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**DRAFT REPORT ON THE EVALUATION OF RAC/SPA
(Regional Activity Centre/Special Protected Areas)**

Draft Report on the Evaluation of RAC/SPA (Regional Activity Centre/Special Protected Areas)

A. Background

At their Tenth Ordinary Meeting (Tunis 18-21 November 1997), the Contracting Parties to the Convention for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea Against Pollution (Barcelona Convention) decided that an evaluation of the activities of the Mediterranean Action Programme (MAP) Regional Activity Centres (RACs) and other MAP Programmes should be undertaken. RAC/PAP (the Regional Activity Centre/Priority Actions Programme) and RAC/PB (the Regional Activity Centre/Blue Plan) have already been evaluated. The Twelfth Meeting of the Contracting Parties recommended that RAC/SPA should be evaluated.

In accordance with this decision, the MAP Co-ordinating Unit (MEDU) commissioned three consultants (Dr Ghazi BITAR, Prof Giulio RELLINI and Mr Michael SMART) to undertake the evaluation of the RAC/SPA (Regional Activity Centre/Special Protection Areas), sited in Tunis, Tunisia. Dr. Bitar and Prof Rellini are experts in marine biology with extensive experience in Mediterranean marine conservation. Dr. Bitar's principal responsibility was to undertake consultations with governmental and non-governmental bodies in eastern and southern Mediterranean states; Prof Rellini's principal task was to undertake consultations with governmental and non-governmental bodies in the western and northern Mediterranean states. Mr. Smart's experience has been in international conservation organizations and wetland conservation; his role was to make contacts with international bodies and to co-ordinate the production of the report on the evaluation.

B. Working Methods

At the beginning of their assignment, the three consultants met senior staff of MEDU and RAC/SPA in Tunis in October 2002, and held interviews with RAC/SPA staff at all levels. They were provided with copies of the evaluations already carried out on other RACs (Blue Plan and PAP/RAC), and of the questionnaires used by the evaluators of the other centres. It was understood that, while funds would be provided for some of their travel, they should use missions carried out in other contexts to extend the range of their consultations.

The consultants were also requested to review the publications and finances of the centre.

After their initial meetings in Tunis, the three consultants devoted considerable time to developing a questionnaire (in English and French, responses given in Section G of the present report) that crystallized the information they were seeking. In a series of visits and interviews carried out during winter 2002/03 and spring 2003, they used this questionnaire as a basis for discussions, and requested appropriate government officials and governmental and non-governmental experts to complete the questionnaire, either by post or by email. It was agreed in advance by the consultants, and made clear to all persons contacted, that responses to the questionnaire and comments made in interviews would remain confidential and that the authors of comments and written remarks would not be identified. Prof. Rellini and Mr. Smart also attended the Sixth Meeting of Focal Points for Specially Protected Areas, held in Marseille, France from 17 to 20 June 2003, where they were able to hold further discussions with RAC/SPA National Focal Points and other participants, and to listen to the discussion in plenary session. They made a preliminary oral report to the Sixth Meeting, which provided extensive comments. The Sixth Meeting was a major opportunity to obtain further input to the evaluation.

C. Contacts made

Contacts were made with Government officials and experts in the following states and organizations:

- Albania Questionnaire completed, discussions with former National Focal Point at MAP headquarters in Athens; interview with Albanian representative at Sixth Meeting in Marseille.
- Algeria Questionnaire sent to National Focal Point but no response received; unfortunately no representative at Sixth Meeting in Marseille.
- Bosnia and Herzegovina Interview with national representative at the Sixth Meeting in Marseille.
- Croatia Interview at Sixth Meeting in Marseille.
- Cyprus Questionnaire completed, meetings held in Cyprus, contacts at Sixth Meeting in Marseille.
- Egypt Questionnaire completed, contacts at Sixth Meeting in Marseille.
- France Questionnaire completed, meetings and interviews held in Paris, contacts at Sixth Meeting in Marseille.
- Greece Questionnaire completed, meetings and interviews in Athens, contacts at Sixth Meeting in Marseille.
- Israel Interview and contacts at the Sixth Meeting in Marseille.
- Italy Questionnaire completed, meetings in Rome.
- Lebanon Questionnaires completed, meetings in Beirut.
- Libya Questionnaire completed, contacts at Sixth Meeting in Marseille.
- Malta Contacts at Sixth Meeting in Marseille.
- Monaco Questionnaires completed, meetings in Monaco, contacts at Sixth Meeting in Marseille.
- Morocco Questionnaire completed.
- Slovenia Questionnaire sent, phone interview, contacts at Sixth Meeting in Marseille.
- Spain Interviews at Sixth Meeting in Marseille.
- Syria Questionnaires completed, interview in Damascus, contacts at Sixth Meeting in Marseille.
- Tunisia Interviews in Tunis, contacts at Sixth Meeting in Marseille.
- Turkey Interviews in Ankara.

