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REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
ON THE POSSIBLE ESTABLISHMENT
OF SUBREGIONAL OIL COMBATING CENTRES

(Prepared in co-operation with the
Inter-Governmental Maritime Consultative Organization)

GE. 77-12182

1. Resolution 8 of the Barcelona Conference of Plenipotentiaries of the Coastal States of the Mediterranean Region on the Protection of the Mediterranean, entitled "Subregional oil-combating centres", calls upon the Executive Director of UNEP:

1. "... to consult with the coastal States of the Mediterranean Region on the required objectives and functions of subregional centres and their relations to the regional oil-combating centre.
2. ... to report his findings to the appropriate intergovernmental meeting of the coastal States of the Mediterranean Region."

2. The purpose of this document is to report to the Governments of the Mediterranean Region on the manner in which the Executive Director carried out, and the conclusions resulting from, these consultations.

3. Under cover of a letter dated 25 November 1976, the Executive Director circulated to Governments a questionnaire, which had been prepared in co-operation with the Inter-Governmental Maritime Consultative Organization (IMCO), on the proposed establishment of sub-regional centres. A copy of the questionnaire is attached as Annex I to this report.

4. Nine States replied to the questionnaire. Four of the nine replies came from Governments who took the view that it was premature to consider creating sub-regional centres before the achievements of the Malta Centre could be evaluated. The other replies came from Governments offering to host a sub-regional centre: Cyprus, Israel, the Libyan Arab Aljamahiriya, Morocco and Turkey.

5. In light of the responses to the questionnaire, UNEP agreed with IMCO to send a joint high-level representative on mission to all Governments interested in hosting a subregional centre in order to exchange views on the responses to the questionnaire and to seek any clarification that proved to be necessary. A list of the visits made by the consultant is included in Annex II.

6. It does not seem necessary to include in this document details of the bilateral consultations held by the consultant in the various Mediterranean capitals. However, it is possible, on the basis of the consultant's visits, to identify common views shared by a large majority of States concerning sub-regional centres.

7. The consultant concluded that of the seven States that had offered to host a subregional centre, only two had precise ideas as to the functions and objectives of such centres.

8. One Government considered that a subregional centre should assume the same functions as the Regional centre (operating as a parallel institution) and should additionally: a) undertake certain technical studies and research; b) centralize training at the subregional level; and c) organize meetings of coastal States in the subregion. The intention of this proposal was to cover all possible ways of helping the Regional Centre by decentralizing certain of its tasks to the level of one or more subregions.

9. Another Government foresaw a subregional centre as being fully operational and as having a substantial amount of equipment whose purchase would be funded jointly by the coastal States of the subregion.

10. Several Governments expressed doubts as to the desirability of creating subregional centres in the near future, and cited the following common reasoning:

- i) the need to evaluate the practical achievements of the Malta Centre before any decision on subregional centres were taken;
- ii) the desire to avoid any risk of confusion between the terms of reference of the Regional Centre and those of subregional centres;
- iii) the necessity of avoiding duplication of effort between the Regional Centre and subregional centres;
- iv) at the present stage, for the reasons set out above, the belief that it would be premature to attempt to define relationships between the Regional Centre and subregional centres.

11. All States considered it advisable to provide the Regional Centre with assistance in the field of radiocommunications so as to enable it to coordinate effectively the work of national centres.

12. In conclusion, the consultations highlighted a desire by all States to co-operate in cases of pollution emergency. The coastal States expressed their determination to continue the development of, or to begin work on establishing, national centres for preventing and combating pollution by oil, as a matter of priority. Those countries which already possess such centres showed a willingness to place them at the disposal of the Regional Centre. Finally, a fairly substantial majority of States of the region consider that the time is not ripe for the creation of subregional centres. Only one State made a proposal for financing subregional centres: that proposal called for cost-sharing among the States of the subregion served by the centre.

RECOMMENDATIONS

13. Consequently, on the basis of the consultations described above, the Executive Director recommends the following.
14. The feasibility of establishing sub-regional oil combating centres can only be assessed at a later stage when the achievements of the Regional Oil Combating Centre can be evaluated.
15. The Regional Centre should encourage the creating of national centres in coastal States where such centres have not been established and should stimulate the development of existing centres, through technical assistance if required.
16. All appropriate action should be taken to promote the exchange of information through the Regional centre, which should continue, as a priority, with the task of drawing up national contingency plans for States that do not yet have their own.
17. The Regional Centre should study the possibility of holding simulated oil combating exercises in subregions of the Mediterranean as part of its training programme. Such exercises should, in particular, provide a means for testing the communications facilities and the response capability of the States involved.

QUESTIONNAIRE

1. In principle, does your Government consider it advisable that subregional oil combating centres be established in the Mediterranean Sea Area?
2. The Regional Oil Combating Centre in Malta should be officially opened in December 1976. What is your Government's opinion of the view expressed by some delegations at the Conference of Plenipotentiaries of the Coastal States of the Mediterranean Region for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea (Barcelona, 2 to 16 February 1976) that a final decision on the establishment of the proposed subregional centres should only be taken after enough practical experience has been gained through the activities of the regional centre?
3. Recalling the three objectives and seven functions of the Regional Oil Combating Centre as set forth in resolution 7 annexed to the Final Act of the Barcelona Conference of Plenipotentiaries, what specific objectives and functions would you assign to subregional centres? How would the functions of these centres compare to those assigned to the regional centre? Do you foresee subregional centres as having functions which differ from or are additional to the regional centre's assigned activities? Are there certain functions which you believe should be fulfilled uniquely by the regional centre?

In the light of your response to question 3 and with regard to each of the seven functions assigned to the regional centre, please describe your views on the relationship among the regional, subregional and competent national centres: e.g. with regard to function D - "to develop and encourage technological co-operation and training programmes for combating oil pollution", are there specific activities which you would wish to see undertaken by subregional centres and, if so, what role is envisaged for the regional centre vis-à-vis the national centre?

5. Recalling that in paragraph 4 of Resolution 7, the Executive Director of UNEP was requested to seek authorization from the Governing Council of UNEP "for the purpose of defraying the expenses involved in the establishment and initial operating costs of the Centre ... on the assumption that the operating expenses of the Centre will be gradually defrayed by means of voluntary multilateral or individual contributions from Governments of the Mediterranean region, from international organizations and from non-governmental organizations", what means would your Government propose for financing subregional centres?

6. Does your Government have any proposals to make with regard to subregional centres? If your Government wishes to offer to act as host to a subregional centre, please describe the subregion to be covered by, and the means for financing such a centre.

MISSIONS OF IMCO/UNEP CONSULTANT CONCERNING POSSIBILITY OF
ESTABLISHING SUB-REGIONAL OIL-COMBATING CENTRES

In a letter to the Mediterranean coastal States dated 25 November 1976. the Executive Director informed Governments of his intention to send a high-level consultant, as a representative of IMCO and UNEP, on mission to all interested Governments in order to exchange and clarify views on the possibility of establishing subregional oil combating centres.

On the basis of replies received to the questionnaire circulated with the letter of 25 November, the consultant undertook the following consultations:

Cyprus	May 1977
Greece	May 1977
Israel	May 1977
Libyan Arab Aljamahiriya	June 1977
Morocco	June 1977
Syria	May 1977
Turkey	July 1977