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REPORT OF EXPERT CONSULTATION
ON
MEDITERRANEAN MARINE PARKS AND WETLANDS

Tunis, 12 - 14 January 1977

REPORT OF EXPERT CONSULTATION ON MEDITERRANEAN MARINE PARKS AND WETLANDS
TUNIS, 12-14 JANUARY 1977

1. Introduction

1.1 As part of the Action Plan for the Protection and Development of the Mediterranean Sea Area, ^{1/} adopted at the Intergovernmental Meeting on the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea (Barcelona, 28 January - 4 February 1975), the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) convened a consultation of experts to advise him on Mediterranean marine parks and wetlands. At the kind invitation of the Government of Tunisia, the Consultation was convened in Tunis from 12 through 14 January 1977.

2. Opening Ceremony

2.1 An opening ceremony to welcome the participants was held by the Government of Tunisia. The ceremony was presided over by Mr. E. Chalby, Head of the Cabinet of the Minister of Agriculture. Mr. E. Chalby welcomed the participants and pointed out that the interest which Mediterranean Governments have shown in the activities undertaken within the framework of the UNEP Mediterranean Action Plan is proof of their willingness to co-operate in order to protect and enhance the environment of the "Mare Nostrum". He assured the participating experts that the Tunisian Government would spare no effort to make the Consultation a successful one.

2.2 The representative of UNEP, Dr. S. Keckes, speaking on behalf of the Executive Director of UNEP, Dr. Mostafa K. Tolba, thanked the Tunisian authorities for their welcome and asked them to convey gratitude to the Government of Tunisia for their hospitality in hosting the Consultation. He continued by explaining that the Consultation was only one activity within a comprehensive Mediterranean Action Plan sponsored by UNEP for the protection of the Mediterranean Sea, and he briefly outlined some of the other activities within this Action Plan. He stressed that participants had been invited to the Consultation in their personal capacity to advise the Executive Director of UNEP on the scientific rationale which should be followed in the establishment and management of natural reserves, in particular marine parks and wetlands.

^{1/} Report on the Intergovernmental Meeting on the Protection of the Mediterranean, UNEP/WG.2/5.

3. Attendance

3.1 A list of participants, invited observers from United Nations bodies, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, and local observers is attached as Annex I.

3.2 The Consultation was co-chaired by Dr. S. Keckes and Dr. Z. Ben Mustapha.

4. General Discussion (agenda item 1)

4.1 Before considering the specific agenda items, Dr. S. Keckes outlined the scope, objectives and agenda of the Consultation (Annexes II and III); reviewed the background documents available to the participants (Annex IV); and opened the floor for a general exchange of views.

4.2 It was agreed that it was the responsibility of each national government to designate and manage national parks and reserves, and that each State must view the establishment of protected areas within the overall framework of its national socio-economic development. It was recommended, however, that the establishment and management of national nature reserves within the Mediterranean region should be co-ordinated, since the Mediterranean was a semi-enclosed sea which formed an ecological unity and many areas faced similar difficulties. This co-ordination could be promoted by the creation of a network of natural reserves and by exchange of information between them.

4.3 It was noted that the problems of marine parks and wetlands had already been considered in other fora which could provide useful precedents for actions on Mediterranean reserves. In particular, the International Conference on Marine Parks and Reserves, (Tokyo, 12-14 May 1975) and the Regional Meeting on the Promotion of the Establishment of Marine Parks and Reserves (Tehran, 6-10 March 1975) were noted.

4.4 It was emphasized that the Mediterranean Action Plan, and specifically the Convention for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea, ^{2/} provided a political and legal basis on which Governments could act to establish natural reserves in the Mediterranean area for the preservation and enhancement of the environment of the region.

4.5 Reference was also made to the forthcoming Intergovernmental Meeting of the Mediterranean Coastal States on the "Blue Plan" (Split, Yugoslavia, 31 January - 4 February 1977) and the Intergovernmental Consultation concerning a draft Protocol for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea against Pollution from Land-Based Sources, (Athens, Greece, 7-11 February 1977) which would provide governments of the Mediterranean Coastal States with a further opportunity to discuss reserves, in particular marine parks and wetlands.

