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**MEDITERRANEAN ACTION PLAN**  
Regional Activity Centre for  
Specially Protected Areas

Expert meeting on common criteria  
for the choice of protected marine and coastal areas  
that could be included in the SPAMI List

Tunis, 22-23 March 1996

**REPORT**

**OF THE EXPERT MEETING ON COMMON CRITERIA  
FOR THE CHOICE OF PROTECTED MARINE AND COASTAL AREAS  
THAT COULD BE INCLUDED IN THE SPAMI LIST**

**Introduction:**

1. During the Conference of Plenipotentiaries held in Barcelona on 9 and 10 June 1995 the Contracting Parties to the Convention for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea against Pollution adopted a new protocol (Protocol concerning Specially Protected Areas and Biological Diversity in the Mediterranean).
2. The final act of the above-mentioned conference of plenipotentiaries stipulates that the annexes to this protocol will be adopted in a forthcoming meeting of plenipotentiaries. One of these annexes concerns the "common criteria for the choice of protected marine and coastal areas that could be included in the List of Specially Protected Areas of Mediterranean Importance (SPAMI)".
3. In order to elaborate the common criteria that will constitute the above-mentioned annex, a meeting of experts has been organized by the Regional Activity Centre for Specially Protected Areas (RAC/SPA) in Tunis on 22 and 23 March 1996.

**Agenda item 1 : Opening of the meeting**

4. The meeting was opened on Friday 22 March 1996. Mr. Mohamed SAIED, Director of RAC/SPA welcomed the participants and noted that the presence at this meeting of experts representing most Mediterranean Countries as well as several NGOs is a sign of the importance given to the topic of this meeting.
5. The Director of RAC/SPA then evoked the framework in which the meeting was organized and invited Mr. Ibrahim DHARAT to open the meeting on behalf of the Coordinating Unit of the Mediterranean Action Plan.
6. At the beginning of his speech, Mr. DHARAT expressed his thanks to the Tunisian authorities for their support for the organization of this meeting. He also congratulated RAC/SPA for the good preparation of the meeting, which will facilitate tackling the heavily loaded agenda.
7. The representative of the MAP Coordinating Unit then reviewed the major objectives of the MAP as well as the recent developments that have occurred within its framework since the 1992 UNCED. He also listed the different protocols adopted within the Barcelona Convention as well as the major new orientations introduced at the level of MAP Phase II. He further observed that the new orientations of the MAP are inspired by the recommendations of the Tunis Conference held in November

1994, during which the Agenda MED 21 was recommended for the Mediterranean countries to utilize it as a reference tool.

8. Mr. DHARAT underlined the importance of the present meeting and indicated that the criteria to be elaborated will contribute in the promotion of the cooperation between Mediterranean countries in the field of management and conservation of the natural heritage as well as in the field of the protection of threatened species and their habitats in the Mediterranean.

9. The following Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention were represented at the meeting: Albania, Algeria, Croatia, Cyprus, Egypt, European Community, France, Greece, Israel, Italy, Lebanon, Libya, Malta, Monaco, Morocco, Slovenia, Spain, Syria, Tunisia and Turkey. The meeting was also attended by the representatives of the MedWet programme, as well as the representatives of the following NGOs : World Wildlife Fund (WWF), MEDMARAVIS, Birdlife International and "Instituto Universitario de Ciencias Ambientales". The list of participants is attached as Annex I to the present report.

#### **Agenda item 2 : Rules of procedure**

10. The meeting noted that the Rules of Procedure applicable to meetings and conferences of the Contracting Parties to the Convention for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea against Pollution (doc. UNEP/IG.43/6, Annex XI) would apply mutatis mutandis to its deliberations.

#### **Agenda item 3 : Election of the Bureau**

11. The meeting unanimously elected among the representatives of the Contracting Parties present in the meeting:

Chairman: - Mr. Patrick VAN KLAVEREN (Monaco);  
Vice-Chairman: - Mr. Adel Ibrahim El GAZAR (Egypt);  
Vice-Chairman: - Ms. Figen ERKOC (Turkey);  
Rapporteur: - Mr. André MANCHE (France).

#### **Agenda item 4 : Adoption of the Agenda and organization of work**

12. The meeting adopted the agenda proposed by the Secretariat, included in the document UNEP(OCA)/MED WG.108/1 and annotated in the document UNEP(OCA)/MED WG.108/2. The agenda is attached as Annex II to this report.

**Agenda item 5: Review of the provisions relating to SPAMIs in the Protocol concerning Specially Protected Areas and Biological Diversity in the Mediterranean.**

13. The Secretariat mentioned the steps that led to the adoption of the new Protocol concerning Specially Protected Areas and Biological Diversity in the Mediterranean. He also set out the main new elements introduced by this protocol which is to replace, once it comes into force, the SPA Protocol adopted in Geneva in 1982.

