

**REPORT OF THE JOINT CONSULTATION MEETING ON
THE HARMONIZATION OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SPA PROTOCOL
AND THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY
IN THE MEDITERRANEAN REGION**

Introduction

1. The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the SPA Protocol of the Barcelona Convention are complementary instruments with respect to the objectives of conservation and sustainable use of marine and coastal biodiversity. Coordination between the focal points of CBD and those of the SPA Protocol will help to ensure harmonized and synergic implementation of the two instruments, in Mediterranean countries. Similarly, coordination among the Secretariats of the two instruments would also be greatly beneficial.
2. The Meeting was convened within the framework of the Memorandum of Cooperation, signed in May 2000, between the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Coordinating Unit of the Mediterranean Action Plan (UNEP/MEDU). It was organized thanks to the generous financial support provided by the Spanish Authorities, and was convened with the aim of promoting integration and consistency in the implementation of the SPA Protocol and the CBD (the Jakarta Mandate, in particular) and of providing contribution for strengthened international environmental governance and for the next World Summit on Sustainable Development to be held in 2002. The Meeting was held on 20 and 21 April 2001 at the University of Valencia (Spain).

Participation

3. The Meeting was attended by the national focal points for SPAs (or their representatives) from the following Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Cyprus, Egypt, European Community, France, Greece, Israel, Italy, Lebanon, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Malta, Monaco, Morocco, Slovenia, Spain, Syrian Arab Republic and Tunisia.
4. The Meeting was also attended by the focal points of the CBD (or their representatives) from Albania, Croatia, Cyprus, Egypt, European Community, France, Greece, Israel, Lebanon, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Malta, Monaco, Slovenia, Spain, Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia and Turkey.
5. The following international organization was represented: United Nations Environment Programme, Coordinating Unit for the Mediterranean Action Plan (UNEP/MEDU).
6. The following institutions and non-governmental organizations were represented by observers: ACCOBAMS, CHELON, ICRAM, MEDASSET, MEDMARAVIS, MIO-ECSDE, RAMOGE and SEHUMED.

7. RAC/SPA staff and the representative of the CBD Secretariat acted as the Secretariat for the Meeting.
8. The list of participants is attached as Annex I to the present report.

Agenda item 1 - Opening of the Meeting

9. Mr. Mohamed Adel Hentati, Director of RAC/SPA, welcomed participants to the Meeting and expressed his thanks to the authorities of Spain for the assistance provided in its organization. He stressed that the Meeting marked the first opportunity for joint consultations on the issue of how to harmonize the activities of countries in their implementation of the two biodiversity-related instruments.
10. Ms. Paloma Gomez Ossorio, Director-General of Planning and Environmental Management, Regional Ministry for Environment, Region of Valencia, welcomed participants on behalf of the Head of Administration of the Valencia region. Noting the importance of the long coastline of the region, she pointed to the impacts of tourism on the conservation of biological diversity and described the efforts underway since 1986 to protect habitats and species, and to establish national parks in the coastal area. In conclusion, she wished participants success in their deliberations.
11. Mr. Humberto Da Cruz, Programme Officer, United Nations Environment Programme, Coordinating Unit for the Mediterranean Action Plan (UNEP/MEDU), expressed thanks to the Meeting. After pledging the support of MEDU for the current discussions, he wished participants fruitful deliberations.
12. Ms. Marjo Vierros, Programme Officer, Marine and Coastal Biodiversity, Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, emphasized in her opening remarks the importance of building synergies between the Convention and regional instruments, such as the SPA Protocol of the Barcelona Convention. It was through such collaboration and efforts at harmonization that the Convention was most effectively implemented at the regional and national levels. It was also through such efforts that regional priorities would be truly met.
13. She reported that (a) the Conference of Parties of the CBD had frequently stressed the importance of collaborative linkages in implementing its programme of work in marine and coastal biological diversity (b) at its fifth meeting, the Conference of the Parties had requested the Executive Secretary to coordinate with the Secretariats of the Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans and (c) particular attention was to be paid to the identification of priorities for action on the regional level, the development of joint implementation of strategies, identification of joint activities, and the use of regional networks.

14. Ms. Vierros further stressed the importance of the current meeting in the implementation of the Jakarta Mandate, and the potential of systems such as the Clearing-house Mechanism to serve as a tool for facilitating access to information needed for the management of coastal and marine resources. Additionally, the Memorandum of Cooperation and the joint work programme between the CBD Secretariat and the Coordinating Unit of the Mediterranean Action Plan could serve as a model for other such collaborative efforts on the regional level. The current Meeting also came in the context of increased positive efforts to harmonize reporting requirements between biodiversity-related conventions.
15. Ms. Inés Gonzalez, Director-General for Conservation of Nature, Ministry of the Environment, said that the Convention on Biological Diversity recognized that the conservation of biodiversity was a common concern for society and that it was included within social development. The objective of the Convention was the protection of ecosystems, species and genetic resources. On the other hand, the objective of the Barcelona Convention was the global protection of the marine environment and the Mediterranean coastal area. That Convention had several protocols, in order to improve its specific objectives, such as the Protocol concerning Specially Protected Areas and Biological Diversity in the Mediterranean. Both Conventions had numerous common objectives. That also applied to other documents and agreements related to conservation of nature. For that reason, initiatives such as the current Meeting on harmonization, which was being held in Valencia and which had demonstrated the good cooperation between the two Secretariats, were very important. It was necessary to optimize the human and natural resources of national public administrations, which were always limited, and find a better way to protect the natural resources of the Mediterranean Sea. In conclusion, she formally declared the Meeting open.

