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MEDITERRANEAN ACTION PLAN

Meeting of the National Focal Points for
Specially Protected Areas in the Mediterranean

Athens, 26-30 October 1992

**REPORT OF THE MEETING OF THE NATIONAL FOCAL
POINTS FOR SPECIALLY PROTECTED AREAS IN THE
MEDITERRANEAN**

Introduction

1. The Protocol on Specially Protected Areas in the Mediterranean was adopted at Geneva on 3 April 1982 and entered into force on 23 March 1986.
2. Article 14.2 of the Protocol provides that "The Parties shall designate persons responsible for protected areas. Those persons shall meet at least once every two years to discuss matters of joint interest and especially to propose recommendations concerning scientific, administrative and legal information as well as the standardization and processing of data."
3. The second Meeting of National Focal Points for Specially Protected Areas in the Mediterranean was held at Athens, Greece, from 26 to 30 October 1992. The first two days of the meeting (26-27 October) were devoted to a joint consultation with Bonn and Bern Conventions concerning the conservation of cetaceans in the Mediterranean and Black Seas. The report of that meeting is contained in document UNEP(OCA)/MED WG.36/6.

Participation

4. The National Focal Points and delegates for Specially Protected Areas in the Mediterranean of the following Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention participated in the meeting: Albania, Cyprus, EEC, Egypt, France, Greece, Israel, Italy, Lebanon, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Malta, Monaco, Morocco, Spain, Tunisia and Turkey.
5. The following non-governmental organizations were represented by observers: Greenpeace and the Mediterranean Association to Save the Sea Turtles (MEDASSET).
6. The full list of participants is contained in Annex I to this report.

Agenda item 1: Opening of the Meeting

7. The meeting was opened by Mr. I. Dharat, Senior Programme Officer of the Mediterranean Action Plan (MAP), who welcomed participants on behalf of the MAP Co-ordinator Mr. S. Busuttil.

Agenda item 2: Rules of Procedure

8. The meeting agreed that the Rules of Procedure applicable to meetings and conferences of the Contracting Parties to the Convention for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea against Pollution should apply mutatis mutandis to its discussions (UNEP/IG.43/6, Annex XI).

Agenda item 3: Election of Officers

9. Following informal consultations, the meeting unanimously elected the following officers:
 - Chairperson : Mr. M. Hentati (Tunisia)
 - Vice-Chairpersons : Ms. A. Mourmouris (Greece)
Mr. A. Baldacchino (Malta)
 - Rapporteur : Ms. M. Grillo (Monaco)

Agenda item 4: Adoption of the agenda and organization of work

10. The meeting adopted the provisional agenda contained in document UNEP(OCA)/MED WG.36/1.

Agenda item 5: Review of the report of the Regional Activity Centre for Specially Protected Areas, 1991-1992

11. Mr. M. Saied, Director of the RAC/SPA, thanked participants for having accepted the invitation to the meeting, which was the first for the new team at the Centre. He particularly welcomed the presence of a representative of Albania, which was participating in the work of RAC/SPA for the first time.

12. He expressed the hope that the meeting of focal points would lead to definition of the orientations and priorities for the future activities of RAC/SPA in conformity with the recommendations of the Seventh Ordinary Meeting of the Contracting Parties held in Cairo (8-11 October 1991). He highlighted the activities carried out by the Centre in 1991 and 1992 described in document UNEP(OCA)/MED WG.36/3 drawing particular attention to the following:

- assistance to countries in the selection, creation and management of protected areas and notification of information on protected areas of biological and ecological value, and of scientific, aesthetic, historical, archaeological, cultural or educational value;
- assistance to countries in the management and conservation of species (marine turtles, monk seals, cetaceans, marine vegetation);
- training;
- Coastal Areas Management Programme (CAMP).