^{2/} Adopted by the Conference of Plenipotentiaries of the Coastal States of the Mediterranean Region for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea, Barcelona, 2-16 February 1976.

5. Significance of Mediterranean Parks and Wetlands (agenda item 2)

5.1 This agenda item was briefly introduced by reviewing the contents of the background documents UNEP/WG.6/INF.4, INF.5, INF.6, INF.7, INF.8 and INF.9.

5.2 The experts realized that each Government would have to establish and manage protected zones in accordance with the political, legal and socio-economic means available to it for the protection of the environment. Since the conditions for such actions may differ from country to country, it was agreed that only general, common principles should be developed which could apply to the overall creation and management of protected areas.

5.3 Great emphasis was placed on the value of natural reserves, particularly on their socio-economic value. It was felt that the identification and management of reserves should be included in national, long-term development plans. Recognizing that agricultural, industrial and tourist development is increasing rapidly in the Mediterranean basin, the experts agreed that it would be essential to analyse properly the impact of development trends on areas identified as deserving protection. The conflict of competing demands to which inadequate development planning may lead was recognized, and it was recommended that research to assist Governments to identify potential conflicts should be promoted.

5.4 Furthermore, it was recognized that long-term development planning of protected marine areas can only be achieved through co-operation among the various authorities responsible for using and administering the marine environment.

5.5 The possible functions of marine parks and protected areas may be identified as follows:

- (i) to provide areas for protecting and studying the marine environment;
- (ii) to provide direct economic and cultural benefits for mankind, in general, and for the local population, in particular;
- (iii) to provide a fully protected core area, including a "critical habitat" ^{3/} and a buffer zone, in which limited activities are permitted for the benefit of the resource protection, tourism, and education;
- (iv) to improve regions already degraded in order to re-establish normal functioning of the ecosystem and to study the possible stages of such re-establishment and other ecosystem processes.

5.6 The experts noted that open sea zones may be important producers of organic matter which is transferred to coastal zones. The need to establish protected open seas zones in areas of high productivity, which are of the greatest

^{3/} The definition of the term "critical habitat" is given in paragraph 5 of Annex VI.

importance for the trophic equilibrium of the ecoregion and for the preservation of fisheries potential, was stressed. Such open sea reserves could be established by an agreement among Governments concerned which would control the discharge or dumping of pollutants within the protected area. ^{4/}

5.7 The safeguarding of the biological renewal processes of living resources and of the structures supporting these processes should be the basis for optimal long-term management of the marine living resources. Marine parks should encompass zones which are important for the conservation of these processes, structures and species.

5.8 The relationship between the development of aquaculture and marine reserves and wetlands was also discussed. It was noted that there is often a tendency to simplify discussions on aquaculture and not to realize that different forms of aquaculture may have varying implications for the environment. It was pointed out that practically all States bordering the Mediterranean have developed some form of aquaculture. It was agreed that research in this area should highlight existing practices and the species cultivated and should identify those forms of aquaculture which involve the least interference with natural processes.

5.9 The experts expressed the opinion that the renewable biological resources of Mediterranean wetlands are valuable national assets and are an integral part of the whole hydrological regime. As such they are important in the stabilization and retention of water and constitute delicate indicators of man's utilization of the catchment area. They are of varying character and scientific interest, and of value in terms of food production, flood control, education, recreation, aesthetics and research. This justifies the highest priority being given to their perpetuation or restoration.

5.10 The desire for short-term gain, without paying sufficient attention to the ecological consequences, has led to the depletion of Mediterranean wetlands. They are extremely vulnerable to drainage infilling, industrial, urban and agricultural pollution, disturbance of the fauna, watershed alterations, direct abstraction of water or over-exploitation of the aquifers within the catchment area for irrigation. These impacts pose serious threats to the future of many Mediterranean wetlands.

