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MEDITERRANEAN ACTION PLAN

Meeting of AD HOC Group on MED Unit,
MEDPOL and RAC Structure

Athens, 26-27 March 1997

**Minutes of the meeting of the Ad-Hoc
group on MED Unit, MED POL
and RACs structures**

Introduction

1. During their Extraordinary Meeting (Montpellier, 1-4 July 1996), the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention invited the Coordinator to:

"establish a small Ad-Hoc Group of limited duration, composed of representatives of the Contracting Parties, to examine the best possible structure of the Coordinating Unit and MED POL, in the light of the activities to be carried out by MAP following the revision of the Convention and its protocols in Barcelona in 1995.

The Group will also review the role, functions and structures of the Regional Activity Centres and the Secretariat of the 100 Historic Sites and the relations they should maintain with one another. It will also make recommendations to be submitted to the Contracting Parties for their approval concerning the evaluation of the activities of the Regional Activity Centres and the Secretariat of the 100 Historic Sites"

2. In preparation for the meeting of the Ad-Hoc Group, the MED Unit staff and the Directors of the Regional Activity Centres (RAC), met in Barcelona, on 17-19 September 1996 and undertook, a thorough review of this issue. Few points were stressed by the RAC meeting concerning the purpose of the exercise, the composition of the group and the contents of the Secretariat report to be submitted to the meeting of the Ad-Hoc Group.
3. The Bureau of the Contracting Parties reviewed this issue during its last meeting held in Athens, on 4-5 November 1996, recalled the concern expressed by the Meeting of the Contracting Parties on this issue and stressed that the work and the proposals of the group should be both realistic and feasible. It was also pointed out that the results of the group's work would be reviewed first by the meeting of the National Focal Points (Athens, 7-9 July 1997) and then submitted to the Tenth Ordinary Meeting of the Contracting Parties to be held in Tunis in November/December 1997.

At the end of its deliberations on this issue, the Bureau took the following decisions on the *modus operandi* relevant to the work of the Ad-Hoc Group:

- a. the purpose of the exercise is to undertake an analytical review of the status, structure, functions, financial aspects and links with the Contracting Parties, of the Coordinating Unit, MED POL and the RACs *vis-à-vis* the new MAP responsibilities and the need to remedy, as far as possible, the discrepancies that exist among the Centres.
- b. the exercise should also take into consideration the new developments within the MAP system including the adoption of new protocols (offshore, hazardous waste) and the integration of the sustainable development and biodiversity elements in MAP Phase II.
- c. the Ad-Hoc Group should be small, with no more than five or six members, who would be technical experts familiar with the work of MAP and come from different parts of the Mediterranean (principle of fair geographical distribution).

- d. a draft secretariat report should be submitted to the meeting of the Ad-Hoc Group as the secretariat's proposal for the work of the Group. The report will be in two parts:

The first part will contain:

- (a) an analysis of the current work of both MEDU, MED POL and the RACs and the inter-relation between the two;
- (b) the status of each Centre within the MAP system;
- (c) their future tasks with regard to the new objectives included in Agenda MED 21 and MAP Phase II.

The second part of the report will deal with other important issues such as the host country agreements, the financial component, the personnel of the Centres, etc.

- e. The meeting of the Ad-Hoc Group should be convened during the first quarter of 1997.

Participants

4. The following Contracting Parties designated representatives to the meeting: Croatia, Egypt, European Union, France, Greece, Italy, Malta, Monaco, Morocco. All MEDU professionals have also participated in the meeting. Mr. L. Chabason chaired the meeting and Mr. I. Dharat acted as its technical secretary. The list of participants is contained in Annex I to this report.

Agenda Item 1: Opening of the Meeting

5. The meeting was opened by Mr. L. Chabason, Coordinator of MAP, who welcomed the participants and pinpointed the mandate of the Group as decided by the meeting of the Contracting Parties (Montpellier, July 1996).

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

6. The meeting adopted its agenda contained in document UNEP(OCA)/MED WG.126/1 and agreed on the Secretariat proposal on the organisation of its work.

Agenda Item 3: Review of the Secretariat Proposal on the status, structure, function of MED Unit, MED POL and RACs

7. In his brief general comments, Mr. L. Chabason pointed out that we are facing the risk of an existing costly MAP structure with a budget which has not been increased proportionally to shoulder the new MAP responsibilities. With regard to RACs, he stated that the national centres should remain as they are, but in line with MAP programme. Staff of the Centres should not be handicapped by languages deficiency. As for MAP Secretariat, this matter has been permanently settled by the meetings of the Contracting Parties, which decided that UNEP was to assume the Secretariat function for MAP.