13. Mr. I. Dharat, MAP, placed on record, on behalf of the Co-ordinating Unit of MAP, his thanks and appreciation to the Tunisian Government for its prompt implementation of the host country agreement relevant to the SPA Centre signed between UNEP and Tunisia in April 1991. All provisions of the Agreement had been implemented:

- a full-time Director (Mr. M. Saied) had been appointed;
- a new building had been made available to the Centre;
- Tunisian nationals had been assigned to the Centre under the Tunisian counterpart contribution;
- two international experts had also been recruited;
- a foreign exchange account had been opened.

14. He also expressed his satisfaction at the excellent work done by the Tunis Centre in the very short period since the signature of the host country agreement. The documents distributed during the meeting were a clear manifestation of that excellent work.

15. The Chairperson invited the National Focal Points to comment on the progress report.

16. The representative of Turkey congratulated the Centre on its overall activities. She highlighted the principal activities undertaken in Turkey, in particular, with regard to monk seals and marine turtles. Concerning the former, she also informed the meeting that Turkey had developed a project for the conservation of the Mediterranean Monk Seal in Foça, to be implemented with the cooperation of WWF International. Turkey had adopted a national strategy, established a national committee and developed a pilot project at Foça in cooperation with the WWF. Regarding marine turtles, there was a national committee and 17 nesting beaches had been listed and were the subject of special management measures.

17. She said that nature protection bodies in Turkey had been strengthened following the creation of a Ministry of the Environment and an Authority for Specially Protected Areas.

18. The representative of the Turkish Authority for Specially Protected Areas explained the Authority's responsibilities as far as management of sites was concerned.

19. The representative of Greece expressed satisfaction at the notable efforts made by RAC/SPA towards the conservation of protected areas and species. She said that Greece wished to reinforce cooperation and exchanges with RAC/SPA. Training activities on monk seals and marine turtles, fields for which Greece had considerable experience, could be envisaged for 1993. She added that Greece attached greater importance to the management of already-existing protected areas than to the creation of new areas. She concluded by enumerating a number of projects and activities taking place in Greece with a view to managing protected areas and conserving threatened species such as the monk seal and marine turtles.

20. The representative of Israel emphasized that her country had always followed the activities of RAC/SPA with interest and appreciated the work accomplished. She thanked the Coordinating Unit and the Director of RAC/SPA for their efforts in transmitting comprehensive and regular information concerning RAC/SPA activities, and asked that it should be maintained and strengthened. She described recent legislative developments in Israel, inter alia a new National Parks, Nature Reserves, National Sites and Memorial Sites Law, 1992.

21. The representative of the Authority for Nature Reserves provided details on conservation policy and management practices developed in Israel.

22. The representative of the EEC expressed appreciation of the work carried out and in hand. He drew attention to the need to exchange information among RAC/SPA, the countries and the EEC. He said that he would make information available to RAC/SPA, in particular, concerning ecological programmes (Natura 2000 in Directive 92/43 of 21 May 1992, Official Gazette No. L.207 of 22 July 1992), legislation available, monk seals and other useful information.

23. The representative of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya congratulated the Centre on the work carried out since its creation. In his country, it had led to a mission by RAC/SPA experts to assess the quality of the coastal zone and propose sites for protection. The mission had only covered half of Libya's 2,000 km coastline and he hoped that the work would be completed in the near future so as to help his country to create a network of protected areas covering the main characteristics of the coast.

24. The representative of Egypt described the activities undertaken in his country by the Environmental Affairs Agency. He gave details concerning existing and projected sites on the Mediterranean coast and referred to the activity carried out with MAP in the Fuka-Matrouh area within the framework of the Coastal Areas Management Programme (CAMP).

25. The representative of Italy expressed his appreciation of the work carried out by the SPA Centre and his satisfaction at the presence of an Italian expert in RAC/SPA, which would reinforce Italy's contribution to the SPA Centre.

26. The representative of Malta joined the other delegates in congratulating the RAC/SPA Centre for the work being carried out. He also informed the meeting that since the first meeting of the National Focal Points for Specially Protected Areas, an Environment Protection Act has been passed. Under this empowering law, new regulations were published in August 1992 for the protection of marine mammals and reptiles. These regulations protect, amongst others, all small cetaceans and the monk seal, and the three marine turtle species recorded in the Malta Islands.