5.11 The possible functions of wetland reserves may be identified as follows:

- (i) to conserve and manage examples of the range of wetland habitats and ecosystems;
- (ii) to protect endangered habitats and species;
- (iii) to conserve and manage important breeding, migrating and wintering areas;

^{4/} See Convention for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea against Pollution and Protocol for Prevention of Pollution of the Mediterranean Sea by Dumping from Ships and Aircraft, Barcelona, 1976.

- (iv) to retain aesthetic qualities of the landscape for present and future generations;
- (v) to serve as sites providing examples of wetland areas for the purpose of tourism, recreation and education of the public;
- (vi) to serve as sites for the education and training of reserve managers;
- (vii) to serve as sites for research;
- (viii) to serve as sites for monitoring the environmental effects of man's activities;
- (ix) to serve as a source of predators to facilitate pest control in neighbouring zones where monoculture is practiced;
- (x) to constitute sources of organic matter for transfer to terrestrial ecosystems surrounding the wetland.

5.12 The role of Mediterranean wetlands as sites of importance for migrating, wintering and nesting waterfowl and other birds is relatively well documented, though more research is still required. Although some of the sites are of broad hydrobiological interest, so far hydrobiological and biological studies have seldom been carried out. Also, little is known of the many wetland sites which are of little value for birds but which may include sites of exceptional conservation value on the basis of their hydrobiological importance. These include fishery, scientific, hydrological and educational uses. The experts, therefore, strongly recommended Governments to support and promote hydrobiological and biocenological surveys of wetland sites in order to provide basic data to determine the types of water present and to assess their conservation value.

5.13 The experts realized that one of the main obstacles to adequate management of protected areas is the lack of formal administrative structures and trained scientific and technical personnel. They emphasized the need for adequate administrative and research structures and for the training of experts and competent technical staff through regional co-operation.

5.14 The urgent need for ecological research programmes was stressed. These programmes should aim at determining resource renewal capacities, possibilities of resource exploitation and conditions for adequate maintenance of ecosystem structures exposed to human influence. This research would require trained scientists and technicians; hence, it was agreed that educational activities in the field of ecology should be intensified.

5.15 It was recommended that on the basis of ecological surveys, national and regional networks of reserves should be established. These networks should, in particular, include identified "critical habitats" and buffer zones and should afford protection to a wide range of characteristic ecosystems, including those of regional ecological importance to migrating and wintering species.

5.16 The experts recommend that the Mediterranean Governments should intensify training and public information campaigns on the function and environmentally-sound use of marine parks and other protected areas.

5.17 The experts recommended that Governments sign and ratify the "Convention concerning the protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage" (UNESCO, 1972), the "Convention on Wetlands of International Importance, especially on Waterfowl Habitat" (Ramsar, 1971), and the "Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species and of Flora and Fauna" (Washington, 1973). It was also recommended that the Governments should protect the sites on the preliminary list of sites of international importance prepared for the Expert Consultation on Mediterranean Marine Parks and Wetlands, Tunis, 12-14 January 1977. It was noted that eight Mediterranean States have already ratified the UNESCO World Heritage Convention and are expected to propose outstanding marine and wetland areas in their countries for the list of sites protected under this Convention. The experts also stressed the importance of the Convention for the Protection of Migratory Animals, which is under preparation at present.

5.18 The need to harmonize national hunting and fishing regulations in order to reduce pressure on migrating stocks of birds and fish and to ensure the rational management of their stocks for future generations was stressed.

6. Review and Updating of existing information on Mediterranean Parks and Wetlands (agenda item 3)

6.1 The agenda item was introduced by a short review of the background documentation UNEP/WG.6/INF.6 and INF.10.

6.2 Realizing the preliminary nature of the information contained in these documents, the participants of the Consultation provided additional information both orally and in written "country reports" which were prepared prior to the meeting. This information and any further information which may come to light from other relevant sources will be used in updating the survey of existing and potential natural reserves of Mediterranean significance.

