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Fourth Meeting of the Mediterranean
Commission on Sustainable Development (MCSD)

Monaco, 20-22 October 1998

**PROGRESS REPORT BY THE COORDINATOR ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE
MEDITERRANEAN COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
(November 1997 - October 1998)**

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Introduction

The present progress report is submitted by the MAP Coordinator in compliance with the Terms of Reference of the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development (MCSD). It covers progress achieved and problems encountered in the implementation of the various decisions taken during previous meetings of the Commission (Rabat, 16-18 December 1996, Palma de Majorca, 6-8 May 1997, and Sophia Antipolis, 28-30 October 1997).

It is worth noting that the fourth session of the MCSD is the first occasion on which the Commission is meeting at full strength, all its members having been nominated, and according to its own Rules of Procedure as adopted at the last meeting of the Contracting Parties .

In this context, the following points should be noted:

- the mandate of the present members of the MCSD will run until the next meeting of the Contracting Parties (Malta, October 1999)
- according to its Rules of Procedure, a new Steering Committee is to be elected during the fourth meeting of the MCSD. Its mandate will run until the next MCSD meeting.

I. BRIEF HISTORY OF THE MCSD

1. The post-Rio era was an important period in the history of the Mediterranean Action Plan (MAP) during which the Governments of the Mediterranean region and the European Community started the process of translating and adapting UNCED principles to the Mediterranean context through the preparation of Agenda MED 21, reorientation of MAP, the Barcelona Convention and its protocols and the creation of a Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development (MCSD).
2. The MCSD was established in 1995 within the framework of MAP, as an advisory body with the following mandate¹:
 - to identify, evaluate and examine major economic, ecological and social problems set out in Agenda MED 21, make appropriate proposals thereon to the meetings of the Contracting Parties, evaluate the effectiveness of the implementation of decisions taken by the Contracting Parties and facilitate the exchange of information among institutions implementing activities related to sustainable development in the Mediterranean;
 - to enhance regional cooperation and rationalize the inter-governmental decision-making capacity in the Mediterranean basin for the integration of environment and development issues.
3. At their Extraordinary Meeting (Montpellier, 1-4 July 1996), the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention adopted the Terms of Reference and the Composition of the Commission². According to the Terms of Reference, the Commission is composed of 36 members, consisting of high-level representatives from each of the Contracting Parties (21), representatives of local authorities, socio-economic actors and non-governmental organizations (15), working in the fields of environment and sustainable development. Strongly believing that the role of the local authorities, socio-economic actors and NGOs

¹UNEP(OCA)/MED IG.5/16, annex XIII (IV-a)

²UNEP(OCA)/MED IG.8/7, annexes V and VI

is very important during this new era of MAP, the meeting of the Contracting Parties approved a new dimension in MAP relations with these three groups by accepting that they shall participate in the work of the Commission as fully-fledged members on an equal footing with representatives of the Contracting Parties.

A) First Meeting of the Commission

4. During its first meeting (Rabat, 16-18 December 1996), the Commission agreed on a programme built around short-term and medium-term activities corresponding to some of the priority needs of the Mediterranean region. Two themes were identified as being areas for action in the short-term because sufficient work had already been undertaken to permit the development of policy and strategy proposals (sustainable management of coastal regions and management of water demand). Another six subjects were identified as medium-term priority themes (sustainable development indicators, tourism, information, awareness and participation, free trade and environment, industry and sustainable development and lastly the management of urban and rural development), the end-products of which are planned for submission to the meeting of the Contracting Parties to be held in 1999.
5. In order to implement efficiently and usefully these activities and to ensure greater participation, the Commission designated Task Managers and Thematic Working Groups to deal with each selected theme. The MAP funds allocated to the MCSD will be considered as seed money since the task managers and support centres are expected to look for the necessary additional human and financial resources and expertise for the activities of the thematic working groups. However, the countries involved were willing to support as far as possible these activities through the provision of human and financial resources, being confident that if the Commission selected priority activities that were as sound in their substance as in their organization, they would raise greater interest from donors³.
6. The first meeting also designated a Bureau composed of eight members, i.e. a president, six vice-presidents, and a Rapporteur. The Minister of the Environment of Morocco was elected President. The other members are representatives from the Association of Chambers of Commerce of the Mediterranean (ASCAME), Centre des Regions Euromediterraneennes pour l'environnement (CREE), the EC, Croatia, Egypt and Tunisia as vice-Presidents, and finally EcoMediterrania as rapporteur.

