

Introduction

1. The meeting of the Bureau of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention was held in Palma de Majorca (Spain), on 9 May 1997, at the kind invitation of the Government of Spain and the authorities of the Autonomous Community of the Balearic Islands.

Participants

2. The meeting was attended by H.E. Mr. Nourdine Benomar Alami, Minister of the Environment of Morocco and President of the Bureau of the Contracting Parties, Mr. Slimane Zaouche, Director General of the Environment of Algeria (Vice-President), Mr. Alexandros Lascaratou, MAP Liaison Officer, (Vice-President), Ms. Nehama Ronen, Director General, Ministry of the Environment of Israel (Vice-President), Ms. Amparo Rambla Gil, Assistant Director General, Ministry of Environment of Spain (Rapporteur). Mr. Salah Hafez, Chief Executive Officer, Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency (EEAA) (Vice-President) was not able to attend the meeting.
3. Mr. L. Chabason, Coordinator of MAP, and Mr. I. Dharat, Senior Programme Officer, represented the Secretariat.
4. 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 H.E. Mr. Nourdine Benomar Alami, President of the Bureau, who welcomed the participants.

Agenda item 2: Adoption of the Provisional Agenda and Organization of work

6. The meeting adopted its agenda on the basis of the Provisional Agenda contained in document UNEP/BUR/50/1 and annotated in document UNEP/BUR/50/2.

Agenda item 3: Progress Report by the Coordinator on activities carried out since the last meeting of the Bureau

Contributions to MTF

7. The Coordinator introduced his progress report contained in document UNEP/BUR/50/3, which covered the period November 1996 to April 1997. He referred to the contributions to the Mediterranean Trust Fund (MTF) and pointed out that an updated status of contributions had just been received that day from UNEP Headquarters which showed that contributions for 1997 had only been received from three Contracting Parties (Israel, Monaco and EC-ordinary contribution only). He urged others to speed up the payment process. The Vice-President from Greece stated that his country's host country contribution for 1997, as well as its 1997 regular contribution to the MTF had been paid.

Institutional arrangements

8. The Coordinator informed the meeting that the MED Unit has suffered a great deal from the recruitment delays. The recruitment exercise of a Fund/Administrative Management Officer has been finalized and the decision is imminent. However, in

order for the administration to run more smoothly, a short-term consultancy contract has been given to one of the candidates for the post (Mr. Tissot). With regard to the other two posts of Deputy Coordinator (D.1) and MED POL Coordinator (P.5). The Coordinator stated that the announcements relevant to these posts will occur soon. They will be sent to all MAP National Focal Points for wider distribution.

Cooperation with NGOs

9. The Coordinator referred to the Secretariat's proposal contained in his progress report concerning the applications received from nine NGOs requesting to be included in the MAP/NGO list which was approved by the Ninth Ordinary Meeting of the Contracting Parties (Barcelona, June 1995) and the Extraordinary Meeting of the Contracting Parties (Montpellier, 1-4 July 1996). The organizations are:

- Association Tunisie Méditerranée pour le Développement durable, Tunisia - TU-MED
- Association de Réflexion d'Echange et d'Action pour l'Environnement et le Développement), Algeria - AREA-ED
- CRETES, Belgium
- EcoPeace, Israel
- Hellenic Institute of Environment, Desalination, Water re-use and Preservation, Greece - EIPA
- International Energy Foundation, Libya - IEF
- Forum of the Mediterranean for the Environment and Sustainable Development, Spain - MED FORUM
- Observatory for Planning the Sustainable Development and the Organization of the Territory, University of Salerno, Italy - OPSAT
- International Ocean Institute, Malta - IOI

In addition he pointed out that, in accordance with the criteria for the selection of NGOs approved by the 1995 Barcelona Meeting of the Contracting Parties, the Bureau of the Contracting Parties shall review collaboration with NGOs listed on the MAP list every two years, and shall determine which NGOs have activities and working relations with MAP that justify their continued inclusion in the MAP list.