6.3 The need for a Directory of Mediterranean protected areas was discussed, and it was recommended that the Directory cover all protected areas of Mediterranean ecological significance, including marine parks and wetlands. The outline suggested for the Directory (UNEP/WG.6/4) was considered generally acceptable, although minor alterations were suggested for improving the quality of information (Annex V).

7. Principles and Guidelines for the Establishment and Management of Mediterranean Marine Parks and Wetlands (agenda item 4)

7.1 The Consultation reviewed and amended the draft principles and guidelines submitted to the meeting (UNEP/WG.6/3).

7.2 In view of the limited time available for the finalization of the principles and guidelines, it was agreed that the amended document should be considered as a draft which would provide a basis for the development of definitive principles and guidelines relevant to the establishment and management of Mediterranean protected areas. Furthermore, it was recommended that the principles and guidelines be sufficiently broad in scope so as to be applicable not only to marine parks and wetlands but also to all protected areas of Mediterranean significance (coastal, aquatic, island).

7.3 The principles and guidelines as amended are attached as Annex VI.

8. Recommendations to the Executive Director of UNEP (agenda item 5)

8.1 Mediterranean protected areas, in particular the aquatic parks, reserves and wetlands, should be organized into an Association of Protected Mediterranean Areas. One member of the Association should act as co-ordinator of the Association's activities.

8.2 Regular, periodic meetings should be organized for representatives of Mediterranean protected areas to exchange views on their experiences and problems.

8.3 Research on ecological problems of protected areas should be intensified and should be related to the ongoing UNEP Co-ordinated Mediterranean Pollution Monitoring and Research Programme.

8.4 An intergovernmental meeting should be convened to consider and adopt guidelines and technical principles for the establishment and management of Mediterranean protected areas. The report of this Expert Consultation should be used in the preparatory work of the recommended intergovernmental meeting.

8.5 A Directory of Mediterranean protected areas should be prepared and kept under constant review.

8.6 The Governments of Mediterranean States should be informed of the work of this Expert Consultation. The forthcoming Intergovernmental Meeting of Mediterranean Coastal States on the "Blue Plan" (Split, Yugoslavia, 31 January - 4 February 1977) and the Intergovernmental Consultation concerning a draft Protocol for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea against Pollution from Land-Based Sources (Athens, Greece, 7-11 February 1977) should provide a useful opportunity for circulating this information.

9. Closing of the Consultation (agenda item 6)

9.1 The Consultation adopted the Recommendations found in paragraphs 8.1 to 8.6 above, gave relatively precise instructions for amending the Draft Technical Principles and Guidelines for the Establishment and Management of Mediterranean Protected Areas (Annex VI), and offered general comments on the other parts of the draft report. It was left to the secretariat of UNEP to make the necessary editorial and structural changes in the report. 5/

10. Closing Ceremony

10.1 A closing ceremony, presided over by H.E. the Minister responsible for relations with the National Assembly, Mr. Moncef Belhadj Amor, was held by the Government of Tunisia.

10.2 At the closing ceremony, Dr. S. Keckes summarized the main results of the Consultation and thanked the Tunisian Government for hosting the meeting and for the hospitality extended to the meeting's participants.

10.3 In his closing remarks, Mr. Moncef Belhadj Amor expressed the satisfaction of the Government of Tunisia that the Consultation was successful and emphasized the deep interest with which Tunisia participates in the activities aimed at the protection of the Mediterranean Sea.

5/ One expert expressed reservations with regard to the report and the technical conclusions of the meeting, since a unique final text of the report was not adopted by the Consultation.

ANNEX I

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ANNEX II

SCOPE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE CONSULTATION*

As part of a comprehensive Action Plan for the protection and development of the Mediterranean Sea Area, adopted at the Intergovernmental Meeting on the Protection of the Mediterranean (Barcelona, 28 January - 4 February 1975), a consultation of experts on Mediterranean marine parks and wetlands will be convened by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in Tunis (12 - 14 January 1977) at the kind invitation of the Government of Tunisia.