14. The Secretariat also recalled the provisions relating to SPAMIs and in particular those concerning the procedure for inclusion of protected areas in the SPAMI List. To this end document UNEP(OCA)/MED WG.108/Inf.3 was introduced.

15. During the work of the meeting on this agenda item and following on questions from some delegations as to the extent of the geographical coverage of the new Protocol, there was an exchange of views on this subject.

16. In response to a question on the status this Protocol provides for specially protected areas already notified to RAC/SPA and included in the Directory of marine and coastal areas drawn up on the basis of the SPA Protocol (Geneva, 1982), the Secretariat reminded the meeting that the SPAMI List is the only official list provided for by the new protocol. Other protected areas created by the Parties will be notified to RAC/SPA within the framework of exchanges of information.

**Agenda item 6 : Common criteria for the choice of protected marine and coastal areas that could be included in the SPAMI List**

17. By way of introduction to this agenda item, the Secretariat introduced document UNEP(OCA)/MED WG.108/3. Stress was laid in particular on the principles used as a basis for the preparation of the document.

18. There was a preliminary discussion of the document as a whole which led to the approval of its structure.

19. The meeting then examined the document paragraph by paragraph. The work of the meeting led to the drawing up of draft common criteria for the choice of marine and coastal protected areas that could be included in the SPAMI list (see Annex III of this report).

20. During the work of the meeting on this agenda item, there were long discussions as to giving different degrees of importance to the criteria. After these discussions the meeting approved the view that an order of priority must be reflected in the draft common criteria elaborated by the meeting. This order of priority should

take into account the provisions of the Protocol relating to SPAMIs as well as the general aims of the Protocol. The meeting also agreed that the conservation of the natural heritage remains the major aim, without however neglecting the protection of the cultural heritage which is one of the aims of the Protocol.

**Agenda item 7 : Adoption of the report of the meeting**

21. The report of the meeting presented to participants by the Rapporteur was adopted after discussion, along with the draft criteria.

**Agenda Item 8 : Closure of the meeting**

22. After the customary exchange of courtesies, the Chairman closed the meeting on Saturday 23 November at 20.00 hours.

## ANNEX I

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## ANNEX II

### AGENDA OF THE MEETING

1. Opening of the meeting
2. Rules of procedure
3. Election of officers
4. Adoption of the Agenda and organization of work
5. Review of the provisions relating to SPAMIs in the Protocol concerning Specially Protected Areas and Biological Diversity in the Mediterranean
6. Common criteria for the choice of protected marine and coastal areas that could be included in the SPAMI list.
7. Adoption of the report of the meeting
8. Closure of the meeting

## ANNEX III

### DRAFT COMMON CRITERIA FOR THE CHOICE OF PROTECTED MARINE AND COASTAL AREAS THAT COULD BE INCLUDED IN THE SPAMI LIST

(elaborated by the Meeting of Experts held in Tunis, 22-23 March 1996)

#### GENERAL PRINCIPLES

The Contracting Parties agree that the following general principles will guide their work in establishing the SPAMI List:

- (i) The conservation of the natural heritage is the basic aim that must characterize a SPAMI. The pursuit of other aims such as the conservation of the cultural heritage, the promotion of scientific research, education, participation, collaboration, etc., is highly desirable in SPAMIs and constitutes a factor in favour of a site being included on the List, to the extent in which these remain compatible with the aims of conservation.
- (ii) No limit is imposed on the total number of areas included in the List or on the number of areas any individual Party can propose for inscription. Nevertheless, the Parties agree that sites will be selected, on scientific bases and listed according to their qualities; they will have therefore to fulfil the requirements set out by the Protocol and the present criteria.
- (iii) The listed SPAMI and their geographical distribution will have to be representative of the Mediterranean region and its biodiversity. To this end the list will have to represent the highest number possible of types of habitats and ecosystems.
- (iv) The SPAMIs will have to constitute the core of a network aiming at the effective conservation of the Mediterranean heritage. To attain this objective, the Parties will develop their cooperation on bilateral and multilateral bases in the field of conservation and management of natural sites and notably through the establishment of transboundary SPAMIs.
- (v) The sites included in the SPAMI list are intended to have a value of example and model for the protection of the natural heritage of the region. To this end, the Parties ensure that sites included in the list are provided with adequate legal status, protection measures and management methods and means.



## GENERAL FEATURES OF THE AREAS THAT COULD BE INCLUDED IN THE SPAMI LIST

1. To be eligible for inclusion in the SPAMI List, an area must fulfil at least one of the general criteria set in Article 8 paragraph 2 of the Protocol. Several of these general criteria can in certain cases be fulfilled by the same area, and such a circumstance can only strengthen the case for the inclusion of the area in the List.

