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INTRODUCTION

The Inter-Agency Steering Committee, at its fourth meeting, which was organized in Athens in November 2003 decided to organize a fifth meeting in order to evaluate the activities undertaken in the period November 2003 - June 2004 and to decide on the accomplishment of the remaining activities.

The main purpose of this report is to review the activities undertaken within the Umbrella Project and three sub-projects coordinated by WHO/EURO, PAP/RAC and CP/RAC, during the period September 2003 - May 2004, to point out the main obstacles in the implementation of the actions, to identify corrective measures which were taken, to present lessons learned, and to elaborate the programme of activities until the end of the Project.

The structure of this report follows the proposed Agenda of the Meeting. After this first introductory chapter, the second chapter presents the progress report for the period September 2003 - May 2004, as well as the programme, timetable and recommendations, where appropriate, for the activities planned until the end of the project. The third chapter contains the conclusions.

1. PROGRESS REPORT FOR THE PERIOD SEPTEMBER 2003 - MAY 2004 AND ACTIVITIES PLANNED UNTIL THE END OF THE PROJECT

1.1 Project Coordination

1.1.1 Coordination at the project level

The project is managed by the Coordinating Unit for the Mediterranean Action Plan, where a small Project Management team was established. The Project Manager reports directly to the MAP Coordinator and UNEP/DGEF. In his activity the Project Manager closely cooperates with the MED POL Coordinator, the MED POL/WHO/EURO Officer and the Directors of PAP/RAC, SPA/RAC and CP/RAC.

Apart from the daily coordination of all activities specified in the project document and the preparation of contracts with the consultants hired under the Umbrella Project and MoUs, the GEF Project Manager has done the following:

- Prepared a half-yearly progress report for the period July-December 2003;
- Prepared a self-evaluation report for 2003;
- Prepared a revision of the project document in 2003, and 2004;
- Prepared the background documents for the fourth and fifth meetings of the Inter-Agency Steering Committee;
- Organized fourth and fifth meetings of the Inter-Agency Steering Committee and the third meeting of the Coordination Committee;
- Prepared the reports of the fourth meeting of the Inter-Agency Steering Committee and the third meeting of the Coordination Committee;
- Organized, together with MED POL, and also attended two regional and one sub-regional training courses;
- Organized and coordinated activities for the printing of regional plans and guidelines (25 volumes);
- Organized and coordinated activities on the preparation of pre-investment studies;
- Organized the printing of regional plans and guidelines (25 volumes);
- Attended the First International Symposium on Environmental Management, Zagreb, Croatia, 1-3 October 2003, and presented a paper on the Project;
- Attended the Workshop on the project "Enhancing public/private partnership for new financial arrangements to eliminate land based pollution: promoting transfer of Best Available Techniques (BAT), Roma, 2-3 Feb. 2004;
- Attended the international CoastWetChange Conference organized by CORILA under the auspices of UNESCO on 26-28 April 2004, Venice, and presented a paper on activities undertaken within the Project on the protection of the biodiversity of the Mediterranean Sea;
- Participated in the preparation of the Concept Paper for a new GEF Mediterranean Strategic Partnership Project.

Inter-Agency Steering Committee

The fourth meeting of the Inter-Agency Steering Committee was held in Athens on 4 November 2003. The meeting reviewed activities implemented during 2003. It was agreed that all efforts should be made to avoid any further extension of the current GEF

Project. If absolutely necessary it could be further prolonged, possibly by another six months, within the existing financial framework, but no decision would be taken until mid-2004, taking into account the current state of the preparation of the NAPs.

Coordination Committee

The Committee met for the third time in Athens on 5 November 2003. The national GEF Coordinators were informed of the details of the planned activities, particularly on the process for the formulation of National Action Plans to address pollution from land-based activities, and the preparation of pre-investment studies. The meeting pointed out the establishment of the close cooperation between the countries and the implementing agencies for the success of the project. The report of the third meeting was prepared and disseminated to the members of the Committee and the participants of the meeting.