- Convention on Migratory Species Interview at Sixth Meeting in Marseille, telephone interview.
- Ramsar Convention on Wetlands Contacts with secretariat in Switzerland, interview with MedWet representative at Sixth Meeting in Marseille.
- Berne Convention Questionnaire completed, telephone interview.

- MEDU, Athens Interviews in Tunis, Athens and Marseille.
- RAC/PB (Blue Plan Office) Interviews in Antibes.

- IUCN, the World Conservation Union Interviews in Switzerland and at Regional Office in Malaga, Spain, where questionnaires completed, contacts at Sixth Meeting in Marseille.

- Tour du Valat Biological Station, France Interviews.
- MEDASSET Interviews at Sixth Meeting in Marseille.
- WWF Telephone contacts with headquarters in Switzerland, interviews with Regional Programme at Sixth Meeting, Marseille.

Meetings organised by RAC/SPA and printed materials produced by RAC/SPA

The following review of meetings organised by RAC/SPA and printed materials produced by RAC/SPA is based on materials supplied by the Centre. Some considerations on technical cooperation have been added. Comments are based on data available in the reports of activity of RAC/SPA from 1994 to December 2001, but from these documents it is not possible to judge the value and quality either of meetings or printed materials.

It should be emphasized that two major new projects have considerably increased the number of meetings organised. The "Project for the preparation of a Strategic Action Plan for the conservation of Biological Diversity (SAP BIO) in the Mediterranean Region" (hereafter called the SAP/BIO project) began in January 2001 and is due to last for three years; it involves application in the Mediterranean of the Convention on Biological Diversity. The Regional Project for the development of Marine and Coastal Protected Areas in the Mediterranean Region (hereafter called the MedMPA project) began in March 2002, but preparatory meetings were held in the previous years.

The subdivisions into different categories are those suggested in the above-mentioned reports. Sometimes the boundary between two categories is not clear and it seems that some activities were put in different categories in different years. But what is important is the overall work carried out.

(1) MEETINGS

The total of 66 meetings are divided into four categories. The two main categories are Expert Group Meetings and Workshops or Training seminars covering 30.30% and 57.59% respectively of total meeting activity.

(i) Intergovernmental (IG) Meetings (Total 3) 4.54 %

Three meetings of National Focal Points (the 3rd, the 4th and 5th) were held as follows:

Year	Number of participants	Place
1996	38	Tunisia
1999	41	Tunisia
2001	46	Spain

(ii) Expert Group Meetings (Total 20) 30.30 %

These Expert Group Meetings were held as follows:

Year	No. of meetings	No. of participants	Places
1994	2	51	Morocco, France
1995	1	35	France
1996	1	41	Tunisia
1997	2	43	Tunisia, Greece
1998	4	80	Greece, France, Tunisia
1999	3	102	Tunisia, Libya
2000	2	63	France
2001	5	87	Spain, Tunisia, France

(iii) Training Seminars/Workshops (Total 38) 57.59 %

Year	No. of training sessions	No. of participants	Places
1994	4	37	Tunis, France, Ligurian and Ionian seas and Cyprus
1995	5	62	France, Italy, Turkey, Tunisia
1996	4	15	France, Greece, Cyprus, Spain
1997	6	44	Greece, Tunisia, France, Cyprus
1998	6	71	Tunisia, Monaco, Malta, Morocco, Cyprus
1999	6	57	Italy, France, Tunisia, Cyprus, Turkey
2000	3	49	France, Cyprus, Spain
2001	4	135	Libya, Tunisia, Cyprus, Roma

(iv) Other meetings (Total 5) 7.57 %

Other meetings were held as follows: in 1998, one in Monaco and two in Tunisia; in 1999 one in Tunisia and one in Libya.