2. The regional value is a basic requirement of an area for being included in the SPAMI list. The following criteria should be used in evaluating the Mediterranean interest of an area:

a) Uniqueness.

The area contains unique or rare ecosystems, or rare or endemic species.

b) Natural representativeness.

The area has highly representative ecological processes, or community or habitat types or other natural characteristics. Representativeness is the degree to which an area represents a habitat types, ecological process, biological community, physiographic feature or other natural characteristic.

c) Diversity.

The area has a high variety of species, ecosystems, habitats, or communities.

d) Naturalness.

The area has a high degree of Naturalness as a result of the lack or low level of human-induced disturbance and degradation.

e) Presence of habitats that are critical to endangered species<sup>1</sup>.

f) Cultural representativeness.

The area has a high representative value with respect to the cultural heritage, due to the existence of traditional activities which support the well-being of local populations.

3. To be included in the SPAMI List, an area having scientific, educational or aesthetic interest must, respectively, present a particular value for research in the field of natural sciences or for activities of environmental education or awareness or contain outstanding natural features, landscapes or seascapes.

4. Besides the fundamental criteria specified in article 8, paragraph 2, of the Protocol, a certain number of other characteristics and factors should be considered as favourable for the inclusion of the site in the List. These include:

a) the existence of threats likely to impair the ecological, biological, aesthetic

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<sup>1</sup> The idea of endangered species includes also endangered endemic species

or cultural value of the area;

b) the involvement and active participation of the public in general, and particularly of local communities, in the process of planning and management of the area;

c) the existence of a body representing the public, professional, non-governmental and scientific sectors involved in the area;

d) the existence in the area of opportunities for sustainable development;

e) the existence of an integrated coastal management plan within the meaning of Article 4 para. 3 (e) of the Convention.

## LEGAL STATUS

1. All areas eligible for inclusion in the SPAMI List must be awarded a legal status guaranteeing their effective long-term protection.

2. In order to be included in the SPAMI List, if a site is situated in a zone already delimited over which a Party exercises sovereignty or jurisdiction, it must have a protected status recognized by the Party concerned.

3. In the case of sites situated, partly or wholly, on the high seas or in an area where the limits of national sovereignty or jurisdiction have not yet been defined, the legal status, the management plan, the applicable measures and the other elements provided for in Article 9, paragraph 3, of the Protocol will be provided by the neighbouring Parties concerned in the proposal for inclusion in the SPAMI List.

## PROTECTION, PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT MEASURES

1. Conservation and management objectives must be clearly defined in the texts relating to each site, and will constitute the basis for assessment of the adequacy of the adopted measures and the effectiveness of their implementation at the periodic revisions of the SPAMI list.

2. Protection, planning and management measures applicable to each area must be adequate for the achievement of the conservation and management objectives set for the site in the short and long term, and take in particular into account the threats upon it.

3. Protection, planning and management measures must be based on an adequate knowledge of the elements of the natural environment and of socio-economic and cultural factors that characterize each area. In case of shortcomings in basic knowledge, an area proposed for inclusion in the SPAMI List must have a programme for the collection of the unavailable data and information.

4. The competence and responsibility with regard to administration and implementation of conservation measures for areas proposed for inclusion on the SPAMI list must be clearly defined in the texts governing each area.

5. In the respect of the specificity characterizing each protected site, the protection measures for a SPAMI must take account of the following basic aspects:

a) the strengthening of the regulation of the release or dumping of wastes and other substances likely directly or indirectly to impair the integrity of the area;

b) the strengthening of the regulation of the introduction or reintroduction of any species into the area;

c) the regulation of any activity or act likely to harm or disturb the species, or that might endanger the state of conservation of the ecosystems or species or might impair the natural, cultural or aesthetic characteristics of the area.

d) the regulation applicable to the zones surrounding the area in question.

6. To be included in the SPAMI List, a protected area must have a management body, endowed with sufficient powers as well as means and human resources to prevent and/or control activities likely to be contrary to the aims of the protected area.

7. To be included in the SPAMI List an area will have to be endowed with a management plan. The main rules of this management plan are to be laid down as from the time of inclusion and implemented immediately. A detailed management plan must be presented within three years of the time of inclusion. Failure to respect this obligation entails the removal of the site from the List.

8. To be included in the SPAMI List, an area will have to be endowed with a monitoring programme. This programme should include the identification and monitoring of a certain number of indicators for the area in question, in order to allow the assessment of the state and evolution of the area, as well as the effectiveness of protection and management measures implemented, so that they may be adapted if need be. To this end further necessary studies are to be commissioned.