Donors meeting

From the conclusions of the fourth meeting of the IASC: *"In a general discussion in which several participants took part, it was explained that the planned donors' meeting(s) had been postponed. The dates set had been over-ambitious and could not be met in view of the state of preparation of the NAPs. Timing and careful preparation, in which the Secretariat would have to play a proactive role, were essential. No rehearsal would be allowed and an unsuccessful meeting would prove disastrous. It was agreed that, in any case, the pre-investment studies would first have to be ready. An overall strategy should be presented to the international community and the results of the GEF Project should be publicized in a showcase meeting. The SAP would have to be operational and the NAPs and hot spots would need to be complete – the idea was that the donors would ensure that a bridge was built between the preparatory phase and the implementation of the Project's goals. That effectively meant that it should be held sometime in 2005, after the Project timeframe, but no later – though it was warned that donors would be "booked up" a long time ahead and some might have already prepared their schedules until 2006. The event might take the form of a conference while a special committee might be set up to ensure that the process was an ongoing one. A consultant should draw up a list of potential donors and begin working with them."*

Preparatory activities for the organization of the meeting, such as the identification of addresses of institutions to be invited to attend the meeting and preliminary contacts with potential donors and partners were undertaken.

1.2 Updating of the Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis (TDA)

In March 2004 MED POL submitted the final version of the updated TDA. The GEF secretariat considered that it still needed some fine tuning in order to meet the standard GEF format; as a result, an international consultant, who possessed extensive experience through his involvement in the preparation of TDA in other regions, was hired to finalize the document. The final draft is expected to be ready before the meeting of the Inter-Agency Steering Committee.

1.3 Pollution hot spots and sensitive areas

During the reporting period, three more countries (Egypt, Turkey, and Slovenia) accomplished the procurement procedure for the selection of a consultant, which increased the number of the GEF eligible countries which selected consultants to 6. An MoU was signed between MAP and the relevant country's implementing agency. As a result, Slovenia and Turkey have already contracted the consultant. Syria issued the call for proposal in March, and the deadline for the submission of proposals was 13 May 2004. So far, Bosnia and Herzegovina submitted the first part of the report, but it was not approved, and amendments were required.

As stated in previous reports, ICS/UNIDO has directly supported the preparation of one pre-investment study in Croatia. The study was accomplished in September 2003.

As, reported previously, FFEM, as the main partner for this action, has decided that it would directly support the preparation of pre-investment studies in four countries (Algeria, Lebanon, Morocco and Tunisia) by applying the same procedure, which was applied to the other countries. The MAP provides technical assistance in preparing ToRs for a consultant, in selecting a consultant, and in the monitoring and evaluation of its activities. So far, a request for a country visit was received from Algeria and Morocco and relevant ToRs were prepared.

Up to now, only one GEF eligible country, Libya, is not participating in this activity.

The development of the process of preparing pre-investment studies is given in the following table:

	Date of mission	Mission report sent to country	Approval from country received	Letter of Agreement signed	Evaluation report sent by country	Contract signed for consultant
ALBANIA	3 July 2002	12 July 2002	July 2002	24 October 2002	3 July 2003	November 2003
BOSNIA	19 May 2002	4 June 2002	3 July 2002	15 July 2002	December 2002	29 April 2003
EGYPT	10 May 2002	4 June 2002	June 2002	10 July 2002	24 January 2004	-
SLOVENIA	10 May 2003	21 July 2003	25 July 2003	10 September 2003	20 January 2004	8 March 2004
SYRIA	6 September 2002	3 October 2002	April 2002	4 April 2003	-	-
TURKEY	22 May 2002	14 June 2002	10 November 2003	12 December 2003	March 2004	11 March 2004

As can be seen from the previous table, the process of preparing pre-investment studies was initiated mid-2002 (in Slovenia it was done one year later), by a country visit to re-validate the proposed pollution hot spots, to prepare ToRs, to assess the cost for the preparation of a pre-investment study, and to select an implementing agency. However, the further development of the process in all countries was much slower than planned and expected for different reasons, which were out of the control of the Project Manager. Below is a brief description for each country.

