of the Bureau and the European Commissioner for the Environment, the Slovenian Minister for the Environment should do so as a representative of all Mediterranean countries, especially the countries of the south and east of the Mediterranean that were Partnership members. The Secretariat and the President agreed.

GEF Strategic Partnership – Implementation of the SAP BIO

45. The Programme Officer gave the justifications for the draft recommendation, which was accepted by Bureau.

Cooperation with NGOs

46. The Programme Officer presented the requests from three NGOs to become MAP partners, recalling the criteria decided by the Parties for adding NGOs to the list of MAP partners. Since all three NGOs met the criteria, the Secretariat asked the members of the Bureau to decide in their favour. She also introduced a table of MAP Partners, giving information on the geographical distribution of the NGOs by country. Reference was also made to the need to assess the NGO's MAP Partners contribution to the objectives of MAP and whether the time has come to carry out an assessment of their activities and decide on the continued inclusion on the list of partners.

47. Mr. Chokkri Nessib, Vice-President representing Tunisia, said that the criteria for maintaining NGOs on the list needed to be regularly updated, as their composition and level of activity often changed. The representative of the EC also raised the possibility of limiting the number of NGOs and improving their geographical balance in attendance at meetings.

National Action Plans (NAPs)

48. The Coordinator said that, having established their respective NAPs, the countries had identified the interventions needed to reduce pollution that they saw as priorities. (for 2010 and 2025). Presenting those priorities would not be justified unless their long-term funding was assured. In addition to their own investments in infrastructures to reduce pollution, the countries would in the future benefit from the prospects offered by the GEF Strategic Partnership and "Horizon 2020" of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership. Countries seeking funding through bilateral cooperation agreements should therefore refer to the priorities of their NAPs. They should also ascertain that the Government and not only the Ministry of the Environment is involved in identifying the priorities. Moreover they had to commit national funding to finance the projects. The World Bank insisted on that point. The countries therefore needed to take into account the complementarity of the NAPs, the GEF Partnership and "Horizon 2020".

49. The representative of Tunisia said that it had been agreed that projects should be presented in terms not only of the environment but also of sustainability, including a confirmation of the cost involved.

50. Having asked the Secretariat to clarify some of the parts relating to the NAPs, SAP MED and SAP BIO in the funding earmarked by the GEF Partnership, the Bureau made some minor changes to the second draft recommendation.

Financial/administrative issues

51. The Coordinator outlined the reasons for the Secretariat to request the Bureau for authorization to utilize additional funds from the MTF for the extraordinary meeting of focal points and the second meeting on the ICZM protocol, due to take place before the next Bureau meeting. For the former meeting, Italy had just offered a contribution of 40 000 euro.

52. In the view of the Bureau, the number of delegates per country whose attendance at the extraordinary meeting of focal points was paid for by MAP could be reduced from two to one. It was also remarked that more savings could be made on meetings by, for example, cancelling the extra morning or full day for adoption of the report; instead the report could be drafted by the Secretariat later and sent by electronic means to the participants, for their observations and final approval.

53. The Coordinator said that he had long been in favour of this approach that would allow for delegates' remarks to be reported more accurately and the overall deliberations to be better reflected, without the pressure of spending all night to write the report in readiness for the final plenary session. Other similar savings might be considered.

54. The Bureau asked the Secretariat to present a recommendation to that end at the Fifteenth Meeting of the Parties in 2007.

Scientific Director, SPA/RAC

55. The Coordinator explained that the post of Scientific Director at SPA/RAC had become vacant. A French national had been selected, but she has renounced her appointment, on the grounds that the pay was not commensurate with her qualifications and was less than that of the Centre's expert. It had been decided that she should therefore be offered more pay. The issue of whether funds available, thanks to the freezing of the post of Deputy Coordinator, could be used for this purpose was also addressed. However it was clarified that part of these funds had been allocated to SPA/RAC for activities by a decision of the Portoroz meeting.

56. The members of the Bureau accepted the increased salary in principle but expressed their bewilderment that there should be a big difference between the pay of the scientific director and the expert, who was also a foreign national and who was answerable to the former.