27. Other information was provided by a number of delegations. It would be transmitted to RAC/SPA through normal channels.

Agenda item 6: Revision of the Directory of Marine and Coastal Protected Areas in the Mediterranean Region, Part I: Sites of Biological and Ecological Value

28. The Director of RAC/SPA introduced the draft of the second edition of the Directory of Marine and Coastal Protected Areas in the Mediterranean, the first part of which was contained in document UNEP/WG.36/Inf.4. He said that the collection of information on existing protected areas had been undertaken in order to prepare a second edition of the Directory. The first version had included 74 sites (MAP Technical Report Series No.26 in English and No.36 in French) and the new version would contain 124 sites.

29. Delegates from a number of countries took the floor to inform the meeting of the creation of new protected areas and to describe the current situation in those already established and listed. The representative of Tunisia underlined the need to classify the areas in the Directory by type of ecosystem and interest.

30. Following a number of questions concerning the criteria used for the inclusion of areas, it was pointed out that RAC/SPA had prepared guidelines for the selection, creation and management of marine and coastal protected areas in the Mediterranean and for the notification of relevant information, in accordance with Article 4 of the Protocol concerning Mediterranean Specially Protected Areas.

31. At the conclusion of the discussion, the Meeting decided that the time limit for communication of amendments to RAC/SPA would be set at 31 January 1993. RAC/SPA would classify the information received with a view to preparing a new version of Part I of the Directory, which would be sent to Focal Points for comments before being published.

Agenda item 7: Progress report on the Directory of Marine and Coastal Protected Areas in the Mediterranean Region, Part II: Sites of scientific, aesthetic, historical, archaeological, cultural or educational value

32. The RAC/SPA expert said that the activity under discussion and the relevant document (UNEP(OCA)/MED WG.36/Inf.5) were the result of the recommendations made by the Contracting Parties in conformity with Article 3.2(b) of the Protocol concerning Mediterranean Specially Protected Areas.

33. In introducing the activity, he emphasized that each category was the subject of a separate definition, even though some overlapped. The meeting was invited to consider the definitions, propose criteria for selection of areas and make any comments that would assist the RAC/SPA to carry out its work.

34. The meeting discussed a proper approach to be used for compiling the Directory, avoiding the inclusion of any areas already contained in the Directory of Sites of Biological and Ecological Value.

35. It was decided in the first instance to deal with sites which were covered by legislation: sites of archaeological, historical and aesthetic value. Since legislation on sites of aesthetic value did not exist in all countries, it was decided that work should be restricted for the time being to sites of archaeological and historical value. It was proposed that, wherever possible, countries possessing information on sites of aesthetic value should transmit it to RAC/SPA for communication to other countries.

36. All National Focal Points were requested to transmit written comments to RAC/SPA on the definitions and model fact sheet by 31 March 1993.

Agenda item 8: Revision of the Directory of Environment Legislation and preparation of the expert meeting on environment legislation (scheduled for 1993) relevant to the implementation of the Protocol on Specially Protected Areas of the Mediterranean

37. The Director of RAC/SPA introduced the draft Directory of Environmental Legislation (UNEP/OCA/MED WG.36/Inf.5) and the analytical study of the relevant legislation (UNEP(OCA)/MED WG.36/Inf.7) and invited participants to make comments and proposals concerning the two documents. He also introduced the provisional agenda for the meeting of experts (UNEP(OCA)/MED WG.36/4).

38. Pursuant to comments made by a number of delegations, it was proposed that any legal texts dealing with pollution, relevant human activities and management of fisheries resources which might affect the conservation of threatened species and protected areas should be included in the Directory in a classified way and countries should ensure that they were communicated to RAC/SPA.

39. Regarding the provisional agenda for the meeting of experts on environmental legislation, it was proposed to add an item on means and measures for implementation of the Protocol concerning Specially Protected Areas.

40. Delegations present said that they were not in a position to make all necessary comments on the existing Directory at the present stage and it was decided that they should be given a time limit in which to respond in writing to the Centre.