Agenda item 2 - Election of Officers

16. After informal consultations, the Meeting elected the following officers by acclamation:

Chairperson:	Mr. Miguel Aymerich *	(Spain)
Vice-Chairpersons:	Mr. Alessandro Curatolo	(European Commission)
	Ms. Lara Samaha	(Lebanon)
Rapporteur:	Mr. Zemir Dedej	(Albania)

Agenda item 3 - Adoption of the Agenda and organization of work

17. The Meeting adopted the provisional agenda contained in document UNEP(DEC)/MED WG.167/1 and approved the organization of work

* The first session of the Meeting was chaired by the Chairperson and subsequent sessions were chaired by the Vice-Chairperson, Mr. Alessandro Curatolo (European Commission).

proposed by the Secretariat in document UNEP(DEC)/MED WG.176/2. The Agenda is attached as Annex II to the present report.

Agenda item 4 - Co-ordination, consultation and sharing of information at national level concerning the Jakarta Mandate of CBD and the Mediterranean SPA Protocol

18. The Secretariat introduced the above item by presenting section 3 of the document UNEP(DEC)/MED WG.176/3. Each delegation was invited to make a brief summary of the national focal point structures for the CBD and for the SPA Protocol, at the level of its country, stating possible procedures for coordination and exchange of information between the focal points of both instruments.
19. The representative of Albania said that, in his country, the National Environment Agency (NEA) was the highest governmental body dealing with environmental issues in Albania, and depended directly on the Council of Ministers. Environmental legislation had been moving forward since 1993, but there were still a lot of gaps that needed to be filled very soon. That was the main challenge for the NEA for the near future, and its programme included approval of the Law on Protected Areas and finalization of the draft Law on Nature and Biodiversity Protection. Albania was party to the main international environmental conventions, including the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Barcelona Convention. In many instances, the implementation of those conventions and the fulfillment of the obligations and duties specified therein still needed to be carried out.
20. The Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan, approved by the Government of Albania, and the establishment of the National Council for Nature and Biodiversity, as the highest body for the implementation of that strategy, marked the major achievement in the recent period. In that document, coastal zone protection and *in-situ* conservation were considered the main issues to be dealt with in the future. Extension of protected areas was programmed in the short and long term. Specially protected areas in the coastal zone had been studied and identified thanks to a project carried out in Albania in 1995, as a follow-up to the Coastal Zone Management study supported by PAP/RAC and the World Bank. Albania had already published a Red Book of endemic species, including their threatened status. Much work had to be carried out, especially for the implementation of the Action Plan approved for different groups of species.
21. The representative of Bosnia & Herzegovina reported that Bosnia-Herzegovina is a member of MAP from 1994, but did not sign Barcelona Convention, neither their Protocols. Up today, Bosnia & Herzegovina adopted four Protocols signed by former Yugoslavia.
22. There is no protected marine and coastal species of fauna and flora in Bosnia-Herzegovina. This area is totally under-investigated, so funds have to be raised in order to describe flora and fauna of this marine area, before any

step towards protection. The ecological studies about influence of fish farm on sea water quality is also necessary in order to preserve good water quality for tourism and shellfish rearing.

