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MEDITERRANEAN ACTION PLAN

Seventh Meeting of the National Focal Points for SPAs

Seville, 31 May - 3 June 2005

ELEMENTS FOR A GUIDING STRATEGY FOR RAC/SPA ACTIVITIES

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The evaluation of RAC/SPA, the results of which were submitted in 2003 to the 13th Meeting of the Contracting Parties, plus the exercise of identifying national and regional priorities done in the context of the SAP BIO Project, show that there is a need to redirect RAC/SPA's action methods to make them more suited to the Contracting Parties' requirements and have the Centre's action dovetail with that of the other international organisations operating in the region.

It is important that when RAC/SPA's action methods are redirected this bear in mind both the successes and lacks in what the Centre is doing, and the MAP's new general trends, which will emerge from the ongoing evaluation, the results of which will be submitted to the next Meeting of Contracting Parties (November 2005), and also the changing regional and international context.

Thus it would be very useful for the National Focal Points for SPAs to examine the issue at their Seventh Meeting (Seville, 2005) with a view to making recommendations that will be submitted, in a first phase, to the MAP evaluation process, and will in a second stage be used to prepare an action strategy for RAC/SPA. The present brief note was prepared by RAC/SPA to facilitate the work of the Meeting of Focal Points on Agenda Item 11. To this end it summarises the main conclusions and priorities that have emerged in the evaluation of RAC/SPA and of SAP BIO and which are pertinent for RAC/SPA's strategic orientation

Concerning **RAC/SPA's activities load**, it is increasingly obvious that the Centre is having to cover a vast field of activities and that the means at its disposal are not compatible with the extent of actions required. Developing cooperation with other organisations would allow this challenge to be at least partially surmounted. It is, however, essential that developing cooperation means moving towards a **partnership relationship** rather than merely providing services or expertise.

Moreover, implementing actions advocated by SAP BIO requires addressing **new subjects** at the level of RAC/SPA activities, through either launching new projects to help countries or new action plans and/or work programmes. But adding to the growing number of action plans that RAC/SPA is already coordinating **could well make the Centre's workload even heavier and trivialize the 'action plan' approach**, which was originally intended to focus attention and effort on one given concern. Here it would be useful to carry out a **reexamination of all the action plans** in order to evaluate (for each one) the need to retain it as one of RAC/SPA's activities, particularly as regards those plans that have been existence for over ten years now.

As for the **subjects** of the Centre's activities, we should remember that the exercise carried out in the context of SAP BIO allowed national and regional priorities to be identified. Obviously this means refining certain advocated activities and making minor readjustments, but it seems useless to reconsider the issue of priorities, at least in the medium term. Thus it is imperative that the subjects of the Centre's activities should be drawn from SAP BIO.

RAC/SPA's relations with the secretariats of other international and/or regional conventions concerned by the conservation of marine and coastal biodiversity in the

Mediterranean must be reviewed and better defined. It is strongly recommended that the results of the cooperation agreements signed with the Secretariats of the CBD, the Ramsar Convention, the ACCOBAMS Agreement and with IUCN be assessed. Defining the objectives and expected results of these Agreements must be discussed at the level of the Meeting of National Focal Points for SPAs. Such cooperation agreements should be designed to promote synergy, **to avoid duplication of work and to define 'who does what' for subjects that are also covered by other pertinent organisations in the region.** This will also enable RAC/SPA to depend on other organisations for subjects it cannot adequately cover because it lacks the financial resources and/or the right expertise, and this, within the framework of agreements of partnership approved by the Contracting Parties, after the National Focal Points for SPAs have given their opinions.

This redirection of RAC/SPA's activities must also bear in mind the **international agenda** on the conservation and the sustainable use of marine and coastal biodiversity in the Mediterranean. Thus, for example, RAC/SPA should work to help the countries in the region attain the objectives set by the Johannesburg World Summit. It is strongly recommended that RAC/SPA have a work programme that aims at integrating Mediterranean priorities regarding marine and coastal biodiversity within the priorities of international conventions such as the CBD, the CMS and Ramsar. Moreover, the Euro-Mediterranean partnership should be called on to make a more substantial contribution to protecting marine and coastal biodiversity in the Mediterranean.

It follows automatically that RAC/SPA's internal structure and the specification of the Centre's experts' tasks should also be adapted to any new direction of RAC/SPA's activities. The scientific and technical staff also needs to be strengthened to cover all the subjects that are constantly emerging in the field of biodiversity generally and marine and coastal biodiversity in particular.

The emergence of a clear, consistent strategic vision of RAC/SPA would enable it to implement the recommendations of the Contracting Parties and further enhance partnership with the various concerned actors, bearing in mind the new regional and international context, and give greater visibility on a world scale to Mediterranean action on marine and coastal biodiversity.