B) Second Meeting of the Commission

7. The second meeting of the Commission was held in Palma de Majorca, Spain, from 6-8 May 1997. The Commission reviewed progress achieved and problems encountered since its first meeting. It listened to the various progress and preliminary reports of the Task Managers, and made the necessary comments and suggestions in order to improve their work.
8. The Meeting also reviewed the composition of the Thematic Working Groups, and decided to add a few other members upon their request.
9. With regard to the draft rules of procedure of the Commission, after a brief discussion and due to time limitation, the meeting decided to defer the decision on the draft Rules of Procedure to its third meeting.

³Report of the first meeting of the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development (document UNEP(OCA)/MED WG.120/4)

C) Third Meeting of the Commission

10. The third meeting of the Commission was held in Sophia Antipolis, France, from 28-30 October 1997. The Commission examined the progress made since the second meeting by the eight working groups, as well as at the MCSD's draft rules of procedure.
11. On the short-term themes, i.e. water demand management and the sustainable management of coastal zones, the Commission made a detailed examination of all the analyses drawn up and the recommendations proposed. These were then amended and approved for submission to the Contracting Parties at their tenth ordinary meeting in Tunis in November 1997.
12. Considering the importance of these two themes, the members of the Commission had expressed the wish that the relevant document should be circulated at the Helsinki Ministerial Conference in November 1997 as well as at the World Water Conference in Paris in March 1998.
13. As for the other working groups, the Commission examined progress made and noted the various planned experts meetings and workshops. On this occasion and following the withdrawal of the Maltese Foundation of International Studies, Lebanon volunteered to act as task manager for the theme of "Free trade and the environment".
14. The discussions about the other activities of the various groups provided the opportunity to review the working method, underlining the fact that the MCSD risked becoming a "research institute" rather than a "consultative task force"; furthermore, it was the duty of the task managers to draft in experts in their respective themes as well as representatives of the public and private sectors. It was, however, noted that the MCSD, which allows MAP's activities to be extended into the field of sustainable development, works with a marginal additional budget, to be used more like seed capital, additional funding needing to be drummed up elsewhere.
15. An ad hoc group was set up in order to complete the preparation of the MCSD's rules of procedure, and its proposal was adopted by the members of the Commission before submitting it to the Contracting Parties.
16. At the close of the meeting, Monaco was decided upon as the venue of the fourth meeting of the MCSD, on the invitation of the Principality.

II . GENERAL INTERSESSIONAL ACTIVITIES AND DECISIONS SINCE THE THIRD MCSD MEETING**A) Contracting Parties Meeting**

17. The Contracting Parties held their Tenth Ordinary Meeting from 18 to 21 November 1997 in Tunis. In relation with the MCSD activities, the meeting approved the recommendations concerning the management of water demand and the sustainable management of Coastal Zones. The meeting considered that the Task Managers and their Working Groups as well as the Secretariat should induce countries to implement these recommendations and translate the strategical lines of action of the MCSD into proposals for concrete action, set within a time frame. It was also pointed out that major partners of the civil society should be involved in the implementation and follow-up of priority projects and activities. Moreover, it was decided to extend the present membership of the Commission until next meeting of the Contracting parties (Malta, October 1999).