23. Presently, there is no strategy of national biodiversity, neither action plans considering Mediterranean coastal zone of Bosnia-Herzegovina.
24. The representative of Croatia reported that Croatia had been a full Party to CBD since 1997. It had developed the National Strategy and Action Plan for the Protection of Biological Diversity (NSAP) adopted by the Croatian Parliament in 1999. The Basic purpose of the NSAP, after making an inventory of the biological and landscape diversity of Croatia, was to define objectives and methods for its conservation and sustainable use. Particularly important was the Action Plan, laying down the priority protection programmes to be financed both from the government budget and international funds. Many of those programmes were related to the inventory and conservation of marine biodiversity. In implementing the NSAP, Croatia was currently working on several projects. Croatia had not yet developed its clearing-house mechanism, but intended to develop it as one of the priority programmes. Concerning the status of signature and ratification of the SPA Protocol, Croatia had signed the new SPA Protocol, which was currently in the process of ratification. The national focal points for the CBD and SPA Protocol were within the Ministry of Environment Protection and Physical Planning. For CBD, competence lay with the Department for Conservation of Biological and Landscape Diversity, and for SPAs, the Marine and Coastal Protection Unit.
25. In the framework of CBD, Croatia had prepared the first national report in 1999, including the national strategy. That two-year process, with financial contributions from GEF/World Bank, involved numerous associates (scientists and other experts) who had helped to collect existing data on biodiversity, scattered in different institutions. The steering Committee for the development of the NSAP (including representative of governmental bodies, scientific institutions and NGOs) validated those data. Within the framework of the SPA Protocol, after receiving a request for elaboration of a country report from RAC/SPA, the report was elaborated by the national focal point for SPAs, using a given format.
26. The representative of Cyprus reported that Cyprus had ratified CITES and the Bern, CMS and Biological Diversity Conventions. The Ramsar Convention had been ratified in 2001. Cyprus had also ratified the Barcelona Convention and SPA Protocol. The new SPA Protocol was currently in the process of ratification. The Fisheries Law protected aquatic habitats and species. In relation to Action Plans, turtles, monk seal and dolphins were protected species. Monk seal habitat protection was foreseen within the wider Akamas Peninsula conservation proposal, currently being considered by the Government. Conservation work on turtles included management of the Lara/Toxeftra Protected Area and also protection of nests on the Polis/Limni loggerhead beaches, operation of a hatchery for nests rescued from tourist beaches, and training courses for Mediterranean scientists/managers of protected areas. The conservation of the Akamas Peninsula was primarily

related to turtle conservation. Compensation for damage to nets by dolphins had been granted to fishermen in 2001. *Posidonia* meadows were protected through banning trawling in shallow waters (less than 55 m), under the Fisheries Law.

27. A management plan for the Larnaca salt lakes in Cyprus had been approved by the Council of Ministers in 1997, whereby the lakes and environs were declared a protected area. The plan was currently being implemented. The main Larnaca Lake and environs were being proposed as the country's first Ramsar site. A LIFE project entitled "Special Areas of Conservation (Directive 92/43/EEC) in Cyprus" was nearing completion, aimed at facilitating the implementation of European Union (EU) Directive 92/43/EEC in Cyprus. An inventory of coastal/marine habitats and of aquatic species of flora and fauna had been drawn up. A number of coastal/marine areas fulfilling the criteria of that Directive had been included in the national list of sites to be proposed for the NATURA 2000 network. Within the EU NATURA 2000 project, a national archive of ecological data of Cyprus, BIOCYPRUS, would be produced.
28. The representative of Egypt reported that the national focal structures for the CBD and for the SPA Protocol in Egypt were the Ministry of State for Environmental Affairs, the Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency, and the Department of Nature Conservation. That Department was responsible for the implementation, coordination and consultation at the national level, including marine and coastal biodiversity. It was necessary to strengthen and develop partnership arrangements with international organizations and institutions, including regional bodies with particular competence in specific areas of marine and coastal biodiversity.
29. Egypt currently participated in a regional MedWet Project including six Mediterranean countries, which would lead to a better understanding of the status of marine and coastal biodiversity and the development of an inventory of biological diversity in the Mediterranean. Egypt had also completed a country study, participated in a UNEP project on management of biodiversity and prepared a national strategy and action plan for the conservation of biological diversity. The top priority among proposed projects was the management of Mediterranean wetlands of Egypt and conservation of the biological diversity of the marine and coastal zones. Egypt had developed its own national clearing-house mechanism, which played an important role in facilitating access to and enhancing the exchange of information of relevance to biodiversity at the national level. The National Biodiversity Unit within the Department of Nature Conservation was working to organize and maintain its own data after the completion of the preparation of the Country Study and Biodiversity Data Management of Egypt.
30. The representative of the European Commission presented the strategy on biodiversity and the four action plans prepared for agriculture, fisheries, natural resources and the economic development of Third Countries.

31. The representative of France reported that his country was Party to the majority of the international conventions – Barcelona and its Protocols, which it had just ratified, Ramsar, Bonn, and Rio. Moreover, France had incorporated into national law the Directives on Birds, Habitats, and Fauna and Flora, and had adopted the agreement on the conservation of cetaceans. It had also initiated an instrument to harmonize planning and conservation of the environment, the “Territorial planning directives”, within which the Alpes Maritimes province covered part of the coastal area. Concerning the harmonization between the CBD and the SPA Protocol, there were two national focal points in France, both within the Ministry of Territorial Planning and the Environment. That greatly facilitated the coordination between the two instruments.
32. The representative of Greece said that the overall responsibility for coordinating the implementation of environmental policies lay with the Ministry of Environment. The competence for implementation of the SPA Protocol lay jointly with the Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Agriculture and Merchant Marine-Port Authorities. Although the respective National Focal Points of the Protocol and the Convention were located in the same Ministry (the Ministry for the Environment), there were difficulties, which impeded the proper achievement of the obligations arising from both instruments.
33. One main concern was that, apart from the arrangements imposed by the Convention and the Protocol, Greece had to implement the European Union legislation. That implied a duplication of work and efforts, as sometimes the process and approach chosen by the EU were different from those of the CBD and the Protocol, although the aims and objectives were the same. Thus, there was a need for coordination at all levels. Greece had not yet ratified the Protocol, but preparations for that were underway. Recently Greece had been designated the host country for the MedWet Coordinator (period 2001-2002), and would provide full financial and technical assistance to facilitate the work of the MedWet Coordinator.
34. The representative of Israel reported that the Israeli Ministry of the Environment was responsible for all aspects of the Barcelona Convention, including its protocols, and for the Convention on Biological Diversity. The management and responsibility for protected areas and natural assets, including natural and cultural heritage sites, was under the Israeli Nature and National Parks Protection Authority (NNPPA). The national focal points for CBD and for SPAs were the same and were under the NNPPA. The outline for the national biodiversity strategy had been presented in the first national report of Israel to the CBD. No special progress had been made since then. Israel was in the process of ratifying the new SPA Protocol; a national management programme for marine turtles had been implemented since 1993; a long-term monitoring programme of the cetaceans found along the Israeli Mediterranean coast was being carried out; and a five-year programme to monitor algal communities was being carried out. Other related conventions ratified by Israel were CITES, CMS, Ramsar, Desertification, Climate Change, Ozone and Basel.