41. The meeting decided that comments on the two documents - the provisional agenda and the Directory of Environmental Legislation related to the expert meeting to be scheduled for 1993 - should be received at the latest by 31 January 1993.

Agenda item 9: Activities related to endangered species

9.1 Marine turtles

42. Mr. C. Rais, expert of RAC/SPA described the principal activities concerning the conservation of marine turtles on the basis of the Action Plan for the Conservation of Marine Turtles in the Mediterranean.

43. He drew particular attention to the training course held in Cyprus, the manual on conservation of turtles in the Mediterranean compiled for the training course, and the extensive exchange of relevant documentation with the majority of countries.

44. A number of statements were made describing the different activities carried out by countries or by non-governmental organizations in the areas of research, education and promotion of awareness.

45. The meeting expressed the appreciation for the fact that the manual had been prepared. The Director of RAC/SPA said that it would shortly be published with photographs and diagrams in an English version, to be followed by a French version and most likely an Arabic version.

46. Some delegations suggested that extracts from the manual should be used to prepare a practical guide to be used for education and promoting public awareness. The possibility would be studied by RAC/SPA.

9.2 Mediterranean Monk Seal

47. The representative of RAC/SPA described activities for the conservation of the monk seal within the framework of the Action Plan for the Management of the Mediterranean Monk Seal already adopted. He referred in particular to the feasibility study on reproduction of seals in captivity, the preparation of document on information and promotion of awareness and the visit to the Port Cros Rescue Centre. The meeting was invited to comment on the activities.

48. The representative of Turkey gave details concerning the national programmes developed by the National Commission for the Monk Seal in the context of the national strategy. The two main activities related to a pilot project developed in Foça with the support of the local authorities and fishermen, and a national assessment of the population and its habitat.

49. The representative of Greece provided information on the activities carried out to conserve the monk seal: inventory of habitats, estimation of the population, protection of sites, information for the public and fishermen, development of a compensation mechanism, assessment of threats, and methodologies to limit or eliminate those threats.

50. The representative of Tunisia said that his country was carrying out an important

programme in the Zembra National Park, from which seals had disappeared. He said that one of the aspects was the possible return of monk seals to the area. He also asked RAC/SPA for a contribution to this project through training activities.

51. The representative of France described the French programme, which had two elements: the existence of a Rescue Centre under the responsibility of the Port Cros National Park and surveillance of the population on the Atlantic coasts of Morocco and Mauritania. Those activities received partial financial support from the EEC. The latter supported four activities related to the monk seal: the French project, the Greek project in the Sporades, the Portuguese project in the Desertas Islands (Madeira), and the data bank on monk seals developed by the Belgian Royal Institute of Natural Sciences.

52. The representative of Libya said that the monk seal population had been estimated at 20-30 in 1975 and it had not been studied since then. He hoped that, within the framework of RAC/SPA's activities, a mission would help his country to re-estimate the population.

53. The meeting expressed satisfaction at the action undertaken and hoped that it would be further developed so that the monk seal would again live in areas from which it had disappeared, as appeared to be the case in Cyprus where monk seals had been sighted for the past three years.

9.3 Cetaceans

54. The meeting considered the most appropriate way of presenting the Action Plan for the Conservation of Cetaceans and the recommendations contained in the report of the joint consultation concerning the conservation of cetaceans in the Mediterranean and the Black Seas (Annex II of UNEP(OCA)MED WG.36/6).

55. As a result of the discussion, the National Focal Points adopted additional points for the implementation of the Action Plan which will be considered as an integral part of the Action Plan. The two documents (Action Plan and the additional points) were attached as Annex II to this report.

56. The representative of Italy provided details on present research activities on cetaceans in Italy, as well as on Italy's legislation on the use of drift-nets.

9.4 Marine Vegetation

57. The expert from RAC/SPA described in detail the activities carried out, in particular the training course on marine vegetation and its components. He said that the course would be repeated in future years so as to allow all countries to participate.

58. He drew attention to the weakness of the protection of marine vegetation. He emphasized that efforts were necessary both as regards legislation and the ongoing monitoring of endangered vegetation.