18. Finally, the Contracting Parties approved the Rules of Procedure of the MCSD, with a Steering Committee of four members representing the Contracting Parties, including ex officio the President of the Bureau of the Contracting Parties and one of each of the three categories foreseen by the Terms of Reference of the MCSD.

B) Technical consultation between MCSD Task Managers

19. In order to coordinating and streamlining the works of the Task Managers and the Thematic Working Groups, based on the experience gained during the first year of work, a Consultation Meeting was held in Athens, on 5 February 1998 (the report of the meeting was issued as document UNEP(OCA)/MED WG. 141/2) on Secretariat's initiative, and with the participation of RAC's directors.

20. Some major points were discussed including:

- some coordination gap between the Task Managers and the Support Centers;
- the need to regularly inform, and as far as possible involve, all members of the Thematic Group;
- the need to exchange information and develop cooperation between the Thematic Groups;
- the need to involve competent experts in the preparatory activities and in the meetings along with the officially designated ones.
- the programme of activity of each working group with agenda of meetings and expected outputs.

C) Bureau of the Contracting Parties:

21. The Bureau of the Contracting Parties met in Tunis on 28 March 1998. This was the opportunity to designate the remaining four MCSD members out of various candidates. After some discussion and reviewing the information provided by the relevant Contracting Parties, the Bureau made the following selection:

Local authorities category

Members

City of Dubrovnic – Croatia
Municipality of Silifke (Mersin) – Turkey

Alternates

District of the Governorate of Greater Algiers - Algeria
Local authorities of the Mediterranean Region – Bosnia and Herzegovina
Association of Coastal Cities, Tourism and Environment (IFOCC) – Israel
Local Councils Association – Malta
City of Hamam Sousse – Tunisia

Socio-economic actors

Members

La Fédération des industries diverses (CGEM) – Morocco
Mediterranean Water Network – Spain

Alternate

Lebanese Businessmen Association - Lebanon

III . INTERSESSIONAL ACTIVITIES OF THE THEMATIC WORKING GROUPS:

22. Before going through the progress report of the respective working groups, some points should be highlighted in relation with the cooperation the MCSD is attracting, mainly in financial, technical and logistical terms. As a matter of fact:

- the meeting of the working group on Sustainable Development Indicators benefitted from a Tunisian logistical support and from the activities the Blue Plan conducted with METAP and Tunisia concerning the UN indicators pilot test carried out with the assistance from France;
- the studies and meetings on Free-Trade and Environment were done thanks to financial and technical support from Lebanon, local UNDP/Capacity 21, Blue Plan and MEDU;
- the meeting group of experts on rural and urban management together with the preparatory activities were done with financial and technical support from Blue Plan and PAP;
- the meeting of experts on Industry will be organized with financial and technical support from UNIDO/Trieste and MEDPOL; the later workshop is expected to be mainly covered by the municipality of Masa Carrera in Italy;
- the major workshop on Tourism was hosted and paid for by the Ministry of Environment of Turkey with Blue Plan Technical support.

23. Activity reports from Task Managers:

The activity reports mainly as submitted by the Task Managers are put all together in document UNEP(OCA)/MED 140/4.

IV. THE MCSD'S WORKING METHOD:

24. Taking their lead from the working method employed by the United Nations' Commission on Sustainable Development, the members of the MCSD chose eight priority activity themes under the responsibility of Task Managers and Support Centres. For a given theme, the task managers, one, two, possibly three members of the MCSD, worked to a greater or lesser degree alongside the Support Centres, virtually all the organs of MAP, in order to complete their working group's activities.

25. The ease with which the assessment could be drawn up, the problem areas and issues analysed, and priorities and recommendations identified depended on the level of existing knowledge on the theme in question. It proved relatively straightforward for water demand management and the sustainable management of the coastal zones. This will doubtless also be the case for the indicators, tourism and, to a lesser extent, information and awareness raising.

For industry, however, and particularly free trade and urban and rural management, it took several expert meetings to complete the analyses and define the approach best suited to Mediterranean problems and priorities. In the latter case, time is running short and the budget required is increasing.