Therefore, the Secretariat intends to submit to the next meeting of the Bureau a critical review of the status of each of the 62 NGOs already inscribed in the MAP list.

10. During the brief discussion on this agenda item, the need for a review of the status of all NGOs in relation to MAP was stressed. A more strict and logical criteria has to be applied to any NGO requesting a relationship with MAP, and a review of the work they have done has to be undertaken before their inclusion in the list.

11. A proposal was made to the effect that the Secretariat should make the necessary contacts with the relevant National Focal Point in order to obtain an opinion and additional information on the relevant NGO before its inclusion in the MAP list. It was stressed, in this regard, that this does not mean in any way that the Secretariat has to seek the prior approval of the relevant National Focal Point for the inclusion of a particular NGO in the MAP list. This exercise remains the prerogative of the meeting of the Contracting Parties.
12. The Coordinator pointed out that before proposing the inclusion of any NGO in the list, the Secretariat does request a dossier to be submitted by the NGO which contains information on:
 - the constitution, the terms of reference, and the rules of procedure of the NGO in question, as well as a list of the Board of Directors (or equivalent);
 - its programme of activities for the coming biennium;
 - progress reports of activities undertaken during the past year;
 - its cooperation with MAP and its commitments to the Mediterranean;
 - its budget.
13. At the end of the discussion, the meeting:
 - a. took note of the Secretariat proposal concerning the nine NGOs requesting to be included in the MAP list and decided to take a decision on this proposal at its next meeting;
 - b. requested the Secretariat to undertake a review of the status of the 62 NGOs listed in the MAP list for the Bureau's consideration at its next meeting.

Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development (MCSD)

14. The Coordinator briefed the meeting on the results of the Second Meeting of the Commission (Palma de Majorca, 6-8 May 1997). He also reported to the Meeting on the participation of the President and the Coordinator at the Fifth Session of the UNCSD (April 1997) in New York, where work was proceeding on the draft declaration to be made by the Heads of State or Government at the forthcoming Special Session of the UN General Assembly.
15. The President had seized the opportunity to attend the ministerial segment of the UNCSD's Fifth Session to draw attention to the establishment of the MCSD. Moreover, he had a discussion with the Chairman of the UNCSD on how best to obtain a solemn political commitment from governments in the Mediterranean region to include sustainability in their development plans. As negotiations on the final declaration of the Special Session were well advanced and it would not be possible to include a statement of the Mediterranean position, he proposed that the MCSD agree upon two or three important non-controversial environmental and sustainable development issues indicative of the common Mediterranean position. The statement could then be transmitted to the Contracting Parties so that Heads of State or Government could take it into consideration in their declarations to the Special Session.

16. The Coordinator pointed out that he had attended the second week of the UNCSD session as a member of UNEP's delegation, and thus had an opportunity to inform the Commission's members about the work of the MCSD. In view of the importance and relevance of the issues discussed by the UNCSD, it was essential for the MCSD to become accredited to the Commission; however, that would require political support from Mediterranean governments. It would not be possible to obtain accreditation in time for the special session of the United Nations General Assembly; therefore, the MCSD's activities could only be reflected in the declarations made by Mediterranean Heads of State or Government.
17. During the ensuing discussion, the members of the Bureau expressed their thanks to the President and the Coordinator for their efforts to represent MAP and the MCSD at the Fifth Session of the UNCSD and expressed their support for the proposal that a common message be conveyed to the Special Session of the General Assembly through the declarations made by the Mediterranean Heads of States or Government.
18. In this regard, a draft statement was prepared and agreed upon by the Bureau (see Agenda item 7).
19. The Coordinator referred to the Draft Rules of Procedure of the MCSD which was considered by the Second Meeting of the Commission (Palma, 6-8 May 1997) with no final decision taken. In this regard, several speakers referred to the issue of the role of the Bureau of the Contracting Parties and that of the Bureau of the MCSD, and the relation between the two Bureaus. It was advocated by some participants that the Bureau of the Commission should cease to function once the meeting came to an end. They considered that there was a serious danger of confusion, if not conflict, if two Bureaus were to meet during the inter-sessional period-especially if two different presidents were involved. There was no need for a Bureau of the Commission outside the period of meetings since the Bureau of the Contracting Parties and the Secretariat were responsible for following up on activities and maintaining relations with other organizations. In support of this approach, they mentioned that the Commission was an advisory body only, and meetings of the Bureau of the Commission would involve considerable expenditure.
20. Others felt that while they agreed there would be problems of authority between the two Bureaus, nevertheless, they felt that the Bureau of the Commission had an important role to play between meetings to follow up on activities during the interval between meetings in order to ensure continuity.
21. As the issue was an important one, the Bureau decided that more time was needed to ponder the matter before coming to a decision. The third meeting of the Commission (France, October 1997) and the next meeting of the Bureau would be good opportunities to reach a solution on this issue for final approval by the Tenth Ordinary Meeting of the Contracting Parties.