57. The Coordinator acknowledged that it was a strange situation and he had only found out about it when the issue of the vacancy had arisen. There were other examples of such anomalies like, for example between the pay of RAC Directors. This was due to the fact that the Centres had totally different statutes. There were national Centres financed through MTF, such as the SPA/RAC in Tunis and PAP/RAC in Split, national Centres "on loan" to

MAP by the countries – such as the CP/RAC in Barcelona and INFO/RAC in Rome – REMPEC in Malta was administered by IMO and having had diplomatic status. One of the challenges being addressed by the evaluation report was how to put an end to the confusion by harmonizing the statutes of the Centres. The Secretariat would rewrite the recommendation so that the issue could be comprehensively addressed at the Fifteenth Meeting of the Parties.

New MEDU premises

58. The Coordinator informed the Bureau of the negotiations under way to move the Athens Unit to new premises, and about the additional financial assistance offered by the Greek Government to enable the Secretariat to meet an increase in rent.

Agenda item 4: Preliminary discussion on proposed topics for the agenda of ministerial segment of the Fifteenth Meeting of the Contracting Parties in 2007

59. Following an introduction by the Coordinator, the representative of Spain said that the dates for the next CP meeting were to be decided in consultation with the Secretariat. Regarding the ICAM Protocol it was agreed to reword the recommendation to avoid mentioning the word “adoption”, since that was an optimistic hypothesis. The Bureau decided to leave it for the extraordinary meeting of the Focal Points in 2006, to set the agenda of the Fifteenth Meeting of the Contracting Parties. Regarding the Ministerial Declaration, it was agreed to discuss the text in the next meeting of the Bureau after the members would have seen its contents.

Agenda item 5: Date and place of the next meeting of the Bureau

60. The Coordinator said that the Bureau would hold its next meeting in November, on dates to be determined. If no country offered to host it, it would take place in Athens.

61. The representative of Tunisia said that he will consult with his Minister about the possibility of his country hosting the meeting; if he met with a positive response he would inform the Secretariat as soon as possible. The representative of Egypt also said that his country wished to host the next Bureau meeting. It was agreed to wait for Tunisia’s reply before considering Egypt’s invitation to host the next meeting.

Agenda item 6: Any other business

62. No other issue was raised.

Agenda item 7: Conclusions and decisions

63. The Bureau reviewed the draft recommendations prepared by the Secretariat on the basis of the meeting’s discussions. Following minor amendments, the recommendations were adopted.

Agenda item 8: Closure of the meeting

64. Following the customary exchange of courtesies, the President declared the meeting closed at 10.30 a.m. on Friday, 7 April 2006.

ANNEX I

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS LISTE DES PARTICIPANTS

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ANNEX II

OPENING SPEECH OF THE MINISTER OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND SPATIAL PLANNING OF THE REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA

H.E. MR JANEZ PODOBNIK

Dear Mr Mifsud and distinguished Members of the Bureau,

I am very pleased to welcome you in Slovenia again, this time in our capital city, which unfortunately has a bit different climate from the coast. However, we should not let this “outer” circumstances affect our work.

Today’s Bureau meeting has been planned to review the work done from the last meeting of the Contracting Parties and I hope that the final balance will be a positive one. If not quite so, it should be imperative for us to work harder and to find more effective ways of action.

I personally assess the 14th Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean and its Protocols in Portoroz last November, as a meeting of outmost importance for the Mediterranean region while the Mediterranean strategy for Sustainable Development as a first regional strategy of that kind was adopted there.

Its implementation is, therefore, very important in many ways:

- to increase the quality of life in the Mediterranean coasts,
- to facilitate the EU-Mediterranean partnership with concrete projects and above all actions;

The marine environment is of high importance as Europe shares its maritime sources with other countries along the coasts of the Mediterranean Sea, giving the opportunity and the touchstone for the strengthening of a true partnership for the development of the Mediterranean.

For the above reasons, the EU 2020 Initiative is an opportunity that neither MAP nor EU must miss. The responsibility for its implementation and success is a common and shared task. That is why I support the projects which are clearly and directly designed, bearing the development benefits for all coastal countries along the Mediterranean Sea. The appropriate action of MAP and EU institutions should also follow these goals and the Mediterranean Strategy of Sustainable Development.