26. Since the first meeting of the MCSD, the thematic activities have been organised following part or all of the following plan:

Some stages of thematic activities	Comments
a)Increasing thematic knowledge	conceptual studies, factual analyses, case studies, questionnaires

Some stages of thematic activities	Comments
b) Expert meetings for focussing issues direction	task managers, support centres, qualified experts not necessarily nominated by the members of the working group
c) Working group meeting	usually bringing together thematic experts nominated by the members of the working group, sometimes with invited experts
d) Workshop	bringing together thematic experts nominated by all MCSD members with other pertinent experts and partners
e) MCSD meeting	review of activities and proposal of recommendations
f) Meeting of Contracting Parties	adoption of recommendations
g) Follow-up of recommendations	MAP, Contracting Parties, Partners

27. Working through these different situations, we were faced with several questions as to how we could improve the preparation of the thematic group's output, and how it would be used by the actors involved:

Clarifying the respective responsibilities of the Task Managers and the Support Centres

Responsibility for the thematic work lies jointly with one or more Task Managers and one or more Support Centres. The Secretariat feels that this type of steering makes for complicated practical implementation. It would like to see discussion on the basis of everyone's experiences in order to clarify and, if possible, simplify respective responsibility for these activities.

Imposing time limits on work

Should we establish a maximum time limit for work on a given theme and the drawing-up of strategic recommendations or guidelines for action?

Financial aspects

Although thus far it has usually been possible to complete activities thanks to additional technical and financial support, it would be preferable to propose a realistic programme of activities, and in particular to define a strategy for tracking down and collecting additional funding at the earliest possible stage.

Broader participation

It would be preferable if observers and other of MCSD's partners, particularly inter-governmental institutions, could be more actively involved in both our current and future activities.

Follow-up of recommendations

Once the thematic recommendations have been proposed by the MCSD and adopted by the Contracting Parties, what sort of follow-up can or should the MCSD provide?(no doubt through the Secretariat and the Support Centres which in principle include parts of recommendations in their activity programmes adopted by the Contracting Parties, usually for a period of two years).

Promoting the work of the MCSD

The activities of the MCSD and their results deserve to be more widely known, both within the countries, throughout the Euro-Mediterranean region and at international level, particularly within the framework of UNEP and the United Nations' Commission on Sustainable Development.

V. COOPERATION BETWEEN MCSD AND OBSERVERS AND OTHER PARTNERS

28. According to its terms of reference, the MCSD is expected to develop and strengthen its cooperation with UN agencies and notably the UN-CSD. This has been recalled in all MCSD meetings and, at its third meeting, this issue of cooperation with UN-CSD was raised for Sustainable Development Indicators, Tourism and Industry. To that end, the Secretariat has visited the Division for Sustainable Development in UN-DESA in 27-28 August 1998 to exchange views on respective activities and discuss on ways and means for strengthening cooperation.
29. It appears clearly that the Mediterranean Region and its MCSD can constitute an interesting regional case, a bridge between global and national levels. There is an obvious mutual interest for learning from each other and this cooperation could take different forms, such as, inter alia:
 - Communication of information on respective activities to a wider public; participation and presentation of specific experience to respective workshops and working sessions;
 - promoting synergy by organizing joint thematic workshops on issues of common interest, such as tourism, indicators, technologies, etc.;
 - organization of joint workshops or consultative meetings on sustainable development and strategies, etc.
30. The UN-CSD expressed the will to promote such cooperation with, as far as possible, jointly organized and cost-shared meetings. Moreover, the contribution of our experience through inputs of CSD sessions and if possible presentations of our regional case and experience during these sessions could be appreciated, would it be directly by the Secretariat of the MCSD or through the Task Manager for a specific subject, or through the president of the MCSD Steering Committee or the President of the Contracting Parties for overall MCSD activities.
31. As UNEP is an active member in the International Advisory Committee on Sustainable Development (IACSD) and involved in several thematic activities, our input should be coordinated with UNEP's overall contribution, and if necessary transmitted through UNEP to UN-CSD. That will be the case for tourism, a priority subject for the seventh CSD session for which MAP was requested to coordinate the preparation of the Regional Seas input in UNEP's report.
MCSD's cooperation should also be developed with UNEP regional and thematic offices such as the ones in Geneva (for indicators and trade) or in Paris (for industry).