In Albania, the selection of the consultant was delayed due to changes personnel in the Ministry of Environment, which had been selected as the implementing agency. The Inception Report was prepared by the selected consultant in February 2004 and submitted to the Implementing Agency, but it was only forwarded for evaluation by the end of May.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the procurement procedure was done as agreed, but the selected consultant delivered the first report beyond the agreed deadline. In order to enhance the activities and to ensure that outputs would be in compliance with ToRs, the Project Manager visited the country and met the consultant and local officials. Despite this, the delivered output failed to meet requirements specified in the ToRs and the consultant was required to amend it.

In Egypt, all decisions concerning the procurement procedure were taken at Ministerial level, which caused unexpected delays.

In Slovenia, a call for proposals was issued twice, because following the first call only one proposal was received, which in accordance with national regulations, required renewal of the procedure.

In Syria, the initial activities in preparing the procurement procedure were slow, and in the course of the process the government was reshuffled and the Ministry of Housing and Utilities, which was selected as the implementing agency, was reorganized. The action was then undertaken by the new Ministry of Local Administration and the Environment, which finally initiated the procurement procedure. The call for proposals was advertised and the evaluation of the proposals received is underway.

In Turkey, the Iller Bank was initially selected as the implementing agency. After the expert mission was organized, the National GEF Coordinator left his post in the Ministry, and it took some time to get an approval for the draft TORs. A national election took place and a new government formed, which brought about changes in personnel in the Ministry of Environment and consequently all activities were delayed for some time. When new contacts were established, the local communities requested to take over the action from the Iller Bank. Finally, when the procurement process was accomplished, a new MoU for hiring the selected consultant was sent to the local authorities for signature. In the meantime, due to the results of a local election, the Mayor lost his position. After a short time, a new Mayor was elected, who was eligible to sign the MoU which had been re-sent.

The current status in all countries is within the deadline adopted by the fourth meeting of the IASC and which was approved when the project was last revised, except for Syria,

as shown in the following table. However, the process to hire a consultant and to award a contract may be achieved by 15 July, which would leave five months to prepare the study.

In order to enhance the activities and ensure the accomplishment of the process by the end of 2004, as it was planned, contacts with the countries and the selected consultants will be intensified. In addition, the time planned for the evaluation and approval of draft reports would be shortened as much as possible, in order to leave more time to the consultants for their activities.

Deadline for relevant activities for the preparation of pre-investment studies

	Activity	Deadline
1.	Publication of a request for proposals	February 29
2.	Evaluation of technical and financial proposal	March 31
3.	Draft Evaluation Report	April 30
4.	Review of Evaluation Report	May 31
5.	Contract award	June 30
6.	Consultant mobilization	July 31
7.	Inception Report	August 31
8.	Progress Report	September 30
9.	Draft Final Report	November 30
10.	Final Report	December 31

1.4 Regional cooperative actions

All Regional Plans and Regional Guidelines, which have been prepared, were submitted to and approved by the meeting of the MAP Focal Points. In addition, two Regional Plans were submitted to and formally adopted by the meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention.

All documents were translated into French and all of them were printed or were prepared for printing within the MAP Technical Report Series (25 volumes). In addition, the two regional plans which were adopted by the CPs will be published in the Arabic language as well.

1.5 Capacity building

MED POL is in charge of organizing training courses on river pollution monitoring. During the reporting period a regional training course was organized in Orleans (France) from 18 to 19 December 2003. This training course was mainly supported by FFEM, and it was hosted by IFEN. Eighteen participants from 13 countries attended the training course, as well as 3 regional experts from France and Greece as lecturers.