Slovenia has had and intends to further actively contribute to the implementation of the Strategy, especially in Adriatic eco-region with concrete actions:

- to carry out the National Action Plan for the reduction of the pollution from land based sources;

- to organize on May 15, 2006, the International Workshop on the Implementation of the Protocol on Biodiversity in Marine Environment of the Mediterranean;
- to convene from 5 to 7 June 2006, the international conference entitled "Strategy for Sustainable Development of the Adriatic" which will stress the need to:
 - 1) -implement the Sub-regional Contingency Plan for Prevention of, Preparedness for the Response to Major Marine Pollution Incidents in the Adriatic Sea;
 - 2) -prepare the plans for the ballast waters management in the Adriatic;
 - 3) -implement the Pollution Prevention and Control (IPPC) directive in the Adriatic

With the activities stated above we intend to make a qualitative contribution to the EU marine strategy implementation from which all the Adriatic countries will benefit.

To all of you I wish a successful and productive work and nonetheless a pleasant stay in Ljubljana.

Thank you.

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ANNEX III

AGENDA

1. Opening of the meeting
2. Adoption of the Provisional Agenda and organization of work
3. Progress Report by the Secretariat on activities carried out since the last Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention (Portoroz, 8-11 November 2005)

A. General review on the progress and outputs of the main activities

B. Specific issues

a. Legal issues:

1. Actions to speed up the acceptance of the amendments to the LBS and the Dumping Protocols
2. New Protocol on ICAM
3. Reporting and Compliance
4. Liability and Compensation

b. Institutional matters:

1. Follow up on the evaluation of MAP
2. Preparations for the 15th meeting of the Contracting Parties

c. National Action Plans (NAPs) to address land-based pollution

d. Cooperation and Partners:

1. Cooperation with the EC
2. Strategic partnership
3. Cooperation with the NGOs MAP partners

e. Financial issues

4. Preliminary discussion on proposed topics for the agenda of ministerial segment of the 15th meeting of the Contracting Parties in 2007
5. Date and place of the next meeting of the Bureau
6. Any other business
7. Conclusions and decisions
8. Closure of the meeting

ANNEX IV

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Ratifications

- 1.1 The Bureau urges all Contracting Parties that have yet to accept the amendments to the LBS and Dumping Protocols to do so in order that the mentioned protocols will enter into force by the 15th Meeting of the Contracting Parties in 2007.
- 1.2 The Bureau invites the President of the Contracting Parties to address a letter to the Ministers of Foreign Affairs with a copy to the Ministers of Environment of those Contracting Parties that have still to accept the amendments to the LBS and the Dumping Protocols to do so in order that these legal instruments will enter into force.
- 1.3 In view of achieving the global 2010 Biodiversity target for the Mediterranean region, the Bureau invites those Contracting Parties that have not yet done so, to ratify the SPA and Biodiversity Protocol.
- 1.4 The Bureau requests the Secretariat to undertake a number of initiatives in the countries that are most likely to ratify the above mentioned protocols, including providing any necessary assistance, to enable them to ratify these legal instruments.

2. ICAM

The Bureau encourages the Contracting Parties to nominate their representatives to the Working Group of Legal and Technical Experts as soon as possible and to take an active part in the first meeting to be held on 27-29 April 2006 in Split to develop a draft text of the Protocol on ICAM .

3. Reporting and Compliance

- 3.1 In view of implementation of Art 26 of the Barcelona Convention on reporting, which is now in force, the Bureau invites the Contracting Parties to submit their reports on the implementation of the Convention and its Protocols for the biennium 2004-2005 by not later than the end of December 2006.
- 3.2 The Bureau requests the Secretariat to:
 - a) Prepare a regional assessment report on the status of implementation of the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols as well as the decisions of the Contracting Parties;
 - b) Provide the necessary financial and technical assistance to developing Mediterranean countries in view of implementing the working program on reporting that was agreed upon by the 14th Meeting of the Contracting Parties in Portoroz in 2005;
 - c) Invite the EEA to contribute to the process and participate at the sixth meeting on reporting issues, planned to be held in Autumn 2006 in view of the harmonization of the MAP reporting system with other reporting systems already in place.

- 3.3 In order to ensure that all Parties will be involved in the process for the preparation of the compliance mechanism, the Bureau requests the Secretariat to fix the dates of the third meeting of the Working Group on Compliance as early as possible in order for the Parties to plan their participation on time.

4. Liability and Compensation

- 4.1 The Bureau requests the Secretariat to invite representatives from industries and insurance companies, both from the public and private sectors, to the second meeting of the Working Group on liability and compensation provided they pay their own way.