The Consultation is expected to advise the Executive Director of UNEP on:

- (a) the present status of Mediterranean marine parks and wetlands, including relevant national legislation.
- (b) the importance and significance of Mediterranean marine parks and wetlands as:
 - (i) safe "sanctuaries" for the endangered indigenous Mediterranean species (seals, for instance);
 - (ii) breeding grounds necessary for the maintenance of exploitable stocks of migratory marine species;
 - (iii) natural habitats for birds migrating to, from, or through the Mediterranean;
 - (iv) reserves of typical Mediterranean ecosystems as reference systems for scientific research, as pools of specific genetic material and as areas needed for public education.
- (c) principles and guidelines for the establishment and management of Mediterranean marine parks and wetlands.
- (d) measures to be taken for the improvement of the present situation.

Based on the advice of the Consultation the Executive Director of UNEP will decide on the steps to be taken in order to bring the recommendations of the Consultation to the attention of the Governments of the Mediterranean States and to ensure action aimed at the protection and development of the Mediterranean marine parks and wetlands.

*Distributed to the participants of the Consultation as UNEP/WG.6/INF.2

ANNEX III

AGENDA*

1. Opening of Consultation
2. Significance of Mediterranean marine parks and wetlands
3. Review and updating of existing information on Mediterranean marine parks and wetlands
4. Principles and guidelines for the establishment and management of Mediterranean national parks, including marine parks and wetlands
5. Recommendations
6. Closing of the Consultation

* Distributed to the participants of the Consultation as UNEP/WG.6/1

ANNEX IV

LIST OF DOCUMENTS*

UNEP/WG.6/1	Provisional Agenda
UNEP/WG.6/2	Annotated Provisional Agenda
UNEP/WG.6/3	Draft Technical Principles and Guidelines for the Establishment and Management of Mediterranean Marine Parks and Wetlands
UNEP/WG.6/4	Draft Outline for a Directory of Mediterranean National Parks, including Marine Parks and Wetlands
UNEP/WG.6/INF.1	List of Documents
UNEP/WG.6/INF.2	Scope and Objectives of the Consultation
UNEP/WG.6/INF.3	Activities of the United Nations Environment Programme for the Protection and Development of the Mediterranean Region
UNEP/WG.6/INF.4	Critical Marine Habitats
UNEP/WG.6/INF.5	A Preliminary Classification of Coastal and Marine Environments
UNEP/WG.6/INF.6	A Preliminary Review of the Wetlands of International Importance in the Mediterranean Region
UNEP/WG.6/INF.7	Endangered Species of the Mediterranean Ecosystem
UNEP/WG.6/INF.8	The Role of Natural Reserves in Support of Bird Migration across the Mediterranean Basin
UNEP/WG.6/INF.9	Importance of Natural Reserves for Mediterranean Fisheries and Aquaculture
UNEP/WG.6/INF.10	Survey of Existing and Potential Marine Parks and Reserves in the Mediterranean Region
UNEP/WG.6/INF.11	List of Participants

*Distributed to the participants of the Consultation as UNEP/WG.6/INF.1

ANNEX V

DRAFT OUTLINE FOR DIRECTORY OF
MEDITERRANEAN NATIONAL PARKS AND OTHER PROTECTED AREAS
WITH A LIST OF ENDANGERED AND PROTECTED SPECIES*

Draft Table of Contents for the Directory

1. Introduction
2. Nomenclature
 - 2.1 Classification of national parks or protected areas
 - 2.2 Biotic provinces
3. Headings for the Directory
4. Description of national parks and protected areas
 - 4.1 Albania
 - 4.2 Algeria
 - 4.3 Cyprus
 - 4.4 Egypt
 - 4.5 France
 - 4.6 Greece
 - 4.7 Israel
 - 4.8 Italy
 - 4.9 Lebanon
 - 4.10 Libyan Arab Republic
 - 4.11 Malta
 - 4.12 Monaco
 - 4.13 Morocco
 - 4.14 Spain
 - 4.15 Syrian Arab Republic
 - 4.16 Tunisia
 - 4.17 Turkey
 - 4.18 Yugoslavia
5. Endangered Species
6. Protected Species

*Distributed to the participants of the Consultation as UNEP/WG.6/4

2. NOMENCLATURE

For the description of national parks and other protected areas a uniform nomenclature should be used. The following descriptions are largely based on practices adopted in previous descriptions and recommendations developed by IUCN.

