





## **Background Brief by the MAP Coordinator**

At the last meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention in Portoroz, Slovenia, the MAP Secretariat was requested to “convene an extraordinary meeting of the MAP Focal Points to consider the conclusions and recommendations of the external evaluation of MAP and to discuss a draft Vision and Strategic Statement, prepared by the MAP Secretariat, and to make recommendations to the meeting of the Contracting Parties in 2007”.

The first step to embark on this exercise was the decision by the 13<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Contracting Parties in Catania in 2003 to launch the external evaluation of MAP with a view to presenting it to the Meeting of the Contracting Parties in 2005. As a result, the Secretariat contracted three Consultants to carry out this assignment. Following a wide consultation process involving a large majority of MAP Focal Points, the MAP components, NGOs as well as visits to several countries, in July, 2005 the Consultants submitted a full report entitled “External Evaluation of the Mediterranean Action Plan” (UNEP(DEC)/MED 270/Inf.9).

The full report, together with an Executive Summary (UNEP(DEC)/MED WG.270/8), were submitted to the Meeting of the MAP Focal Points which was held on 21 –24 September, 2005 in Athens, Greece. Due to the many recommendations made and the implications of some of them it was agreed by the MAP Focal Points, and eventually approved by the 14<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Contracting Parties in Portoroz, Slovenia, to hold an extraordinary meeting of the MAP Focal Points with the objectives stated earlier.

As I had occasion to point out at the meeting in Athens on 9 December, 2004 to launch the evaluation process, other similar exercises were carried out in the past. These included among others an “Environmental Impact Assessment for the Evaluation of MAP” (CEFAS – 1997) as well as reviews and assessments of MAP on the occasion of the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. The latest evaluation exercise, however, was carried out in 2004 when a Strategic Assessment of the General Framework of the Barcelona Convention was assigned to a Task Force appointed by the Bureau from among the Contracting Parties together with external experts, on a mandate given by the 12<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Contracting Parties in Monaco in November, 2001.

All these reviews and assessments have taken into account the achievements of MAP over the years and arrived at similar conclusions. They have all acknowledged that MAP has been successful because of the commitments of the Mediterranean governments to co-operate at the regional level despite their political, economic and cultural differences. The biennial meetings of the Parties and ad hoc conferences have been for years the only regional forums where representatives of countries on the Northern and Southern shores of the Mediterranean could meet face to face to develop a comprehensive, co-operation programme for the protection and enhancement of the marine environment. They emphasize the fact that MAP is considered an important process for assisting governments to co-ordinate their policies on the regional level in order to achieve maximum results from the national activities concerning marine pollution. Over the

years, thanks to initiatives by MAP, the regional awareness of the problems has increased and a forum for action has been created. MAP's legal instruments, the assessment component as well as the coordination of activities have stimulated a collective awareness of the Mediterranean as a common heritage. The overall positive conclusion is that MAP ought to continue.

Naturally, there were also shortcomings that have also been taken into consideration in these evaluations. They identified the same weaknesses primarily resulting from the fact that over the years the remit of MAP has been widened without the resultant increase in resources and capacities. Starting in 1975 as a marine Convention with a clear mandate to combat marine pollution; and later extending to the protection and conservation of marine coastal zone, biodiversity as well as sustainable development concerns, the historical role of MAP as an environmental cooperation forum and its wide experience in that area had to a large extent evolved. The activities, platforms and actors had increased, with great expectations on the part of the countries in terms of assistance and concrete actions on the ground.

I will briefly outline the main issues which have been highlighted in all of the evaluation reports carried out so far and which have again been identified in the "External Evaluation of the Mediterranean Action Plan" (UNEP(DEC)/MED 270/Inf.9). They include:-

1. Non-Ratification of the Barcelona Convention and its related Protocols

It took ten years for the amended version of the Barcelona Convention to enter into force. Still there are a number of countries that have yet to ratify the Convention. Three acceptances have been missing for several years now for the amended version of the Land-based Sources Protocol to enter into force. Two acceptances are still needed for the amended Dumping Protocol to become effective too. This apart from the Hazardous Waste and Offshore Protocols, about which very little progress has been made so far. Non-ratification of legal instruments represents a serious problem for the image and credibility of the Barcelona system and the whole of the Mediterranean region.