35. The representative of Italy said that the focal point for CBD was the Servizio Conservazione della Natura of the Ministry of Environment, but the Servizio Difesa Mare of the same Ministry was in charge of marine biodiversity in Italy. Since the representative was not entitled to speak on behalf of the CBD focal point, he only expressed views on the subject of implementation of the SPA Protocol. The Italian contribution to the protection of marine biodiversity was described in a paper published in 1999 and given to the Secretariat. Up-to-date information was to be found in the SPA national focal point report to the Fifth Meeting of NFPs for SPA.
36. The representative of Lebanon gave her report. In her country, which ratified the Convention on Biological Diversity in 1994, the Barcelona Convention in 1977 and the SPA Protocol in 1994, the Service for Nature Protection is located in the Ministry of Environment and was responsible for follow-up of the CBD. The National Focal Point for CBD is located in that Service. The Service for Protection of the Urban Environment at the Ministry of Environment is currently responsible for follow-up of the SPA Protocol. The National Focal Point for the SPA Protocol is located in that Service and is also responsible for follow-up of all issues related to nature reserves in Lebanon. There is regular coordination between the focal points of both instruments, as they are both located within the Ministry of Environment. However, a draft new law regarding the organization of the Lebanese Ministry of Environment has been prepared and submitted for the Council of Ministers for endorsement. Under the new law, the national focal point for the CBD and the national focal point for the SPA Protocol will both be located at the Service for Protection of Nature (at the Ministry of Environment) and that service will be responsible for follow-up on all issues related to biodiversity and protected areas. In conclusion, she described the concrete activities in Lebanon to implement the CBD and the SPA.
37. The representative of Libyan Arab Jamahiriya said that the Environment General Authority (EGA) was the highest governmental body dealing with environmental issues in the country. EGA was also the national focal point for CBD and for the SPA Protocol. It had started to build programmes and plans in order to establish a new system for gathering and collecting information and data concerning biological diversity and other environmental issues. Libyan Arab Jamahiriya had signed the CBD in 1993, and the SPA Protocol in 1995, which had not yet been ratified. A national programme for marine turtles was under preparation. A national report for biodiversity would also be prepared during the current year and would pay attention to issues relating to CBD and SPA strategies and articles.
38. The representative of Malta said that the CBD had been ratified by Malta in December 2000. It was administered by the Biodiversity and Protected Species Unit of the Environment Protection Department. The same section was also responsible for other nature protection conventions, such as CITES, Bern, Bonn, SPA, and was also involved with European Union legislation. However, even before ratification, the Unit was well versed and also kept in touch with what was going on within the CBD. That helped the Biodiversity

and Protected Species Unit of the Environment Protection Department to change legislation in the light of the principles contained in the CBD. In fact, a number of regulations for the protection of species and their habitats had been published. The state of the environment report had also been published, and a number of projects for data collection, and species action plans were underway. The present primary legislation for environmental protection was also being revised to enable the publication of better secondary legislation. One of the problems in the field was the lack of natural resources. The control of the introduction of alien species was one field where more regional cooperation and coordination was necessary.