8. Mr. I. Dharat, introduced the main report on the "Secretariat proposal for the analytical review of the status, structure, functions, financial and personnel aspects of the MED Unit, MED POL and RACs", as contained in document UNEP(OCA)/WG.126/2. He referred to the mandate of the Group as specified by the meetings of the Contracting Parties and the Bureau. In particular, he stressed the Bureau's recommendations that the work of the Group should be both realistic and feasible, and its results would be first reviewed by the meeting of the MAP national focal points (Athens, 7-9 July 1997) and then by the Tenth Ordinary Meeting of the Contracting Parties (Tunis, November 1997).
9. He continued his introductory report by explaining the main issues and problems and the Secretariat's proposals for tackling them. He first pointed out that Part I of the report contains the inputs of the Centres on their status, functions and structures within MAP system, while Part II was devoted to a critical review including few recommendations.
10. In the ensuing debate, a tour de table exercise was undertaken during which general comments were made. One view was expressed to the effect that, we should review the activities of the Centres, along with their status and structures. Others felt that neither the mandate of the Group nor the time available at its disposal allow for such undertaking. Another point was related to the issue of the categories of the RACs and to the fact that there were four Centres which have been established through a protocol or through the initiative of the Contracting Parties, namely, REMPEC, BP, PAP and SPA, while the other two Centres (ERS/RAC and CP/RAC) have been established through a voluntary offer of the countries concerned. The issue of the classification of the RACs was a delicate one and no consensus was reached during the discussion.
11. With regard to the meetings of the national focal points of the Centres, it was pointed out that the convening of these meetings are important for the Centres during which technical guidance would be given by the focal points to the Centres. All participants stressed that all Centres should be involved in the work of the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development (MCSD), and as the Commission is still in its early years, we should not designate the Commission, at this early stage, to act as the focal structure for any particular Centres. Others stressed the need to upgrade the representation and the mandate of the national focal points for MAP in order to thoroughly deal with the programme and budgetary issues of MAP, while leaving the Ministerial level Ordinary Meetings of the Contracting Parties to mainly deal with the general policy, strategic, and political issues relevant to MAP as a whole.
12. Other participants reconfirmed that while there would be some flexibility in the decentralisation of work of MAP, the Coordinating Unit in Athens is to remain the main and leading body in the MAP system.
13. The role of UNEP *vis-à-vis* MAP has been the subject of some statements during the discussion. It was felt that UNEP should be more supportive to MAP, in particular through a better utilisation of the programme support cost (13% PSC).
14. Others felt that a system of financial auditing of the RACs to be carried out by MEDU should be envisaged. In this connection the Secretariat informed the participants that UNEP already has its own internal auditing system which covers the projects signed between UNEP/MAP and the RACs.

15. As to the newly approved protocols on the Offshore and the Hazardous Wastes, it was felt by some participants that it would be a mistake to associate any of these protocols to a particular RAC. The responsibility of implementing them should be of the Coordinating Unit. Others felt that only the technical aspects of the protocols could be delegated to relevant RACs.
16. A point was raised to the effect that MAP should be more recognised by and more involved in the work of other relevant Conventions, programmes and Secretariats, such as the Sofia Initiative (Environment for Europe Process), Black Sea Secretariat, Ramouge, METAP etc.. The Coordinating Unit could also authorise, in some cases, a Contracting Party, a RAC or an NGO to represent MAP in the meetings of these bodies.
17. The Secretariat proposal to unify, as much as possible, the legal status of RACs was the Centre of discussion. It was felt by some participants that all hosting countries should sign an agreement with MAP specifying their responsibilities in hosting a RAC Centre, others were of the opinion that a flexible approach should be followed as there are various administrative and legal systems in the Mediterranean region. At the end of the discussion, a consensus was reached on the need to prepare an agreement or a formal exchange of letters for all RACs, taking into account the diversity of the administrative and legal systems and the prevailing circumstances in the host country.