(2) PRINTED MATERIALS

Among the four categories of printed materials, the most important is that of Technical Reports with 68.8% of the total.

(i) Report to Intergovernmental Meeting 1.63%

MEDU - Biodiversity in December 2001.

(ii) Technical Publications (Total 7) 11.47%

Technical publications were produced as follows: one in 1994 on legislation, one in 1995 on turtles, three in 1996 (two on turtles, one on Monk Seals), and two in 1999 (on turtles and Monk Seals, both of them in English and French).

(iii) Technical Reports (Total 41) 68.85%

Technical reports were produced as follows: one on cetaceans in 1994; four in 1995 (one on seals, one on marine protected areas, one on wetlands and one on training); three in 1996 (one on seals, one on turtles and one on coastal management); four in 1997 (one on turtles and management of Special Protected Areas, one on habitats and species, one on biodiversity of invertebrates, one on legislation); seventeen in 1998 (three on cetaceans, six on seals, two on turtles, the second edition of the List of Mammals, one on indices of Mediterranean Biodiversity, one on Areas of Special Protection in Tunisia, one on classification of habitats, one on conservation in Israel, one Marine Park Report); five in 1999 (one on turtles in Tunisia, one on Areas of Special Protection in Egypt, one in English on training for Areas of Special Protection, one on France, one on classification of coastal habitats); five in 2000 (one on Monk Seal, one on turtles, one on tools and guidance for the SPAMI List, one on sea grass, one on marine vegetation); and two in 2001 (one on the marine environment of Malta and one a park in Tunisia).

(iv) Other reports	(Total 7)	18.03%
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Other reports were produced as follows: in 1994, one on Areas of Marine Protection; in 1995, one on cetaceans; in 1996, one on seals, one on turtles and one on cetaceans; in 1998 a turtle bibliography; and in 1998 the ASPIM Protocol (in English and French).

In addition, a turtle poster was published in Croatian and also in Arabic in 1998, the book on Areas of Special Protection from 1982 to 1995, a poster in 1999 and Habitat types in 2001.

(3) TECHNICAL COOPERATION

Among the four categories of technical cooperation the principal one is Grants and Fellowships.

(i) Grants and Fellowships	(Total 20)	41.66%
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A total of 20 grants and fellowships were made available: two in 1994 (Cyprus for turtles, various for cetaceans); three in 1996 (various for cetaceans, turtles and mammals); two in 1997 (Greece and various for cetaceans); four in 1998 (various for mammals and cetaceans, Cyprus for turtles, Croatia for cetaceans); three in 1999 (various for cetaceans in France, Tunisia for turtle centre, Cyprus for turtles in Croatia and Malta); and six in 2000 (MedWet in Djerba, IUCN in Tunisia, ICCAT students in France, CRIDEAU/INRA in Tunisia, Caulerpa algae in Tunisia and Birds of Tunisia).

(ii) Staff Missions	(Total 24)	12.50%
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Thirteen staff missions were carried out; eleven in 2000 and 13 in 2001.

(iii) Advisory Services	(Total 11)	25%
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Eleven cases of Advisory Services were recorded between 1994 and 1999: two were in 1994 (a lake in Egypt and Special Protected Areas legislation in Malta); one in 1995 (biodiversity in Albania); four in 1997 (Special Protected Areas in Syria and Egypt, biodiversity in Tunisia, Special Protected Area management in France), three in 1998 (a lake in Egypt, Slovenian wetland visit to France, Tunisian vegetation) and one in 1999 (Djerba marine protected area in Tunisia).

(iv) Other technical co-operation	(Total 14)	20.83%
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Fourteen cases of other technical co-operation were recorded between 1994 and 2001. In 1994 there were two (a course in Tunisia and turtles in Tunisia); in 1997 four; in 1998 one (Special Protected Areas in Tunisia); in 1999 four (Special Protected Areas List in the Mediterranean, turtles and ecosystems in Tunisia, a workshop in Tunisia, Sustainable Development Day in Tunisia); in 2000 one (six activities in the first part of the year); and in 2001 two (Special Protected Areas in Slovenia and data for Al Hoceima National Park, Morocco).