Guidance on the detailed information which should be included in describing each national park or other protected area may be found in Chapter 3.

2.1 CLASSIFICATION OF NATIONAL PARKS AND OTHER PROTECTED AREAS

2.1.1 National Parks and Related Reserves

A national park is an area of national territory for which the central government authority has established the following requirements:

- status of general protection;
- size in excess of a certain minimum;
- protected status adequately maintained;

and in which the central authority permits or actually encourages tourism.

The term "related reserve" is applied to those protected areas which qualify as national parks, but which are known by other names.

National parks and related reserves should derive their legal protection from the highest competent authority (central government) having jurisdiction over the region in which the area is situated.

2.1.2 Provincial Parks and Related Reserves

Provincial parks and related reserves, regardless of their official names, are those reserves which satisfy the criteria for national parks with the exception that their statutory legal protection stems from an authority other than the highest competent authority (central government).

2.1.3 Strict nature reserves

Strict nature reserves consist of natural areas set aside for the protection of nature and for scientific research, and kept strictly free from any disturbance. They are not open to tourism nor public visits except under highly restrictive control.

2.1.4 Managed nature reserves

Managed nature reserves are protected natural areas which meet the same criteria established for strict nature reserves with the exception that they are actively managed to protect particular species or communities. They are usually known under various names, such as sanctuaries, wildlife and game refuges, or game, botanical or zoological reserves.

2.1.5 Multiple-use reserves

Multiple-use reserves are actively managed areas in which conservation of nature is only one, and often not the most important, of several purposes for which they acquired protected status. Other purposes may include the production of wildlife, fisheries, timber or forage for livestock, recreation, the protection of watershed for soil stability, water yield or hydroelectric power, etc.

2.1.6 Archaeological or historic reserves

Only those archaeological or historic reserves which include areas having important functions in nature conservation will be included in this Directory.

2.2 BICTIC PROVINCES

The following tentative classification of the biotic provinces, recommended as relevant to this Directory, is based on IUCN Occasional Paper No. 18, Classification of Biogeographical Provinces of the World, by M.D.F. Järvardyr.

- West European forest
- West Mediterranean sclerophyll
- Balkan sclerophyll
- Tyrrhenian Islands
- Aegean Islands
- West Asian sclerophyll
- North African sclerophyll
- Iberian highlands
- Atlas highlands

As this classification covers mainly the terrestrial provinces, including specific island ecosystems, an adequate classification for the marine provinces will have to be developed.

3. HEADINGS FOR THE DIRECTORY

1. Name

Name in the language of the respective country.

2. Postal address

Full postal address in one or several of the United Nations' languages, including POB, telephone and telex numbers and telegram abbreviations.

3. Operational responsibility

Structure (government, ministry, province, community, corporation, etc.) sponsoring the national park or protected area or responsible for its operation and management.

4. Executive officer

Full name and title of the executive officer (director, manager, etc.).

5. Classification

The type of national park or protected area according to one of the following categories:

- national park or related reserve
- provincial park or related reserve
- strict nature reserve
- managed nature reserve
- multiple-use reserve
- archaeological or historic reserve.

For further explanation see Chapter 2.

6. Legal protection

The nature and extent of the legal protection.

7. Date of establishment

Date of establishment with full reference to the legal document establishing the area as permanently protected and providing sufficiently strict safeguards to achieve the objectives of conservation.

8. Location

The geographic location descriptively and in terms of the extreme geographic co-ordinates with a precision of 1'.