5. MAP Evaluation

- 5.1 The Bureau requests the Secretariat to ensure that more time is given to the Contracting Parties to carry out consultation on the documents for the Extraordinary Meeting of MAP Focal Points, either by postponing the date of the meeting or by advancing by at least 1 month the dissemination of the documents.

6. Preparations for the 15th Contracting Parties Meeting

- 6.1 The Bureau requests the Secretariat to further consider other topics with respect to the agenda of the Contracting Parties Meeting in 2007 other than the following:
- a. Future of MAP (Ministerial Declaration)
 - b. Integrated Coastal Zone Management
 - c. Development of a financial framework to protect the marine environment from pollution from land-based sources and activities.

7. Cooperation with the EC

- 7.1 The Bureau requests the Secretariat to write to the European Community pointing out that, as a Contracting Party, it should give due consideration to the proposals made by MAP during the Environmental High Level meeting in Barcelona for a better synergy between MAP and the EC in the implementation of the Horizon 2020 initiative.
- 7.2 The Bureau invites the President of the Bureau of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention to meet the EU Commissioner for the Environment in order to discuss MAP's full participation in the implementation of the "Horizon 2020" initiative.

8. New GEF Strategic Partnership – Implementation of SAP BIO

The Bureau encourages the Contracting Parties to give full support to the re-establishment of the SAP BIO advisory committee and SAP BIO national correspondents in view of achieving a better coordination and integration of the Regional Component with the Investment Fund of the GEF Strategic Partnership.

9. Cooperation with NGOs

- 9.1 The Bureau approves that the NGOs “Athens Environmental Foundation”, Greece; “Association UN Marinu CPIE Bastia Golo Mediterranee”, France; “Syrian Environment Protection Society”, Syria be included in the list of MAP partners.
- 9.2 The Bureau approves the carrying out of an assessment on the activities of the NGO/MAP partners with a view to revising the list where appropriate, taking into account inter alia the following elements:
- a. the contribution of MAP/NGOs to the achievement of MAP objectives,
 - b. a cost-benefit analysis of their support by MAP,
 - c. a better geographical representation of the NGO/MAP partners.

10. National Action Plans (NAPs)

- 10.1 The Bureau encourages Contracting Parties:
- a. To take into account the pollution reduction interventions included in their NAPs when negotiating bilateral cooperation agreements;
 - b. To make use of the Investment Fund of the GEF Strategic Partnership to mobilize funds for the implementation of pollution reduction interventions included in the NAPs.
- 10.2 The Bureau, while taking note of the common objectives of the SAP, its NAPs and the EC Horizon 2020 initiative, recommends to the Contracting Parties and the EC to take fully into account the common objectives and the extensive work already carried out by the SAP in identifying priorities and setting targets.

11. Financial/ Administrative issues

- 11.1 Provided that no voluntary contribution is received by the Secretariat in addition to the 40,000 Euros provided by Italy, the Bureau authorizes the Secretariat to withdraw up to a maximum of 100,000 Euros from the MTF in order to cover the cost of the Extraordinary Meeting of the MAP Focal Points.
- 11.2 Provided that no voluntary contribution is received by the Secretariat to meet the cost of the second meeting of the Working Group on ICAM, the Bureau authorizes the Secretariat to withdraw up to a maximum of € 120,000 from the MTF for this purpose.
- 11.3 The Bureau requests the Secretariat to prepare a recommendation for the consideration of the 15th Meeting of the Contracting Parties with respect to the procedures to be followed regarding the preparation and adoption of reports of different meetings with a view to make a more efficient use of MAP's financial resources.

12. Recruitment of Scientific Director at SPA/RAC

- 12.1 The Bureau approves that the Secretariat authorizes SPA/RAC to utilize the whole budgetary allocation for 2006-2007 in respect of the post of the Scientific Director to cover the emoluments of the post for a period of 18 months.

- 12.2 The Bureau requests the Secretariat to prepare a proposal for consideration by the 15th Meeting of the Contracting Parties in order to address the disparities in emoluments paid out of the MTF funds, with respect to the salaries of different RAC Directors.

13. New Premises in Athens for MEDU

The Bureau expresses its appreciation to the Greek authorities for the additional financial contribution and for the assistance being extended to MEDU to enable it to move to new premises.