Agenda Item 4 - Proposed recommendations by the Ad-Hoc Group

18. The Secretariat has proposed concrete recommendations concerning the various issues raised in the Coordinator's report or during the general discussion, these recommendations were reviewed and commented by the participants during the debate.
19. At the conclusion of the discussion, the meeting established a small Working Group consisting of the representative of Malta, Monaco and the Secretariat with a mandate to propose a set of recommendations for the Group.
20. The draft recommendations prepared by the Working Group were reviewed, amended and finally approved by the Ad-Hoc Group for presentation to the forthcoming meeting of the MAP National Focal Points (Athens, 7-9 July 1997). The draft recommendations are contained in Annex II to these minutes.

Agenda Item 5 - Closure of the meeting

21. As the Group has not been able to conclude its discussion on few issues, such as the classification of RACs, due to the time limitation, the Coordinator suggested that he will explore the possibility of convening a second meeting of the Ad-Hoc Group, to be coincided with the meeting of MAP National Focal Points, in order to continue the discussion of these issues.
22. After the customary exchange of courtesies, the Coordinator declared the meeting closed on 27 March 1997, at 13.00 hours.

ANNEX I

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ANNEX II

Draft Recommendations

A. General recommendations

1. The Group is of the opinion that as the issues facing MAP are well defined and prioritized through the newly approved Convention and protocols, MAP-Phase II, Agenda MED 21 and the MCSD, a more holistic and well coordinated approach is needed in the work of MEDU, MED POL and RACs. Streamlining of the Secretariat work, improving its managerial process, synergy and transparency in its work, has to be enhanced in order to be able to shoulder the new responsibilities.
2. The Group restates the fact that the Coordinating Unit is the main and leading body in the MAP system.
3. Ultimate responsibility of protocols lies with the Coordinating Unit of MAP. The relevant centres implement the technical aspects of the protocols.
4. However, the Group recommends that implementation of certain activities be delegated from the Athens MEDU office to other RAC Centres, such as the coordination of few CAMP projects, the coordination of biodiversity issues, and the representation of MAP in outside fora, keeping the overall responsibility of the Coordinator of MAP.
5. The principle of equitable geographical distribution within the Mediterranean region should be respected whenever vacant or new internationally recruited posts are to be filled.
6. As MTF funds are considered as seed money, it is recommended that MAP relation with relevant financial and development institutions and programmes be strengthened, in order to solicit additional finance, human resources and expertise. Concrete and well prepared projects should be presented to these organisations by the Coordinating Unit.
7. The Group recommends that UNEP Headquarters augment its support to MAP (and IMO for REMPEC), in particular through a better utilization of the programme support cost for the financing and administration of these structures.
8. The Group recommends the strengthening of MEDU capability to manage the legal component of MAP.

B. Meetings of the Contracting Parties and MAP National Focal Points

1. Meetings of the Contracting Parties are held at the Ministerial level, in order to deliberate on the general policy, strategic, and general political issues relevant to MAP as a whole.

2. The meetings of the MAP National Focal Points would be mandated to thoroughly review and finalize the MAP programme budget and prepare a framework strategy for subsequent approval by the Meetings of the Contracting Parties.

C. Regional Activity Centres (RACs)

The Group recommends:

1. A unified approach concerning the status of RACs other than REMPEC, which has a UN status, should be pursued, as much as possible.
2. Agreements or formal exchange of letters are to be prepared for all RACs taking into account the diversity of the administrative systems and the prevailing circumstances in the host country.
3. The Contracting Parties hosting RACs are requested to simplify the procedures for issuing entry visas, residence permits, and work permits of internationally recruited staff, as well as granting entry visas to representatives of Contracting Parties on official MAP business.
4. Project documents should be signed by UNEP and RACs covering the activities to be carried out by them on the basis of priorities decided by the Contracting Parties. Host countries of national centres should provide counterpart contribution to cover operational costs.
5. RACs should do their best to solicit additional funds for MAP activities from outside sources, in full cooperation and prior consultation with the MEDU,
6. The Group recommends that an assessment of the activities of RACs and other MAP Programmes should be undertaken on a regular basis by MEDU, taking into consideration the cost-efficiency ratio.
7. The Group recommends that financial auditing of the activities of RACs financed by the MTF should be undertaken by UNEP/MEDU on a regular basis.

Staff

8. The recruitment of international or foreign staff paid under the MTF, should be based on a vacancy announcement to be circulated by MEDU to all Contracting Parties. The appointment of the Director of a Centre is to be undertaken in consultation with the MEDU, on the basis of vacancy announcement jointly prepared by the host country and MEDU.
9. Consultants and experts recruited by RACs in the framework of MAP shall be selected in full consultation with the MEDU. The principle of diversification of the nationalities of the recruited consultants should be observed.