39. The representative of the Principality of Monaco said that her country had signed and ratified the CBD and the new SPA Protocol, as well as the majority of the instruments related to conservation of biodiversity. The majority of the larger groups had been inventoried and a strategy for diversity had been elaborated, taking into account the provisions of CBD and of the SPA Protocol. The focal point for CBD was at the Ministerial level, and the focal point for SPAs was at the technical level. The link between the CBD and the other conventions related to conservation of biological diversity and, in particular, the harmonization and synergy of efforts was a permanent goal for the Principality of Monaco. In the same spirit, the Principality hosted in 1994 a meeting on the links between the CBD and the Bern Convention and, in 2000, a meeting between the UNEP regional seas conventions and the global conventions. Moreover, through its programmes for bilateral cooperation with the countries of the Mediterranean and the Black Sea, the Principality of Monaco implemented activities for the conservation of biological diversity.
40. The representative of Morocco reported that the SPA focal point in his country was the Ministry of Water and Forests. The CBD focal point was the Department of the Environment. Morocco adhered to the majority of the conventions dealing with environmental management and conservation of biodiversity. To give concrete form to its commitments, in 1993 Morocco had undertaken a study on protected areas which had led to the formulation of a national strategy and a master plan for protected areas, identifying 154 sites of biological and ecological interest, of which eight were national parks. The implementation of the national strategy had been initiated through two important projects:
- a GEF project for the management of protected sites, concerning three national parks, including El Hoceima, situated on the Mediterranean side, and 10 sites of biological and ecological interest, including Jbel Moussa on the Mediterranean coast, and
 - the MedWet Coast project, aimed at ensuring durable management of the biological diversity of wetlands and coastal Mediterranean ecosystems, which concerned five sites of biological and ecological interest on the Mediterranean coast.
41. The representative of Slovenia said that his country had ratified the CBD and, as part of the former Yugoslavia, was Party to the Barcelona Convention. The new text of the Barcelona Convention, together with the amended protocols, would be ratified within the current year. The Ministry of Environment and

Spatial Planning was responsible for both conventions. The National Focal Point for CBD was located at the State Authority for Nature Protection in Ljubljana, while the National Focal Point for SPAs was located at the Regional Institute for the Conservation of Natural and Cultural Heritage, in Piran. Coordination between the two was satisfactory. The National Focal Point for SPAs took an active part in the drafting of the National Strategy on Biodiversity Conservation and its Action Plans, with regard to the section concerning marine and coastal environment. That was also due to the fact that protected areas made up 10 per cent of the Slovenian coastal area.

42. The representative of Spain reported that Spain had ratified the Convention on Biological Diversity in 1993, and the new Protocol concerning Specially Protected Areas and Biological Diversity in the Mediterranean in 1999. Spain was currently working on the organization of the national structure for the two Conventions, in order to improve the coordination between them. Spain had created a working group, comprising several technicians from the Ministry of Environment, and had designated an expert for each subject. Within that group, the national focal point for the SPA Protocol also participated. For the implementation of the two Conventions, Spain was further promoting the group by increasing the number of participants. The national focal point for the CBD had the task of informing the experts of the working group, summarizing documents and transmitting them to the experts, in order to coordinate the group. As the national focal points for both agreements were working in the same department within the Ministry of Environment, coordination between them had proved to be very effective.
43. The representative of the Syrian Arab Republic said that the Ministry of State for Environmental Affairs was responsible for all aspects of the CBD and the Barcelona Convention, including its Protocols, and for other conventions related to protection of biodiversity. His country had ratified the CBD, and had prepared three steps related to Article 6 of CBD: (a) a national country study of biological diversity, (b) a national strategy and action plan, submitted to the Supreme Council of Environmental Safety for ratification, (c) and a first national report, submitted to the Secretariat of the CBD. Syria had ratified other conventions and agreements related to the protection of biodiversity (Ramsar, MAP, the Convention to Combat Desertification). The National Biodiversity Unit (NBU) coordinated with other national institutions for the ratification of other conventions, which were not yet signed. The Ministry of Environment, together with the CBD focal point, coordinated with other national Ministries and institutions in pursuit of SPA and CBD activities. Concerning marine life, the Centre of Marine Research (Lattakia, Syria) had prepared studies related to marine life, including alien and migratory species.
44. In preparing a national report, representatives were invited from the different national institutions and Ministries with responsibilities for the protection of biodiversity (e.g. agriculture, irrigation). Syria had prepared the first national report for biodiversity and had submitted it to the Secretariat of the CBD. The second national report would be prepared during the current year. The first report to MAP (RAC/SPA) would also be prepared during the current year,

after discussions with RAC/SPA about the reporting system, and would pay attention to issues, which had greater importance for the CBD and SPA Protocol.