E. Review of financial issues

The following review of financial issues has been carried out on the basis of materials provided by RAC/SPA. This section of the report makes a cost-benefit analysis of the budget of RAC/SPA in relation to its activities, and deals with how resources were allocated and the efficiency of expenditures. It should be emphasized that the SAP/BIO project began in January 2001, with annual financial support of some 300.000 US dollars from the World Bank; this project practically doubled the budget of RAC/SPA, though the number of staff did not increase accordingly. From March 2002 the MedMPA project will provide an additional 600.000 euros per annum for three years.

(1) Comparison between approved and allocated budgets

The budgets approved between 1994 and 2001 have shown an increase. The budget approved over this period is of the order of four million dollars; it rose from 300,000 dollars in 1994 to reach 670,000 dollars in 1999 and 600,000 in 2001. This increase is partly due to contributions from the European Union from 1998 onwards.

A comparison between approved and allocated budgets for the years 1994 to 2001 shows no significant variance, except for the years 1997 - when there was a decrease (517,000 dollars approved, 294,000 dollars allocated) - and 1995, - when there was an increase (361,000 dollars approved and 540,000 allocated). It should be noted that the budgets allocated increased considerably in 2000 (617,000 dollars) and 2001 (724,000 dollars). The difference between the amounts allocated, especially in 1996 and 1997, and the delay in payments by Contracting Parties are reflected in the achievement of the objectives set out by the Contracting Parties.

(2) Comparison of budgets allocated and actual expenditure

A comparison between budgets allocated and actual expenditure shows that RAC/SPA spends almost all of its annual budget, in other words it carries out and achieves all its activities, except for the years 1997, 1998 and 2000. In 1997, a sum of 148,000 dollars (out of a total budget figure of 631,200 dollars) was not spent; similarly in 1998, a sum of 170,000 dollars (out of the 517,000 dollars allocated) was not spent. In 2000 a sum of 75,700 dollars out of a total allocation of 527,000 dollars was not spent. These three amounts are spread over several budgets for different activities, which were either carried out partially or were left undone. The principal activities concerned were: Coastal Area Management Programmes (CAMPs); assistance to countries in the fields of conservation of the biological diversity of endangered species; legislation on protected areas and endangered species; preparation of inventories; training courses. The fundamental reasons why these activities were not carried out in full, or had to be postponed, were: delays in provision of the allocated funds; some Focal Points and/or consultants did not provide the information or documents requested by RAC/SPA.

It is difficult to tell whether, in general terms, the expenses really do correspond to the allocated budgets. The expenditure fits closely with the allocated budgets, since the under-spending (429,000 dollars or 10% of the total budget for the period 1994-2000) is not significant. This indicates that the budget is well managed by RAC/SPA and fits within the budgetary envelope.

(3) Staff and the RAC/SPA office

The staff in 1994 was made up of eight persons: the Director, two experts in marine biology, one data researcher, one administrative assistant, one bilingual secretary, one finance officer and one driver.

By 2001 the staff had increased to twelve persons: the scientific staff still comprises five persons: the Director (geomorphologist); two experts in oceanography; and an oceanographer/ document specialist who has scientific responsibilities in the centre; an additional scientific assistant has been recruited using MedMPA project funding. Administrative support is provided by seven persons: an administrative assistant, a finance officer, two bilingual secretaries and a driver; another secretary and an administrative assistant have been recruited using MedMPA and SAP/BIO funds. This team can be increased by temporary staff who are taken on for short periods.

The RAC/SPA was located in a little office during the period from 1992 to 1996. In 1996 the RAC/SPA was relocated in CITET (International Centre for Environmental Technology in Tunis), near Tunis International Airport. This suite is made up of four small rooms and a library, which is also a small area given the increase in staff at RAC/SPA. RAC/SPA was able to rent a separate suite of offices in 2002, to accommodate staff working on the MedMPA project.

Given the limited number of staff members, its multidisciplinary role, and the variety of activities included in a regional programme covering 20 countries, RAC/SPA needs to increase the numbers of its staff so as to carry out its duties in all the countries concerned. The shortage of space and the presence of temporary staff members creates a stressful situation and undoubtedly affects productivity and efficiency; the staff are as a result obliged to work under conditions that are not really appropriate. Furthermore, the departure, on two occasions, of experts has led to a lack of continuity in the work and delayed the implementation of programmes. In order to increase its cost-benefit ratio, the centre calls on its associates or on national, or occasionally international, consultants.