59. The meeting congratulated the Centre on the activity and participants described activities in a number of countries. The meeting requested that the training session be repeated, particularly in English, so as to improve the exchange of knowledge on the management of plant species in protected areas and the coast as a whole. It also called for the transfer of an increased amount of information to countries.

Agenda item 10: Coastal Areas Management Programme (CAMP)

60. The Senior Programme Officer, MAP, highlighted the major problems facing the coastal zone and stressed the need for integrated management of coastal areas. A programme called the Coastal Areas Management Programme (CAMP) had been developed for that purpose by the Coordination Unit and the five MAP centres. The Programme was financed by MAP together with other organizations, *inter alia* the World Bank and the European Investment Bank.

61. He pointed out that the Contracting Parties had adopted four areas within the CAMP: Kastela Bay, Rhodes Island, Syrian Coast and Izmir Bay.

62. Five other areas were under preparation: Albania, Fuka/Egypt, Sfax/Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco.

63. The Director of SPA/RAC presented in detail the activities which were developed within each CAMP.

64. The meeting took note of the activities and emphasized the importance of such programmes for management. It also expressed the hope that the methodology used and the results would be widely disseminated.

Agenda item 11: Other business

- . The Director of RAC/SPA introduced the documents on existing training courses and requested that any additional information be sent to the MAP Secretariat.
- . The meeting thanked RAC/SPA for the information provided, although some documents such as those on underwater archaeology had not been discussed.
- . All delegations, following the proposal of certain representatives requested that a recommendation be presented by the Secretariat to the next meeting of the Contracting Parties. The recommendation should provide that, in the future, all technical documents requiring adoption by the Contracting Parties, with a view to implementing the SPA Protocol, would be discussed at the level of the National Focal Points Meetings, before being transmitted to the Contracting Parties.

Following a proposal made by certain countries, all delegations present requested that in future all technical documents should be discussed at the level of National Focal Points before being transmitted to the Contracting Parties.

Agenda item 12: Adoption of the report

65. The meeting adopted its report on Friday, 30 October 1992.

Agenda item 13: Closure of the meeting

66. After the customary courtesies, the Chairman declared the meeting closed on Friday, 30 October 1992, at 12.25 hours.

ANNEX I

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ANNEX II

ACTION PLAN FOR THE CONSERVATION OF CETACEANS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA^{1/}

INTRODUCTION

1. The Contracting Parties to the Convention for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea Against Pollution and its related protocols, included among their priority targets for the period 1985-1995 the protection of marine endangered species (Genoa Declaration, 1985).

2. When the Genoa Declaration in which these priority targets were included was adopted, the monk seal and the sea turtle were mentioned as examples of endangered marine species in the Mediterranean. Action plans for these species were adopted in 1987 and in 1989.

3. There is now clear evidence that some cetacean populations in the Mediterranean Sea Area are also endangered. Consequently, measures to enhance their protection should be considered a priority within the Mediterranean Action Plan.

4. Many important aspects of cetacean biology, behaviour, range and habitats in the Mediterranean are poorly known, but the actual degradation of the populations is such that action can no longer be postponed, in line with the precautionary principle adopted by the Contracting Parties in 1989. Using the available information, it is possible to prepare an Action Plan for the conservation of Mediterranean cetaceans. This Plan will be adjusted, as necessary, when more information becomes available.

5. Concrete protection measures, co-ordinated programmes for scientific research and public awareness campaigns can ensure the survival and assist in the recovery of cetacean populations.

6. Effective and durable cetacean protection in the Mediterranean Sea Area implies the co-operation with existing programmes and plans, such as:

- at the international level: the global conventions regarding the protection of the marine environment (in particular the 1973/78 MARPOL Convention and the London Dumping Convention), the conventions on endangered species (i.e. UNEP Global Plan of Action for Conservation of Marine Mammals, adopted in 1984, the Bonn Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals and CITES (Washington Convention)) and fisheries management plans.