The material for the training course, which had originally been prepared in English, was translated into Arabic, Croatian, French, and Turkish with the organization of other sub-regional/national training courses in local languages in mind.

A sub-regional training course in French for national experts from Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia was organized on 25-26 March 2004 in Tunis (Tunisia), hosted by the Tunisian ANPE at the premises of CITET. Twenty-nine experts attended the training course.

MED POL is planning to organize four additional training courses before the end of this year (see the table): One sub-regional training course in Croatian for experts from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, and Slovenia is planned in Split (Croatia) on 3-4 June 2004. One sub-regional training course in Arabic for national experts from Egypt, Lebanon and Syria is planned in September 2004, while one national training course in Turkish is planned for October 2004. In addition, one more national training course in Albanian was added to the originally planned four national training courses in order to train national experts from all the GEF eligible countries that have larger rivers. The costs for the organization of this training course will be covered from savings from other training courses. A national expert was hired to translate the training material into Albanian.

As regards capacity building and particularly the national training courses implemented by WHO/MED POL, the following were conducted, utilizing the same background support training material that was translated to the respective languages of the countries, where the courses were held:

- Two national training courses on pollution inspection were held in Albania, from 6-8 October 2003, and from 9-11 October 2003. In view of the increased participation it was decided to hold two training courses in order to cover all the participants. A total of 48 trainees attended the courses.
- Three national training courses on pollution inspection were held during October and November in Croatia, Bosnia & Herzegovina and Slovenia. In total, 70 experts attended the courses held in their national language.
- A national training course on pollution inspection was held in Arabic in Tunis from 10-14 May. Thirty experts participated in the course.
- A national training course on municipal wastewater treatment plant operation and management was held in Algiers from 15-17 May 2004 with the assistance of an invited expert. Thirty participants attend the course which was conducted in Arabic.

It is anticipated that two national training courses on pollution inspection will be held in the second semester of 2004. Preliminary activities have already begun, and the training courses will take place in Damascus, Syria, and in Algiers, Algeria. Discussions are being held for one training course on wastewater treatment plant operation and management, to take place in Turkey.

In addition to the activities related to training courses under the responsibilities of WHO/MED POL, a regional training course on wastewater reclamation and use, which was not included in the signed sub-project document, will be held probably in November 2004, using the support material that is under preparation. This training course will be organized with the support of FFEM.

Timetable for the organization of training courses

Training Course	Implementation	Planned Date/Place
Sub-regional on river pollution monitoring for Croatia, Slovenia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina	MED POL	3-4 June 2004, Split
Sub-regional on river pollution monitoring for Egypt, Syria and Lebanon	MED POL	September, Lebanon or Egypt
National on river pollution monitoring for Turkey	MED POL	September, Turkey
National on river pollution monitoring for Albania	MED POL	October, Albania
National training course on pollution inspection	WHO/MED POL	21-24 June, Damascus, Syria
National training course on pollution inspection	WHO/MED POL	23-25 May, Algiers, Algeria
National training course on wastewater treatment plant operation and management	WHO/MED POL	Turkey
Regional training course on wastewater reclamation and use	WHO/MED POL	November

1.6 Sustainability of SAP MED

ACTIVITIES IMPLEMENTED SINCE SEPTEMBER 2003 - MAY 2004

Since November 2003, countries have begun to sign the MoUs for the preparation of the "Proposals of economic instruments to address marine pollution from land-based activities for the NAPs". MoUs have been signed by Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Algeria, while a contract has been made in Croatia, Lebanon, Morocco, Syria, and Turkey. Contracts are likely to be signed with Albania and Slovenia. Some replies have been received from Egypt and Tunisia, but the MoUs have not yet been signed.

During the reporting period, pilot projects were being carried out towards the implementation of the proposed economic instruments. The pilot project carried out in Bosnia and Herzegovina implemented the new model of calculation of the wastewater charge, and surprisingly it showed that the cost is lower than the present charge. The project continues to propose solutions for the untreated wastewater, currently discharged into the river Neretva. Remaining projects made less progress in their implementation.