45. The representative of Tunisia said that, in her country, the two focal points were located in the same Ministry. The CBD focal point was in the Directorate for Nature Conservation and the focal point for SPAs was in the National Environment Protection Agency (ANPE). Tunisia had signed the CBD in Rio in 1992 and had ratified it in 1993. Tunisia had also adopted the SPA Protocol in 1995, and had ratified it in 1998. It had ratified all the treaties and conventions that dealt with biological diversity, nature and environment. Tunisia's concern for the marine environment was one of the national priorities. An Agency for the Protection and Management of the Coast had been created in 1995 to deal exclusively with the management of marine and coastal zones. National legislation on protected areas was in the process of being drawn up. A strategy and an action plan had been prepared in 1998. The action plan was the result of a process of harmonization and national consultation at the national and regional levels, which also took into account the provisions of the CBD. Its aims were to combat genetic erosion, to protect and manage ecosystems in a way that preserved their integrity and equilibrium, to integrate biological diversity considerations into sectoral strategies, to establish an institutional capacity and appropriate regulations, to carry out training, reporting, and to develop and use the knowledge about biological diversity. Tunisia had just initiated a project on biological diversity in protected areas, as well as a project in a sensitive coastal area (the Gulf of Gabes), which had an industrial pollution problem and degradation of the marine resources.
46. The representative of Turkey said that the focal points of the CBD and of the SPA Protocol were within the Ministry of Environment. The CBD focal point was the General Directorate of Environmental Protection and was responsible for coordination of efforts to implement the CBD. The National Biodiversity Strategic Action Plan had been prepared and was currently under review with regard to action plan follow-up and revision. The Focal Point of the SPA Protocol was the Department of Foreign Affairs, which ensured linkages between all multilateral agreements on environment and environmental protection. The Agency of Specially Protected Areas, which was mandated by the Minister of Environment, was responsible for the establishment, conservation and monitoring of SPAs. There were 16 SPAs on the Mediterranean coast of Turkey, and the areas had special importance for the viability of the Mediterranean monk seal and marine turtle populations.
47. Observers from environmental non-governmental organizations stressed the importance of sharing information on marine biodiversity at the national, regional and international levels. In addition, it was emphasized that public participation and the involvement of civil society in conservation activities were crucial to the success of such endeavors. There was also a need for increased collaboration between national focal points and non-governmental organizations, inter alia to take advantage of the wealth of information available from them. The non-governmental organizations welcomed the

collaboration between RAC/SPA and the CBD and stressed that synergies should be promoted with other relevant international treaties.

48. The Meeting was asked to identify means and initiatives to be implemented for improved coordination and consultation at national level and the Secretariat proposed that the national focal points of both instruments, when they were different, should:

- Be well versed about the obligations of both instruments;
- Consult each other frequently regarding the implementation of obligations arising from these two instruments;
- Coordinate the compilation of national information on aspects under the Convention and the Protocol through collaboration between them;
- Share information at national level for harmonization and streamlining of reporting to both instruments, as well as the contents of the reports;
- Create a direct and user-friendly database with all the relevant data and information, and with established, comprehensive guidelines to be helpful in complying properly with the reporting obligations;
- Assist in the development of a national clearing-house mechanism within the framework of the two instruments and share its benefits;
- Develop joint work plans in order to achieve harmonized implementation of the two instruments.

49. During the debate on the item, the comments made centered around the two main elements listed below.

Element 1

What are the obstacles, if any, which impede the achievement of the above suggestions and need to be overcome

50. Delegates identified the following issues:

- The need to facilitate information exchange at the national level. In that connection, the process for national reporting could be used to reinforce cooperation within countries themselves;
- The need to involve stakeholders in the transfer of information;
- The importance of giving countries an adequate capacity to compile information in a systematic way;
- The need to bridge the gap between scientific institutions and decision makers;
- The need to tackle the conflict between economic pressures and conservation of sites of interest;
- The need to assist developing countries and countries with economies in transition with capacity-building;
- The need to overcome the lack of cooperation between institutions within countries.

Element 2

Other initiatives, which would assist in the harmonization for better coordination, consultation and sharing of information

51. Delegates identified the following issues:

- The need for a national reporting system and ongoing exchanges of information between the entities responsible for each convention;
- The importance of managing the quality and dissemination of such information at the national level and of validating the data;
- The need for proper organization of the national focal point structures themselves;
- The desirability of an appropriate network for international exchange of information on biodiversity-related conventions,
- The need to base national reports on a harmonized database and to harmonize data regionally;
- The need to increase cooperation between the CBD focal points and those of other biodiversity-related conventions,
- The need for all countries to agree on a harmonized scientific monitoring system;
- The need for active coordination between the convention secretariats;
- The importance of exchange of precise and qualified information;
- The idea that establishment of databases to gather information on biological diversity promoted cooperation at the national level.

52. The Meeting approved the Secretariat's proposals, as set out in paragraph 48 above.

Agenda item 5 - Development of the clearing-house mechanism of the CBD in the Mediterranean at the regional level

53. The Secretariat introduced section 4 of the document UNEP(DEC)/MED WG.176/3. The representative of the CBD Secretariat gave a presentation on the CBD clearing-house mechanism and described its background, national focal points, long-term work and strategy, and current projects. She reported that its conclusions were to support the national, regional and international institutions and to be a forum for collaboration between them, and to further develop the mechanism for scientific and technical collaboration and cooperation.

54. The Meeting expressed support for the general concept of setting up a Mediterranean regional-level clearing-house mechanism, and for the idea that RAC/SPA was the appropriate body to deal with the Mediterranean initiative. Such an initiative would collate the findings of the different national

clearing-house mechanisms and could act as an important liaison system between countries. However, some representatives, while supporting the general concept, questioned how such a mechanism would be organized, how it would function, and the relationship between the focal points of the conventions, the regional clearing-house mechanism and of the global CBD clearing-house mechanism. Some representatives opposed a further proliferation of information exchange entities, believing that, in some countries, it was more important to concentrate on the gathering of base data and on activities to protect endangered species.