9. Surface and altitude/depth

The surface in Km² and the extreme altitudes or depths (in the case of marine parks) in m.

10. Land tenure

The type of ownership (government, state, communal, private, corporate, etc. property).

11. Physical features

Description of physical features, including geographic and geological characteristics.

12. Climate or hydrographic conditions

General characteristics of the climate, seasonal differences and extremes. In addition, for marine parks, wetlands and rivers, the prevailing hydrographic conditions and their seasonal variations.

13. Flora

The most important floristic elements, using their scientific names. Rare or endemic species specifically mentioned.

14. Fauna

The most important faunistic elements, using their scientific names. Rare or endemic species specifically mentioned.

15. Biocenoses

Characteristic biocenoses using standard terminology and reference to biotic provinces (see Chapter 2), when applicable.

16. Ecological disturbances or deficiencies

Forest fires, overgrazing, overfishing, tourism, etc.

17. Relevance to tourism or education

Number of visitors annually; recreational or education facilities (hotels, public roads, camping sites, picnic areas, skiing grounds, zoos, aquaria, permanent exhibitions, etc.).

18. Management

Description of management practices, in particular the management of natural resources.

19. Scientific research

Type of research carried out in the national park or protected area, results obtained, research facilities in the national park or protected area.

20. Publications

List of general publications describing the national park or protected area (author, title, publisher, year of publication, language of publication) and of scientific publications resulting from research listed under 19).

ANNEX VI

DRAFT TECHNICAL PRINCIPLES AND GUIDELINES FOR THE
ESTABLISHMENT AND MANAGEMENT OF MEDITERRANEAN PROTECTED AREAS

1. Principles

- (1) The Mediterranean is a semi-enclosed sea with an overall residence time of about 80 years. It is also a sea heavily utilized by man and, at present, a heavily polluted sea. The Mediterranean basin contains significant freshwater, brackish and salt wetlands which are an integral part of the whole hydrological regime. The health and character of the Mediterranean is influenced by land-based sources of nutrients, sediments and by pollutants, and as such, it is a continuum between land and sea.
- (2) The Mediterranean is potentially a rich sea in terms of its most valuable long-term aquatic resources, i.e. renewable living resources. However, the utilization of these resources on a sustainable basis is greatly endangered, primarily as a result of overexploitation, but also from habitat destruction and pollution.
- (3) The Mediterranean bridges three continents, Africa, Asia and Europe. Its wetland and marine resources - especially those which are pelagic or migratory - are the common property of many nations, and are of particular interest to those States which border the sea. Resource management requires integrated, jointly planned inter-governmental action, since actions taken by one government often affect the interests of another State.
- (4) Man's impact on the Mediterranean is variable in space, time, intensity and direction. The most significant and often detrimental impacts are caused by dredging, ill-planned coastal development, over-utilization of aquifers, wetlands and estuarine modification, bulkheading, siltation from rivers and pollution, in particular from land-based sources.
- (5) The Mediterranean basin as the heritage of present generations and of those to come comprises a variety of ecosystems, each of which is important for the Mediterranean ecoregion as a whole and for its present and future utilization. Areas of particular importance, which may be termed "critical habitats" and upon which rest most of the Mediterranean environment's productivity and character, may be defined as places where important life functions and special ecological processes occur. As such, their identification is vital for the preservation of both economic and natural resources. Typical examples of "critical habitats" are estuaries, wetlands, upwelling areas and breeding zones which often have the highest natural bioproductivity on earth.
- (6) Aside from practical benefits, protected areas and reserves are valuable to man as records of man's past and as examples of man's interrelationship with nature. The eventual recreational and educational value of these areas largely depends on their proper protection and management.
- (7) The important traditional knowledge and ancient methods of managing natural resources should not be ignored by modern training and should be included in managerial rules established from now onwards for areas under discussion.
- (8) Environmental management in the Mediterranean region requires, inter alia, carefully-planned zoning for various activities as a means to achieve harmonious eco-development. A vital part of this zoning is the establishment of an integrated

network of protected areas, such as reserves, marine parks and wetlands. In this way, "critical Mediterranean habitats" may be safeguarded and used as reference sites for research aimed at providing scientific information on the magnitude of changes caused by man's activities in the Mediterranean ecoregion. In safeguarding "critical habitats" the national needs for socio-economic development must also be taken into consideration.