Simulation guidelines, which consist of the methodology for the simulation of the pilot project results, finalised in July 2003, were revised in order to meet the pilot project needs. The simulation is to be finished by July 1st. Simulation of the baseline pilot project will be finalised in May 2004.

Policy guidelines are in preparation. The deadline for submission is the end of June. The purpose of these guidelines is to assist relevant authorities in introducing/adapting economic instruments to combat marine pollution from land-based sources and activities.

In order to promote economic instruments for environmental protection developed in the framework of the GEF project, the project component "Development of economic instruments for sustainable implementation of SAP" was presented at the MedCoast Conference, held in Ravenna, Italy, in October 2003.

In February, the PAP/RAC Director, and the Project Coordinator participated at the meeting "Enhancing Public/Private Partnership for New Financial Arrangements to Eliminate Land-Based Pollution: Promoting Transfer of Best Available Techniques (BAT)" organised by CIRPS and UNEP/GPA that was held in Rome. The GEF project component "Sustainability of SAP" and the results achieved were presented, and the possibilities for co-operation discussed.

In March, the PAP/RAC Director, and the Project Co-ordinator participated at the training course for the preparation of Sectoral Plans and National Action Plans (NAPs) in the framework of the Strategic Action Programme (SAP) in Izmit, Turkey. The GEF project component "Sustainability of SAP" results were presented. One of the outputs from this project component will be the "Proposals of economic instruments to address marine pollution from land-based activities for the NAPs". Proposals were given for establishing co-operation and collaboration between the experts preparing proposals of economic instruments and the teams working on the NAP preparation, as well as for the participation of the experts on economic instruments in the NAP preparation.

OBSTACLES FACED DURING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ACTIVITIES

The implementation of the baseline pilot project was stopped with the change of government in Croatia in January 2004 and the delayed change of the Law on Environment. Therefore, the project implementation was not possible until summer 2004. During the first 5 months of 2004, simulation of the introduction of the tourist eco-charge was carried out. The process lasted longer than foreseen.

Delay in the finalisation of the Implementation Report in Algeria was caused by the effects of the earthquake in the country, which delayed all activities of the Ministry of Environment.

The Implementation Report for the Kvarner pilot project has been prolonged because of the change in the Law on the Maritime Domain adopted in December 2003. In order to take into account the changes of the law, and the opinion of the Port Authorities on the pilot project issue, in line with the amended legislation, more time was needed for its elaboration.

No results were achieved from the Albanian pilot project during the reporting period. The reason is probably the lack of interest of the new authorities in economic instruments and in the project.

WHAT WAS DONE TO OVERCOME THE OBSTACLES?

The Law on Environment in Croatia should enter into force during the second half of 2004. The Major of Hvar, and the Town Council are not in favour of the introduction of the tourist eco-charge as a pilot project, but want this instrument to be introduced in the law. Proposals for the change in the law will be sent again to the new government officials.

The report on implementation for the Kvarner pilot project has been sent back for revision. The new version is expected by the end of May.

Additional clarifications and discussions have been held in Algeria, in the framework of the PAP/RAC CAMP. However, no Report on Implementation has yet been achieved from the team working on the pilot project. A new member was included in the team in May 2004.

Permanent contacts are maintained with the Albanian EI NFP in order to find the solution to the problem.