2. Lack of enforcement and compliance mechanism

After 30 years, unlike other global and regional conventions, there is still no enforcement and compliance mechanism in place. There seems to be no fear of embarrassment due to poor or non-compliance with the legally binding MAP instruments or the non-implementation of the decisions taken at the Conference of the Parties that, even if not legally binding, are serious commitments. Compliance is monitored on the basis of reports which the Contracting Parties are obliged to submit under the Convention, a procedure which some of the countries have been somewhat reluctant to follow.

### 3. RACs operate independently of the Coordinating Unit.

Regional Activity Centres operate too much independently of the Coordinating Unit. Action should be taken to bring about better coordination and harmonization among the RACs. As an integral part of the MAP, RACs should focus their activities entirely to help the countries in the implementation of the Convention and its Protocols under the overall coordination and supervision of the MAP Secretariat.

### 4. Improving synergy between MAP and the EU

The relations between MAP and the European Union need to be strengthened in order to improve the synergy between them especially since they have fully comparable objectives for the Mediterranean and both endorse sustainable development as the basis for the future of the region. Building on what has been achieved so far, relations between both sides should be established on a more formal footing both with regard to policy planning and integration as well as policy implementation and the building of capacities in the region. Account has to be taken of the fact that seven Contracting Parties are now members of the European Union with others in the pipeline. Consideration has to be given also to the development of community policies and legislation in areas already covered by MAP as well as the developments within the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership of which many of the Contracting Parties are also members.

### 5. Change in the mandate and role of the MCSD

Following the experience of the last decade, there is the need for a change in the mandate and role of the Mediterranean Commission for Sustainable Development in terms of its method of work, tasks and composition in order to improve its performance to meet the expectations of the Contracting Parties. Experts possibly coming from the national commissions for sustainable development and socio-economic sectors should represent countries on the MCSD. Terms of Reference and criteria for the composition of the MCSD should be drawn up with a view to ensuring high level and broad inter-sectoral representation.

### 6. Roles of MAP Focal Points are not well defined

There is a need to clearly define the roles of the MAP Focal Points in view of their valuable contribution in ensuring coordination and communication of MAP decisions, recommendations and other relevant information at the national level. Their future role is crucial since they are the ones who have to promote inter-sectoral coordination and a higher MAP visibility at the country level.

### 7. Cooperation with other conventions and programmes should be strengthened

MAP's cooperation and synergy with other conventions and programmes should be strengthened. MAP should forge additional alliances with global and regional conventions that have similar objectives and are of particular interest to the Mediterranean. Cooperation with UNEP, especially the Regional Seas Programme, should also be enhanced. Likewise, MAP should identify how to strengthen its relations with financing institutions in order to develop financing mechanisms to

assist Mediterranean countries to address effectively pollution problems from land-based sources, protect biodiversity, and prevent marine pollution from shipping activities.

#### 8. MAP lacks visibility

MAP lacks visibility both at the country as well as the regional and global levels. Promotion of MAP's activities and publications is seriously lacking. MAP has produced a series of detailed and important data and assessment documents that were not given the exposure and promotion they deserve. In many instances the problem has been that the highly technical documents were not produced in such a way to reach a wider public. There is also a need to improve the visual quality and presentation of the publications and documents giving importance to the Mediterranean dimension. Ways and means should be explored on how the information about MAP and its activities could be better promoted towards civil society using a more proactive approach and the latest information and communication tools.

The above is by no means an exhaustive list of the shortcomings that have been identified over time or weaknesses that may have manifested themselves in recent years. But they are definitely issues that have been highlighted several times as needing the attention of the Contracting Parties in order to increase MAP's political clout and relevance in the region.

These and other shortcomings are still with us. They cannot be ignored any more and MAP would do well to take the bull by the horns and introduce the necessary changes if it wants to remain a point of reference for the region. MAP needs to re-define its future role within the international environment which is evolving continuously, taking into account both the regional as well as the national context in the countries of the Mediterranean. In the same way that in the past MAP had to renew itself in the face of new realities on the global level especially following the RIO and Johannesburg Summits as well as at the European level, it has to do the same today in view of new emerging situations on all these fronts.

The 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Convention is a good opportunity to strengthen and launch a true new phase of MAP and the Convention, a new face with a new meaning and a new resolve.