Furthermore, considering the relevant work carried out within the framework of the International Whaling Commission (IWC), the Contracting Parties agree to address an appeal to the IWC to designate the Mediterranean Sea Area as a whale sanctuary;

1/ As it was adopted by the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention during their Seventh Ordinary Meeting (Cairo, 8-11 October 1991)

- at the regional level: all relevant regional agreements, (in particular FAO General Fishery Council for the Mediterranean, FAO/GFCM and the Bern Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats);
- at the national level: the measures adopted, or to be adopted, by the Mediterranean States.

7. The most serious threats to cetaceans are:

- taking, defined as to harass, hunt, capture or kill or attempt to harass, hunt capture or kill any cetaceans;
- pollution, as defined by the Convention for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea Against Pollution;
- reduction or depletion of food resources;
- incidental catches in fishing gear;
- degradation and disturbances of habitats caused by other factors.

8. This Action Plan for the conservation of cetaceans in the Mediterranean Sea Area outlines objectives, priority actions, and co-ordinating structures. These different components are mutually reinforcing and must be taken together to have the best chance of success.

OBJECTIVES

9. The objectives of this Action Plan are:

- (a) Protection, conservation and the recovery of the cetacean populations in the Mediterranean Sea Area.
- (b) Protection and conservation of cetacean habitats include feeding, breeding and calving grounds, without however, being restricted to these aspects.

PRIORITIES

10. The following general priorities are recommended:

- prohibition of deliberate taking;
- prevention and elimination of pollution;
- elimination of incidental catches in fishing gear;
- prevention of over-exploitation of fishery resources;
- protection of feeding, breeding and calving grounds;

- monitoring, research and data collection and dissemination with regard to biology, behavior, range and habitats of cetaceans;
- educational activities aimed at the public at large and fishermen.

OBLIGATIONS

11. The Contracting Parties shall take all the necessary measures to ensure a favourable conservation status for cetaceans by protecting them and their habitats from undue and cumulative effects resulting directly or indirectly from activities under national jurisdiction or control.

Such measures should include:

- the prohibition of any deliberate taking of cetaceans as well as ensuring enforcement of existing laws;
- the adoption of fishery policies that avoid the adverse effects of fisheries on the conservation status of cetaceans in the Mediterranean Sea Area;
- the regulation of fishing gear and practices in order to eliminate by-catches and to prevent fishing gear from being lost or discarded at sea;
- a ban on the use of large-scale driftnets;
- the safe release of any cetaceans incidentally caught in fishing gear;
- the adoption of national and regional strategies to phase-out the discharge of toxic compounds in the Mediterranean Sea Area, giving priority to those substances contained in the black and grey lists of the Protocol for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea Against Pollution from Land-Based Sources;
- the establishment of port reception facilities for the collection of ship generated garbage and of bilge and ballast waters;
- the development of scientific research and monitoring, using non-destructive and non-invasive procedures in order to:
 - (a) assess the status, dynamic and seasonal movements of the populations concerned
 - (b) identify present and potential threats to the various species
 - (c) make full use of the information that becomes available by establishing an efficient system for reporting by-catches and stranded specimens and carry out full autopsies in order to collect tissues for further studies and reveal possible cause of death, with special regard to contaminant loads, stomach contents, disease incidents and any physiological or anatomical abnormalities.

- the creation of a network of marine protected areas, including feeding, breeding and calving grounds for cetaceans;
- the development of widespread campaigns to increase public and fishermen awareness to support the conservation measures and to encourage the establishment of voluntary observer programmes to report sightings and strandings.

The conservation status will be taken as "favourable" when:

- population dynamic data indicate that cetaceans in the Mediterranean Sea Area are maintaining themselves on a long-term basis as a viable component of the ecosystem;
- the range of cetaceans in the Mediterranean Sea Area is neither currently being reduced, nor is likely to be reduced on a long-term basis;
- there is, and will be in the foreseeable future, sufficient habitat in the Mediterranean Sea Area to maintain cetaceans on a long-term basis.

12. The Contracting Parties shall apply the conservation measures prescribed in this Action Plan and co-operate closely to achieve and maintain a favourable conservation status for cetaceans.