Regional Activity Centres (RACs)

22. The Coordinator briefly introduced the various sections in his progress report relevant to the reports of MAP Centres and programmes, i.e. BP/RAC, PAP/RAC, CAMPs, SPA/RAC, MED POL Programme, REMPEC, ERS/RAC and CP/RAC. He drew the attention of the Bureau to the GEF project being implemented by a grant to MAP (MED POL), in the framework of the implementation of the LBS Protocol for the

formulation of a strategic action programme to address pollution from land-based activities. A meeting of Government-designated experts will take place in Ischia, Italy, from 15 to 18 June 1997 which will comment, amend and approve the Strategic Action Programme, the Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis and a report on Pollution "Hot Spots". The documents, as amended, will be transmitted to the Tenth Ordinary Meeting of the Contracting Parties (Tunis, 18-21 November 1997) for adoption.

Legal component

23. The Coordinator informed the meeting that the first meeting of Government-designated legal and technical experts on liability and compensation for damages resulting from pollution of the marine and coastal environment in the Mediterranean will be hosted by Croatia, in September/October 1997, which agreed to cover part of the financial expenditure and to make available the conference facilities for the meeting.
24. He also informed the meeting that, as of today, no Contracting Party has ratified any of the new legal instruments approved by the meetings of the Contracting Parties. He urged the members of the Bureau as well as other Contracting Parties to speed up the ratification process. The Bureau echoed the Coordinator's plea and requested the Secretariat to send a reminder to all Contracting Parties on this issue.
25. In this regard, the Coordinator stated that an informal consolidated document was recently issued in English and French containing all new legal instruments and will be distributed to all MAP National Focal Points.

Agenda item 4: Programme and budget for the 1998-1999 biennium

26. Mr. L. Chabason introduced the section relevant to the 1998-1999 budget and stated that the programme and budget for the next biennium will be shaped up and presented in a new style on the basis of priorities agreed upon by the Contracting Parties, and as a result of the new or revised legal instruments, the establishment and functioning of the MCSD and the priority fields of activities (1996-2005) approved by the meetings of the Contracting Parties.
27. He stated that all programme budget proposals will fall within one of the following chapters of the budget: coordination, pollution prevention and control, protection of biodiversity, sustainable management of coastal zones, sustainable management of natural resources and integrated environment and development. That means that the proposal for the programme budget will be based on a thematic approach in order to avoid duplication of work and to cut costs.
28. With regard to the level of the 1998-1999 contributions, the Coordinator pointed out that a modest increase in the contributions would be sufficient at this stage to maintain a moderate rate of growth of the MAP budget, enabling it to shoulder the new responsibilities emanating from the new or revised legal instruments, the establishment of the MCSD and the priority fields of activities (1996-2005). He stated that the Secretariat is also well aware of the current financial constraints shaping the economies of many Mediterranean countries, and in order to assist in reaching a realistic proposal which would meet a consensus between the Contracting Parties, he suggested that there should be no increase in the ordinary contributions, but only a modest increase of 2-3% in cash/kind, in the extraordinary contributions, for the next biennium.