55. Some representatives stressed the need for a Mediterranean regional-level clearing-house mechanism to take into account the experiences of the initiative already launched to set up subregional clearing-house mechanisms among the Arab States, to exchange information and share collective experience on biological diversity, as well as the initiative for the Adriatic. One representative believed that countries first needed to develop their national clearing-house mechanisms, to ensure that information first received the appropriate national dissemination.
56. The representative of the Secretariat clarified that, although it was too early to go into the finer details of its operations, a Mediterranean regional-level clearing-house mechanism would constitute a network of national networks. It would not duplicate the work of any other initiative, but would rather accentuate the provision of information on marine and coastal issues. As such, it could be a pilot project, dealing with information on marine issues and on common concerns with intergovernmental bodies pertinent to the Mediterranean.
57. He explained that some focal points would work with RAC/SPA, which would coordinate the regional-level information and linkages to national-level information, and there would still be direct communication from the national level to the global CBD clearing-house mechanism. A regional clearing-house mechanism came within the context of the general harmonization of different national and international clearing-house mechanisms, and standardization of the content was necessary. If a regional-level clearing-house mechanism were to be set up under MAP, then it should be in line with the MAP procedures for information notification between national focal points and RAC/SPA. The aim was to meet the information needs of different countries, while presenting the existing data and information in a standardized format. Concerning the need to generate data, the Secretariat considered that the dissemination of data through a clearing-house mechanism in itself tended to stimulate the demand for the gathering of further information.
58. The Meeting requested RAC/SPA and the CBD Secretariat to submit the comments made at the current Meeting to the Contracting Parties of both instruments and to prepare a feasibility study on the aims, structure, operation, added value and costing of a clearing-house mechanism at the Mediterranean regional level.

Agenda item 6 - Co-ordination for the national process for reporting within the framework of the two instruments

59. As an introduction to the work of the Meeting regarding the item of the agenda, the Secretariat presented section 5 of document UNEP(DEC)/MED WG.176/3. On the basis of the information provided by the Secretariat and the delegations, the Meeting was invited to assess the feasibility of harmonizing the procedures for elaborating national reports, and make recommendations to be submitted to the Parties of both instruments. The representative of UNEP/MEDU informed the Meeting about the ongoing process to set up the reporting system within MAP.
60. A number of representatives reported on the procedures followed in their respective countries for elaborating national reports in the context of the two instruments. In some countries, institutes and focal points were tasked with the preparation work. In some others, the reports were prepared by consultants, experts, or non-governmental organizations and were subsequently reviewed and validated by a national committee. One representative pointed out that, while no set process for report preparation existed in her country, the procedure relied on coordination and cooperation between the Ministry of Environment and other relevant Ministries. The representative of an economic integration organization reported that the preparatory work was coordinated by the responsible General Directorates in his organization. In one country, owing to the strict separation of competencies between Ministries, the preparation of the national reports was described as complicated, and was currently being coordinated by the focal point.
61. One representative observed that, in preparing the next report for the CBD, her country would be using the standardized format provided by CBD. Her country's SPA report had been prepared on the basis of the format prepared by RAC/SPA. Another representative considered that it was necessary to prepare guidelines for the standardization of reporting to SPA and CBD, which could be forwarded to the Parties for their consideration. Yet another considered that, while a report template had certain advantages, it was not always easy to compartmentalize the information required by the different reports. One representative considered that the structure for the preparation of reports needed to be as simple as possible.
62. Some representatives questioned the value of a concrete and precise calendar or timetable, according to which Parties should submit their reports. Some stressed that the important thing was to concentrate on identifying matching areas in the reports and areas of common interest, rather than to set a calendar.
63. Several representatives expressed a preference for a modular system of reporting to CBD and SPA, while others questioned the advantages of a joint reporting format for CBD and SPA, and pointed to the different levels of information required in the two reports. One representative supported the idea of preparing a single national report, since it meant that the two focal points

could work together, sharing experts and data, and thus offered a more efficient method of working. Another representative requested that the focal points be provided with information on the work ongoing with WCMC on the harmonization of reporting formats for multilateral environmental agreements. National reports on the implementation of the SPA Protocol, taking into account mainly the objectives of the Jakarta Mandate, could constitute the section dealing with conservation of marine and coastal biodiversity in national reports to the CBD.

64. By way of clarification, the Secretariat explained that the aim of a standardized reporting format was to help countries avoid repetition and duplication of work, since data required by the different reports often overlapped. In addition, a modular reporting format should also take into account the UNEP initiative, coordinated by WCMC, to ensure the best way to ease the reporting burden on countries. In conclusion, it was emphasized that the current meeting was for consultations only, and no decisions were expected. At the next meeting of focal points, the RAC/SPA Secretariat would give a presentation on the work of WCMC to coordinate the reporting system between the Secretariats of RAC/SPA and the CBD.