CO-ORDINATING STRUCTURE

13. It is necessary to co-ordinate the activities envisaged in this Action Plan. It is considered that the Specially Protected Areas/ Regional Activity Centre (SPA/RAC) of the Mediterranean Action Plan is the most appropriate centre for this co-ordination in co-operation with other bodies concerned.

14. Its major function will be:

- (a) collect and evaluate data relating to the conservation status of cetaceans in the Mediterranean Sea Area;
- (b) disseminate and exchange information;
- (c) assist and/or organize expert meetings on specific topics regarding cetaceans in the Mediterranean Sea Area;
- (d) contribute to the identification, selection and establishment of marine protected areas for cetaceans;
- (e) prepare recommendations for the Contracting Parties aimed at the protection and conservation of cetaceans in the Mediterranean Sea Area as well as a time-table and financial proposals for their implementation.
- (f) Organize training courses in this field.

15. The conservation status of cetaceans in the Mediterranean Sea Area, the content of this Action Plan and its implementation shall be reviewed every four years.

Appendix

Additional Points for the Implementation of the Action Plan for the Conservation of Cetaceans in the Mediterranean Sea

In conformity with the mandate given by the Seventh Ordinary Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Convention for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea against Pollution and its related protocols (Cairo, 8-11 October 1991), at their Second Meeting held in Athens from 26-30 October 1992, the National Focal Points for Specially Protected Areas adopted the following additional points for the implementation of the Action Plan for the Protection of Cetaceans in the Mediterranean:

The Contracting Parties will assess, where they exist, their national policies concerning the conservation of cetaceans and prepare within one year a policy document for their implementation at the national level and communicate that document to the Secretariat.

Furthermore, the Contracting Parties will undertake the following action:

Legislation

if they have not already done so, to adopt and implement legislation within a period of two years:

- to prohibit the deliberate taking of cetaceans;
- to prohibit any boat from having on board or fishing with one or more drift nets of a total or individual length exceeding 2.5 kilometres;
- to prohibit the discarding of nets or other fishing gear at sea;
- to provide for the safe release of cetaceans accidentally caught;

and to identify and assess other threats to cetaceans, in particular, pollution, fishing practices and techniques which have an important negative effect on cetaceans and, when they have been identified, to formulate appropriate legislation to deal with them as soon as possible;

Management

In connection with the management necessary for the conservation of cetaceans, the Contracting Parties agreed to:

Fisheries policy

- **request** the competent organizations, inter alia the General Council for Mediterranean Fisheries of FAO, to develop fisheries policies that will avoid the negative impacts of fishing on cetaceans in the Mediterranean Sea;

Creation of protected areas

- **promote**, in cooperation with RAC/SPA and other relevant bodies, the creation of a network of protected areas and marine sanctuaries covering sites where cetaceans live;

Research

- **develop** research so as to assess the status and biology of cetaceans, identify potential threats to them and develop appropriate alternative fishing methods and other practices to deal with those threats;

Technical capacity

- in cooperation with appropriate organizations, **strengthen** the capacity of countries in the field of experts (training) and financial and technical means;

Promotion of awareness/education

- **prepare** and disseminate documents individually or within the framework of RAC/SPA to promote awareness and information among the "target" public in cooperation with the Marine Mammals Action Plan (UNEP-OCA/PAC).

Group of Experts

In order to assist with the implementation of the above proposals, it is recommended that, whenever necessary, the RAC/SPA should convene an ad hoc group of experts from the Mediterranean countries to be attended as well by representatives of the following bodies and organizations inter alia:

- RAC/SPA
- Bonn Convention
- Bern Convention
- International Maritime Organization
- Commission of the European Communities
- General Council of Mediterranean Fisheries (GCMF, FAO)
- International Commission for the Scientific Exploration of the Mediterranean
- RAMOGE
- NGOs active in this field

The role of the Group of Experts would be to provide specific scientific advice to RAC/SPA with a view to efficient implementation of the Action Plan for the Conservation of Cetaceans in the Mediterranean Sea.