29. In the ensuing discussion, the thematic approach for the presentation of the programme budget was approved by the Bureau. With regard to the increase in the contributions, several participants (Algeria, Spain, Israel) expressed their concern that due to budgetary problems in their countries, any increase in the contributions will not be accepted. Therefore, they suggested that only priority activities should be financed, leaving other activities for future implementation. In this regard, one speaker cited as an example the two new protocols on offshore and hazardous wastes which have not yet been entered into force. The Vice-President from Greece stated that it is essential to have a modest increase in the contributions in order to allow for the implementation of the new responsibilities of MAP.
30. In this regard, the Coordinator explained that it was not the intention of the Secretariat to allocate funds for the implementation of the two protocols in question; however, the Secretariat has to start preliminary preparation in order to facilitate the implementation of the protocols when they enter into force, as requested by the resolutions on "Interim arrangements" approved by the Conference of Plenipotentiaries relevant to the two protocols.
31. Another speaker suggested that it is high time for MAP to look for a long-term solution to the issue of financing of MAP activities. She suggested that an appropriate financial mechanism should be envisaged.
32. The President stressed the importance of devoting the short time available to the ordinary meeting of the Contracting Parties to discuss strategies and policies relevant to the Mediterranean as a whole and avoid spending this time on budgetary issues. The Coordinator suggested that all efforts should be made during the MAP National Focal Points Meeting to reach an agreement on the budgetary issues, in order to allow the Contracting Parties Meeting to devote its time to consider strategic and policy issues relevant to MAP as a whole.
33. The issue of establishing a Mediterranean Fund to be financed from taxation revenues was raised. In this regard, the Coordinator informed the meeting about the WWF proposal for the establishment of a Mediterranean Conservation Fund.

Agenda item 5: Recommendations proposed by the meeting of the Ad-hoc Group on MED Unit, MED POL and RAC structures

34. The Coordinator introduced the report of the meeting of the Ad-hoc Group contained in document UNEP(OCA)/MED WG.126/3, and the relevant section in his progress report (UNEP/BUR/50/3), concerning the set of recommendations proposed by the Group. He briefly described the various recommendations, pinpointing the most important ones, explaining that the system of RACs is a complex and sensitive one due to the fact that RACs fall under several categories with different legal and financial status. However, as the Centres are considered to be an integral part of MAP, certain rules and ethics should be respected by them. He expects that the proposed recommendations will be reviewed by the forthcoming meeting of the National Focal Points (Athens, 7-9 July 1997), for submission to the Tenth Ordinary Meeting of the Contracting Parties for approval.
35. A brief debate took place, during which a few points were raised. One point concerned the relationship between the MCSD and the BP and PAP Centres. On this point, it was stated that we should be explicit in defining this relationship. One speaker pointed out that he cannot accept the proposal that the MCSD acts as the

focal point structure for the BP and PAP Centres. He recalled from the *Ad-hoc* Group meeting that an agreement was reached to the effect that the meeting of the MAP National Focal Points would act as the focal point for the BP and PAP Centres. Another speaker was of the opinion that the BP Centre should convene regular meetings of its national focal points in order to review its activities with the technical experts.

36. On this point, the Bureau decided that MAP National Focal Points should devote one session at the beginning of their meetings to act as the National Focal Points for each of the BP and PAP Centres.
37. The second issue raised during the discussion under this agenda item relates to the recommendation of the *Ad-hoc* Group on the visa issue. The Bureau confirmed the proposed recommendation which requests all Contracting Parties hosting MAP meetings to simplify the procedure for issuing entry visas to representatives of Contracting Parties attending the MAP meeting.

Agenda item 6: Date and place of the next meeting of the Bureau

38. The Bureau decided to convene its next meeting immediately after the Third Meeting of the MCSD (France, October 1997). The exact date and place of the meeting will be fixed in consultation with France.