(9) Mediterranean reserves have a great importance and significance as:

- breeding grounds necessary for the maintenance of exploitable stocks of economically important marine species;
- natural habitats for birds migrating to, from or through the Mediterranean region;
- typical and "critical" Mediterranean ecosystems;
- reference sources for scientific research;
- pools of genetic material and safe "sanctuaries" for endangered, indigenous Mediterranean species;
- areas for public environmental education;
- sites of historical, geographical, archaeological, hydrological and ecological interest;
- coastal areas especially requiring land-use management.

(10) The designation of reserves and the degree of legal protection conferred upon them falls within the responsibility of the individual Mediterranean governments.

(11) It would be desirable for each State to follow as far as possible the same basic principles and guidelines for the establishment and management of reserves in the Mediterranean region in order to achieve a harmonious protection and development of the Mediterranean ecoregion as a whole. Close collaboration between countries is desirable if reserves extend over national borders.

(12) The existence of protected areas - established in the interest, and for the advantage and enjoyment of the people - should not be viewed as hindering development but as an approach to the achievement of optimal long-term development in the ecological and socio-economic interest of the region and its inhabitants.

(13) An intercountry exchange of information should be developed among authorities responsible for the management of reserves and scientists studying them.

2. General Guidelines

(1) The selection of areas to be treated as protected areas (such as marine parks and wetlands) must be based on biogeographic/geomorphologic data, as well as on ecological, cultural and socio-economic criteria. Using this approach, a network of habitats can be effectively protected which will ultimately contribute to the adequate protection and development of the Mediterranean ecoregion.

(2) Management policies for the protected zones should be defined and implemented by national authorities. However, it must be taken into account that natural boundaries of "critical habitat" (zones) do not necessarily coincide with national political boundaries, divisions at the shore between land and sea, or even contour lines (for example: the conveniences of the 200m. continental shelf contour, the low tide contour, or the 6m. wetland definition). Natural units should be determined according to the characteristics of the ecosystem and their ecological processes (for example: nutrient cycling, system predictability and stability, migration, sediment transport, and current structure). However, since marine natural units or those for migratory species are very large and dynamic, single parks and reserves may not include these units in their entirety.

(3) Habitats and species result from ecological processes: each must be seen within the framework of its support system. Thus "critical habitats" may be included in the core areas of protected zones, but each core area depends on buffer zones for its continuity. Proper management of the core areas will also depend on management of the buffer zones.

(4) Therefore, a network of protected areas in the Mediterranean requires the establishment of a high degree of national control over identified core areas, in which man's deleterious activities, and in some cases even his presence, are minimized or eliminated. The size of the core areas may be variable.

(5) The buffer zones should be managed in such a way that man's activities are compatible with ecological processes. Buffer areas are almost always large. Certain buffering activities should be controlled in the Mediterranean as a whole (for instance: protection from pollution).

(6) The creation and successful management of protected areas require the following specific national actions:

- adoption and enforcement of adequate national legislation;
- designation of a responsible national authority equipped with suitably qualified personnel to manage each protected area;
- standardization of scientific methodology used in selection and monitoring of protected areas;
- cognizance of past practices;
- regulation of non-compatible uses of an area.

(7) National environmental education programmes should be promoted in order to increase the public awareness of the need for protected areas and to justify their continued existence for coming generations.

Detailed elaboration of certain principles and guidelines relevant to marine protected areas can be found in the proceedings of the International Conference on Marine Parks and Reserves (Tokyo, 12-14 May 1975) and of the Regional Meeting on the Promotion of the Establishment of Marine Parks and Reserves (Tehran, 6-10 March 1975).