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**MEDITERRANEAN ACTION PLAN**

Meeting of MAP National Focal Points

Athens (Greece), 15-18 September 2003

**THE DECLARATION OF THE MINISTERS  
RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ENVIRONMENT OF THE  
CONTRACTING PARTIES TO THE BARCELONA CONVENTION  
CONCERNING THE PROTECTION OF THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA  
AGAINST POLLUTION FROM SHIPS**

**The Declaration of the Ministers  
responsible for the Environment of the  
Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention  
concerning the protection of the Mediterranean Sea against  
pollution from ships**

The Ministers responsible for the environment of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention

*Being aware* of the sensitivity of the marine environment of the Mediterranean Sea and its biodiversity and of the threat that maritime activities in the Mediterranean region may pose to them;

Being concerned about avoiding that accidents such as Erika and Prestige occur in the Mediterranean as well as about reducing voluntary acts of pollution of the marine environment;

*Conscious* that due to its particular social, economic, cultural and environmental dimensions the Mediterranean Sea represents a common heritage of all peoples living along its shores;

*Bearing in mind* the legal framework for the protection of the marine environment that exists at the global level, comprising UNCLOS and international conventions dealing in particular with maritime safety, the prevention of pollution from ships, preparedness for and response to pollution incidents, and liability and compensation for pollution damage, and at regional level, comprising the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols;

*Convinced* that the new Protocol concerning Co-operation in Preventing Pollution from Ships and, in cases of Emergency, Combating Pollution of the Mediterranean Sea (Prevention and Emergency Protocol) adopted in Malta on 25<sup>th</sup> January 2002 represents an efficient tool for strengthening co-operation among the Contracting Parties aimed at the protection of the marine environment in the Mediterranean;

*Convinced furthermore* that only the implementation of a common and homogeneous regional policy by all Contracting Parties can ensure that the marine environment of the Mediterranean Sea in its entirety is equally protected against threats posed by ship generated pollution;

Recognizing the international role played by IMO and the need of an effective application of the rules and recommendations adopted by this Organization;

Being pleased with the initiatives taken by EU within the framework of the packages Erika I and II and with progress achieved by it to prevent the accidents and to fight against voluntary pollution, as well as with the help provided to the neighboring countries within the framework of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership;

Being also pleased with the initiatives taken by the Member States for a better control of voluntary pollution in particular the establishment of an ecological zone of protection within the framework of the Convention on the law of the Sea;

*Recognizing* the role that REMPEC plays within the framework of the Mediterranean Action Plan in the promotion of regional co-operation in the field of prevention of, preparedness for and response to pollution of the Mediterranean Sea by shipping related activities,

[Welcome into force of the protocol concerning cooperation in preventing pollution from ships and, in cases of emergency, combating pollution of the Mediterranean Sea]

REAFFIRM their commitment to ratify the protocol concerning cooperation in preventing pollution from ships and, in cases of emergency, combating pollution of the Mediterranean Sea and to act jointly in the implementation of its provisions;

RECOGNIZE the need for the preparation and adoption of a common Strategy for the implementation of the Prevention and Emergency Protocol;

DECIDE to move towards a proactive approach for the reduction of risks of maritime accidents, based on sound scientific, technical and legal grounds;

DESIRE to involve in the process of planning and decision making and to closely collaborate with the representatives of local authorities, civil society and other stakeholders, including the oil, chemical and shipping industries;

AGREE to establish, at national and regional levels, a necessary synergy among all sectors concerned, and in particular between the national authorities responsible for maritime affairs and the marine environment;

REQUEST that prevention of pollution from ships, reduction of risk of shipping incidents and their consequences, and increasing the level of preparedness for responding to marine pollution incidents are given a prominent place in the framework of Mediterranean Action Plan ;

INVITE the Governments of the Contracting Parties, civil society representatives and other stakeholders to strongly and actively support REMPEC in its efforts aimed at promoting co-operation in preventing pollution from ships, at reducing the risk of maritime incidents and their consequences, and at increasing the level of preparedness for responding to such incidents, causing or likely to cause pollution of the Mediterranean Sea;

Encourage the Contracting Parties to ratify, as needed, and to enforce the relevant international legal instruments and in particular the MARPOL Convention 73/78 and its annexes, the 1996 HNS convention, the 2001 bunker convention and the Fund and CLC Protocol of 1992;

Invite the non Mediterranean Flag States whose ships sail across the Mediterranean to strictly observe their obligations as stated into the Convention on the law of the Sea and other relevant international rules;

Recommend the Contracting Parties to adopt at their 14 ordinary meeting in 2005 a regional strategy for the implementation of the prevention and emergency protocol. Within this context the following priorities will be addressed, including precise commitments and deadlines;

1. To ensure that each Contracting Party meet its obligations as a Flag State within the framework of the convention on the law of the Sea and according to the rules adopted by IMO;
2. To ensure the enforcement of national legislation related to prosecution of offenders illicitly discharging polluting substances. In doing so, due attention should be paid to the need for achieving even-handed treatment of such offenders throughout the Mediterranean region;
3. To establish and implement at the national level the procedures for surveillance of sea areas under their jurisdiction;
4. To establish a comprehensive regional network for monitoring, detection and reporting of illicit discharges from ships;
5. To raise the level of enforcement and the effectiveness of prosecution of illegal discharge offenders;
6. To provide all major ports in the Mediterranean with adequate reception facilities for wastes generated on board ships, according to the provisions of Annex I and Annex V to the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships, 1973, as amended by the 1978 Protocol relating thereto (MARPOL 73/78);
7. To ensure the implementation of provisions of Annex I to MARPOL 73/78 related to carriage of heavy grades of oil and the early phasing out of single-hull oil tankers;
8. To identify appropriate places of refuge with a view to its completion in the Mediterranean region;
9. To study and identify the areas of the Mediterranean Sea where maritime safety and control of maritime traffic are in need of improvement;
10. To propose to IMO the establishment of additional Vessel Traffic Separation Schemes deemed necessary for improving the safety of navigation;

11. To set up additional Vessel Traffic Management Systems (VTMS) considered necessary as a complementary tool for improved control of maritime traffic;
12. To develop and implement sub-regional oil spill contingency plans and agreements for their enforcement, covering the entire Mediterranean region.
13. To adopt Mediterranean guidelines on emergency towing including, if appropriate, agreement on sharing towing capacity between neighboring states;
14. To set up a network of Particularly Sensitive Sea Areas (PSSA) in line with the implementation of the protocol concerning especially protected areas as well as relevant IMO rules;

The Ministers call the Euro-Mediterranean partnership to join in the implementation of the strategy.