65. The Meeting:

- Agreed that there should be standard formats to comply with the reporting obligations, thus presenting comparable data, which would help in the compilation of information;
- Recommended that modular reporting should be used and harmonized with the reporting systems of other conventions;
- Invited RAC/SPA to pursue harmonization with the other Secretariats regarding the calendar for submission of reports;
- Invited the RAC/SPA and CBD Secretariats to further investigate a method for modular reporting that satisfied the requirements of both instruments.

Agenda item 7 - Cooperation between the Secretariat of the CBD and the Coordinating Unit of the Mediterranean Action Plan

66. The Representative of the Secretariat introduced the Memorandum of Cooperation signed by the Secretariats of both instruments (contained in document UNEP(DEC)/MED WG.176/Inf.3) and informed the meeting about progress in the implementation of the work plan for 2000-2001. He highlighted the fact that the actions included in the working plan fell within the remit of both conventions.

67. Participants emphasized the importance of collaboration between the Secretariats and encouraged them to further develop the cooperation between the two instruments. They encouraged the joint publication of scientific documents and highlighted the importance of indicators in helping to assess the status of marine and coastal biodiversity in the Mediterranean. They requested RAC/SPA to provide countries with further information on the initiatives undertaken within MAP concerning indicators for sustainable

development. The Secretariat was urged to organize the information workshop provided for by the Memorandum of Cooperation's programme of activities. It was also emphasized that, when identifying new indicators, one should take in consideration those indicators related to socio-economic matters. The participants also urged the Secretariat to be specific regarding the marine and coastal biodiversity of the Mediterranean when collaborating with CBD in the harmonization process. The Meeting also stressed that the cooperation between the two Secretariats should not only deal with harmonization, but should also include the implementation of proposals regarding the conservation of the marine and coastal biodiversity of the Mediterranean.

68. In the light of the discussion on this item and the proposals of the Secretariat the meeting agreed that the co-operation between the two Secretariats could be further developed by improving effectiveness and efficiency in the gathering, handling, disseminating and sharing of information and data, giving priority to:

- Improving knowledge on marine and coastal biodiversity in the Mediterranean, using GIS technology, when appropriate;
- Encouraging national level coordination and a standard approach to data collection among the Parties;
- Disseminating and jointly publishing material, particularly of a scientific nature rather than an administrative nature, relevant to both instruments;
- Creating a mechanism for a continuous flow of information between them;
- Developing cooperative programmes, which would specifically link the work programme of the two instruments;
- Identifying pilot projects that could be carried out under the auspices of the two instruments;
- Investigating the possibility of developing a clearing-house mechanism of the CBD in the Mediterranean at the regional level;
- Pursuing work on the definition of indicators with a view to ensuring the proper monitoring of the marine and coastal biodiversity in the Mediterranean.

Agenda item 8 - Any other matters

69. No other points were raised by participants under this agenda item.

Agenda item 9 - Adoption of the report of the meeting

70. The meeting adopted the report, as amended.

Agenda item 10 - Closure of the meeting

71. After the closing speech, made by Mr. Lucien Chabason (MAP Coordinator), and customary exchange of courtesies, the meeting was closed on Saturday, 21 April 2001 at 6.30 p.m.

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ANNEX II: AGENDA OF THE MEETING

AGENDA OF THE MEETING

- Agenda item 1 - Opening of the Meeting
- Agenda item 2 - Election of officers
- Agenda item 3 - Adoption of the Agenda and organisation of work
- Agenda item 4 - Co-ordination, consultation and sharing of information at national level concerning the Jakarta Mandate of CBD and the Mediterranean SPA Protocol
- Agenda item 5 - Development of the clearing-house mechanism of the CBD in the Mediterranean at the regional level
- Agenda item 6 - Co-ordination for the national process for reporting within the framework of the two instruments
- Agenda item 7 - Cooperation between the Secretariat of the CBD and the Co-ordinating Unit of the Mediterranean Action Plan
- Agenda item 8 - Any other matters
- Agenda item 9 - Adoption of the report of the meeting
- Agenda item 10 - Closure of the meeting

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ANNEX II: AGENDA OF THE MEETING

AGENDA OF THE MEETING

- Agenda item 1 - Opening of the Meeting
- Agenda item 2 - Election of officers
- Agenda item 3 - Adoption of the Agenda and organisation of work
- Agenda item 4 - Co-ordination, consultation and sharing of information at national level concerning the Jakarta Mandate of CBD and the Mediterranean SPA Protocol
- Agenda item 5 - Development of the clearing-house mechanism of the CBD in the Mediterranean at the regional level
- Agenda item 6 - Co-ordination for the national process for reporting within the framework of the two instruments
- Agenda item 7 - Cooperation between the Secretariat of the CBD and the Co-ordinating Unit of the Mediterranean Action Plan
- Agenda item 8 - Any other matters
- Agenda item 9 - Adoption of the report of the meeting
- Agenda item 10 - Closure of the meeting