ACTIVITIES PLANNED UNTIL THE END OF THE PROJECT

Activity	Timing	Output	Responsibility
Dissemination of the proposals for introducing new / adapting existing economic instruments	January - September 2004		PAP/RAC
Implementation of proposed measures in economic instruments' application at national and regional level, with special emphasis on making SAP MED programme sustainable	October 2002 – September 2004	Improvement of national legislation on economic instruments; sustainable implementation of SAP MED	National govt. institutions, NFPs
Preparation of the baseline pilot project	January 2002 – July 2004	Diagnostic Analysis Report on Procedure of and measures for development and implementation of EI Report on simulation	Countries - EI NFP PAP/RAC
Implementation of five additional pilot projects in selected countries	March 2002 – September 2004	Four Diagnostic Analyses Four Reports on Procedure of and measures for development and implementation of EI Four Reports on simulation	Countries - EI NFP PAP/RAC
Evaluation of newly introduced / adapted economic instruments at regional and national level	January - November 2004	Final evaluation paper on effects of the Project on introducing new / adapting existing economic instruments	National institutions and experts PAP/RAC

MEASURES TAKEN TO ENSURE THEIR SMOOTH IMPLEMENTATION

Initiative has been taken to ensure collaboration between the teams working on the NAP preparation, and the EI NFPs preparing "Proposals on economic instruments for NAPs". A special contract will be offered from the GEF project component on NAPs for involvement of the EI NFPs in the NAP preparation.

For each output, guidelines and the outline of the document have been provided, and methodology has been developed and sent to the teams working on the preparation of the outputs.

Policy guidelines for economic instruments are in preparation. The purpose of these guidelines is to provide assistance to the authorities that will introduce/adapt economic instruments to combat marine pollution from the land based sources and activities in future.

The teams and/or the experts in charge of the outputs who are late in their submission have been reminded constantly by phone and e-mail.

Transparency of the project is ensured by the maintenance of the "Development of the economic instruments" web site.

1.7 Public participation

The third meeting of the Inter-Agency Steering Committee decided to modify the action on public participation in such a way that a document on a common methodology, based on the Aarhus Convention principles, would be prepared and dispatched to the countries, together with the corresponding balance in the budget allocated to the countries for the inclusion of public participation strategy in their NAPs.

As a result, the common methodology report was prepared and distributed in December 2003/January 2004 to the countries. The balance in the budget was allocated to the countries for public involvement in the process of the preparation, adoption and implementation of NAPs, and a relevant MoU was submitted to the countries in December 2003/January 2004. So far, 4 Mediterranean countries have signed the MoU to receive support for public participation.

1.8 National Action Plans to address pollution from land based activities (NAPs)

Concerning the preparation of National Diagnostic Analysis (NDA) and National Baseline Budget (NBB), which are considered the corner stones for the formulation of National Action Plans to address pollution of the Mediterranean Sea from land-based sources and activities, the current status is shown in the following table:

Country	NDA	NBB
Albania	Yes	Yes
Algeria	Yes	Yes
Bosnia-Herzegovina	Yes	Yes
Cyprus	Yes	Yes
Croatia	Yes	Yes
Egypt	Yes	Yes
France	Ongoing	Ongoing
Greece	Yes	Yes
Israel	Yes	Expected May 2004
Italy	Ongoing	Ongoing
Lebanon	Yes	Yes
Libya	Yes	Ongoing
Malta	Yes	Yes
Monaco	Ongoing	Ongoing
Morocco	Yes	Yes
Serbia-Montenegro ^{x)}	Ongoing	Ongoing
Slovenia	Yes	Yes
Spain	Ongoing	Ongoing
Syria	Yes	Yes
Tunisia	Yes	Expected May 2004
Turkey	Yes	Yes
Palestinian Authority ^{x)}	Yes	Yes

^{x)} not participating in the Project

A regional expert was engaged to harmonize the information and data and to review the reports received.

The process of the preparation of the NAPs actually started in February 2004, even if a number of preparatory activities had been accomplished earlier. In fact, MED POL organized, with the assistance of GEF and FFEM, a training course on 4-7 March 2004 in Izmit, Turkey at the premises of the Turkish National Research Center (TUBITAK-Marmara Branch), to discuss and review the background document prepared for the preparation of NAPs, and to train national experts nominated by MED POL National Coordinators to perform the preparation of the Sectoral Plans (SPs) and NAPs.