Agenda item 7: Any other business

39. As stipulated in paragraph 18 of this report, the Bureau agreed upon a statement on a common Mediterranean position regarding two or three important non-conventional environmental and sustainable development issues indicative of the common Mediterranean position. The following statement was approved by the Bureau which requested the Secretariat to transmit it to the Contracting Parties so that Heads of State or Government could take it into consideration in their declarations to the UN Special Session of the General Assembly (New York, June 1997):

"The Bureau proposed that the Contracting Parties to the Convention for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea Against Pollution (Barcelona Convention) and its Protocols express in their declarations to the 19th Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly the following points:

- in the Mediterranean region, which has more than 450 million inhabitants, for over 20 years there has been solidarity between Mediterranean countries and the representatives of civil society so as to strengthen the linkage between environmental protection and balanced development. It should be cited as a model;
- the themes adopted by the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development at its first meeting in Rabat as priority themes, i.e. management of water demand and sustainable development of coastal zones should be referred to as major issues;

- the ongoing negotiations with a view to drawing up a legally binding instrument for the protection of all types of forests at a global level should be supported;
- rapid implementation of the provisions of the Convention to Combat Desertification, support for this process at the global level, the adoption of relevant measures including resources and rational management of land use;
- as tourism is expected to become in the future an increasingly important economic activity worldwide, in the Mediterranean area in particular, appropriate measures should be adopted for the management of tourism that respects the environment and the historical and cultural heritage pursuant to the objectives of sustainable development.

It would be beneficial for States, through their highest authorities, to reaffirm their attachment to reviving public interest in national and regional environmental policies and to supporting and reinforcing the role of institutions responsible for the environment and for sustainable development."

40. The President referred to the article on coastal zone management which appeared in one of the newspapers published in Palma during the meeting, and which was based on an interview with the President of BP/RAC. He pointed out that the article was of a dramatic and critical nature, was not accurate in its analysis and conclusions, and had embarrassed the Bureau of the Contracting Parties, the local authorities in Palma, as well as himself as the president of the meetings of the Commission and the Bureau. Therefore, he suggested that in the future, MAP officials, should be careful in expressing views related to sensitive environmental and sustainable development issues in the Mediterranean, such as tourism. It would be preferable that, in the case of written articles or statements, prior clearance from the MAP Coordinator be obtained.

Furthermore, the President suggested that a Press Release should be prepared on behalf of the Bureau in order to set the facts straight.

41. After a brief discussion, during which members of the Bureau concurred with the President's views, the Coordinator was requested to inform all RAC and MEDU officials of the necessity to be careful while speaking on behalf of MAP and obtain the Coordinator's clearance for any statements/articles regarding sensitive environmental and sustainable development issues in the Mediterranean.

The Bureau also agreed on the substance of a Press Release. (See Annex II to this report).

Agenda item 8: Adoption of the report of the meeting

42. As agreed, the draft report of the meeting will be prepared by the Secretariat and sent to members for their comments before its finalization and distribution.

Agenda item 9: Closure of the meeting

43. Following the customary exchange of courtesies, the President declared the meeting closed on Friday 9 May 1997, at 13.30 hours.

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ANNEX II

Press Release

The Bureau of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention which met on 9 May 1997 noted that in the margin of the second meeting of the MCSD at Palma de Majorca the *presentation of oversimplified scenarios on the development of the Mediterranean Basin* has given rise to very pessimistic conclusions on the future of the Mediterranean Basin which appeared in press articles.

The Bureau notes that the scenarios prepared by the Blue Plan 10 years ago aimed at alerting the competent authorities on the risks of uncontrolled development of coastal areas; it notes with satisfaction that since that time active policies were undertaken by national governments and local authorities to improve environmental quality.

Concerning the hypothesis of an eco-tax which could be levied on tourism to finance environmental protection schemes, the Bureau points out that such an idea was never either raised or studied by the competent MAP authorities and is not on their agenda.

Palma, 9 May 1997