32. Similarly, cooperation need to be more systematically promoted with concerned UN Agencies as they are, most of them, active partners and even assuming a Task Manager's responsibility in CSD framework. Generally, MCSD will look for translating at regional and national levels the CSD recommendations in addition to the identification of specific ones that correspond more to the Mediterranean context, stakes and needs. This cooperation can go along with above four types (in paragraph 29).
33. In certain cases, it would be useful and of mutual interest associating and involving UN Agencies and other partners such as EEA, METAP, CEDARE, etc. in preparing the background papers, in conducting relevant researches through clear cooperation in the Task management system and /or the supportive activities.

ANNEX
TABLE
THEMATIC WORKING GROUPS

Themes	Task managers	Members of the group	Support from MAP ⁴
Short-term (over about a one-year period)			
- Sustainable management of coastal zones	Morocco and MEDCITIES	CREE, European Community, Greece, City of Rome, Spain, EcoMediterrania, Monaco, WWF, Italy, EOAEN, Cyprus, France, Tunisia, MIO-ESCDE, Egypt, Malta, Albania, Lebanon, Algeria, FIS	RAC/Priority Actions Programme, RAC/Blue Plan, RAC/Environment Remote Sensing and RAC/Specially Protected Areas
- Management of water demand	Tunisia and Morocco	Libya, WWF, APNEK, European Community, Egypt, Italy, France, CEFIC, MIO-ESCDE, Malta, Spain, EcoMediterrania, CEDARE, Cyprus, Israel, Algeria, Turkey, Bosnia & Herzegovina	RAC/Blue Plan and RAC/Priority Actions Programme
Medium-term (until 1999 Contracting Parties meeting and beyond)			
- Sustainable development indicators	France and Tunisia	European Community, Morocco, EcoMediterranean, Greece, Israel, Spain, Slovenia, Turkey, Lebanon, Algeria	RAC/Blue Plan
- Sustainable Tourism	Spain, EOAEN and Egypt	Malta, Monaco, Cyprus, Croatia, European Community, Greece, EcoMediterrania, WWF MIO-ESCDE, ASCAME, Slovenia, Libya, Turkey, Lebanon	RAC/Blue Plan and RAC/Priority Actions Programme
- Information, awareness and participation	MIO-ESCDE and CREE	European Community, WWF, France, APNEK, Croatia, Egypt, Morocco, MEDCITIES, EcoMediterrania, Albania, Algeria, Libya, Lebanon	MED Coordinating Unit
- Free trade and environment in the Euromediterranean context (strategic impact assessment)	Lebanon	Tunisia, France, European Community, APNEK, Morocco, MIO-ESCDE, Algeria, ASCAME, FIS, Bosnia & Herzegovina	MED Coordinating Unit
- Industry and sustainable development (cultural, economic, technical and financial aspects of progressive elimination of land-based pollution)	Italy, Algeria	WWF, Israel, EOAEN, ASCAME, CEFIC, Spain, European Community, Turkey	MED POL, RAC/Clean Production
- Management of urban/rural development	Egypt	MEDCITIES, FIS, MIO-ESCDE, Spain, Morocco, France, Malta, Turkey, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Algeria, CEDARE, EC, Slovenia	RAC/Blue Plan and RAC/Priority Actions Programme

⁴ The Coordinating Unit and the Regional Activity Centres will each provide the necessary support to the different working groups according to their expertise.