Forty-five experts and representatives from 18 Mediterranean countries participated to the training course together with representatives from GPA, MEDU, CP/RAC and PAP/RAC and 3 regional independent experts. The following documents were reviewed and discussed in plenary sessions:

- Guidelines for the preparation of SPs and NAPs including Cleaner Production
- Guidelines for Public Participation for NAPs
- Guidelines for Economic Instrument for NAPs
- Guidelines for the preparation of Portfolio for NAPs
- Two CDs including 23 Guidelines and Regional Plans in English and French prepared by MED POL and adopted by the Contracting Parties in 2003, in

addition to a set of technical documents that could be used during the preparation of SPs and NAPs.

The participants were organized into three working groups to prepare a virtual NAP for an imaginary case study prepared by MED POL. Each participant in the working groups was to play the role of a national stakeholder that would participate in the process of the preparation of SPs and NAPs. The course was highly appreciated by the participants and reached its objectives successfully.

As a result of the training course, MED POL, with the assistance of GEF, started the process of contracting national experts for the preparation of SPs and NAPs with a deadline of December 2004, which was not considered realistic by the countries' representatives. As a result, MED POL set up a tentative timetable and phases to achieve the preparation of NAPs by June 2005.

It should be mentioned that the preparation of NAPs started with 6 months delay on the planned timetable, due to the difficulties encountered by national authorities and experts for the preparation of NDAs and NBBs. In fact, the lack of data and information needed for the preparation of these two reports led the national experts to urge the active involvement of MED POL and the regional expert to facilitate the task. Many experts spent a few days at the MAP premises, which ensured the transfer of data and information between experts from different Mediterranean countries.

It is planned to contract a regional expert who would assist MED POL in providing support, and to follow up during the period of the preparation of the SPs and NAPs. MED POL and/or the regional expert(s) would be present in most of the national stakeholders meetings which will be organized in the framework of the preparation of NAPs. The countries may receive financial support for the organization of these meetings. So far, 5 countries have signed a relevant MoU to receive this support.

3. CONCLUSIONS

From the information above, the following may be concluded:

All activities which were organized for the support of countries' activities, such as capacity building and regional cooperative actions have been, or will be accomplished as planned. In addition, two more training courses are scheduled, which will be financed either from the project savings from previous years or from the FFEM contribution.

The preparation of pre-investment studies and National Action Plans is based on a country driven approach. It is therefore up to the countries to manage these components of the project with support from the GEF Project Manager and MED POL.

The process of the preparation of pre-investment studies is rather more complex, addressing many technical, environmental and socio-economic issues, bringing a large number of stakeholders together, and requiring more time than assumed in the Project document. In addition, it is a country-specific process, in terms of political structures, constitution, level of economic development, culture and public awareness. Finally, the success of the action is not just the pre-investment study prepared. Political commitment and financial capability to undertake remedial actions are required. From the experience

gained, it may be concluded that most probably three countries (Albania, Slovenia and Turkey) would accomplish the activities by the end of 2004. One country (Bosnia and Herzegovina) would need the assistance of a regional consultant, while for the two remaining countries (Egypt and Syria) it is difficult to make any prediction, because consultants are not mobilized yet.

The preparation of National Action Plans is a specific process for countries, which requires the full engagement of national experts and officials, as well as adequate assistance from outside. In order to further stimulate the implementation of the process, the countries should be provided with reasonable assistance as required. This will be done by establishing/strengthening the management structures related to the entire process in each country, and by the assistance of regional consultant(s). As mentioned above, a differentiated approach for each country should be applied. However, the process of the preparation and the adoption of NAPs would not be accomplished in all countries before 31 December 2004, as originally planned. MED POL considers that the preparation of Sectoral Plans and NAPs could be finalized not before June 2005, due to the accumulated delays during the preparation of NDAs, NBBs and the recruitment of national experts. However, MED POL believes that there is the need and the possibility to assist very closely the countries in the process to ensure successful conclusions.