In terms of the percentage of resources allocated to each of the components of the budget from 1994 to 2001, the major part of the allocations goes to consultants (38%) and to staff salaries (31%), then to training courses and expert meetings (14%). The remaining 17% are expended on travel (6%), equipment (3%) and 8% to other activities (maintenance, reporting, communications). More than 80% of the resources allocated have been used for the most important RAC/SPA activities. The consultants and staff provide the professional, technical and logistical services necessary for the execution of RAC/SPA projects

F. Contacts with international institutions

RAC/SPA has established contacts with a number of international governmental and non-governmental bodies.

Global conventions

As far as global conventions related to biological diversity are concerned, the main contacts have been with:

- the Convention on Biological Diversity, through the SAP/BIO programme;
- the Convention on Migratory Species, through the Agreement on Cetaceans (ACCOBAMS) and the draft Action Plan on Birds, discussed at the Sixth Meeting of Focal Points; and
- the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, mainly through MedWet.

ACCOBAMS (the Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and contiguous Atlantic Area) is a formal Agreement under the Convention on Migratory Species. A Memorandum of Agreement has been signed between ACCOBAMS and RAC/SPA. This envisages that ACCOBAMS would provide the legal

framework, while RAC/SPA, which already has its Action Plan on Cetaceans, should act as the implementing agency for ACCOBAMS in the Mediterranean area. It does not appear as yet that this MoU has been fully put into practice, and there may be some unclarity about the legal status of this and other Action Plans.

The draft Action Plan on Birds has been drawn up in co-operation with the CMS Agreement on African/Eurasian Waterbirds (AEWA). AEWA covers a vast area and the draft Action Plan on Birds (which features the endangered or threatened bird species listed in Annex II of the SPAMI Protocol) will be a regional implementation of AEWA. While it may be outside the strict scope of the present evaluation, the consultants draw attention to certain shortcomings in the text of the draft Action Plan on Birds, recently drawn up at the Sixth Meeting of Focal Points in Marseille. Among these may be mentioned: the reference in the preamble to "European"(sic!) birds wintering in the Mediterranean (as though they belong to Europe, when these are birds breeding in Eurasia with African/Eurasian wintering grounds in the waters of the Mediterranean); the over-emphasis on the breeding areas of the featured coastal species, when passage and wintering areas are just as critical; and the lack of information on where pelagic species are to be found outside the breeding period.

The periodic conferences on Marine Turtles are another way in which CMS cooperates with RAC/SPA and on which an MoU might be developed.

Regional bodies

In terms of regional bodies, the main links are with the Berne Convention (Council of Europe), and the European Commission, which is a Contracting Party and takes a full part in the deliberations of RAC/SPA.

RAC/SPA is regularly invited to meetings of the Standing Committee of the Berne Convention; the Berne Convention secretariat co-operates regularly in technical issues with RAC/SPA, and was much involved in discussions of the revision of the Barcelona Convention and the establishment of the SPAMI Protocol.

IUCN - The World Conservation Union

IUCN is a special case with its mixed governmental and non-governmental constituency; RAC/SPA maintains close links with IUCN, particularly through the new Centre for Mediterranean Cooperation at Málaga, Spain.

Non-Governmental Organizations

Extensive links exist with several non-governmental bodies, including WWF (through its Mediterranean programme sited in Italy) and MEDASSET (the Mediterranean Association to Save the Sea Turtles).

Comments by the international bodies contacted

RAC/SPA contacts with several bodies are, quite properly, through their Mediterranean offices rather than through their global headquarters. Thus the headquarters of Ramsar, IUCN and WWF were not in close touch with RAC/SPA, though their Mediterranean offices were. All of the above bodies have been contacted, and their detailed comments incorporated into Section G below. There follows a summary of the views of international bodies.

In general it may be said the international bodies contacted express strong support for, and

appreciation of, the efforts of RAC/SPA. However, they suggest that its effectiveness could be increased. In particular, they suggest RAC/SPA should be more pro-active towards the Governments, urging them to implement the undertakings they have accepted through the SPAMI Protocol and Action Plans. They also feel that RAC/SPA should give greater emphasis to follow-up of reports and recommendations. They recommend the establishment by RAC/SPA of some kind of medium-term strategy, with specific goals and actions, designed to give a clearer strategic vision of future activities.

There was a general impression that RAC/SPA has tended to be over-ambitious, inclined to do too much on its own, despite its limited resources. Several international organizations are very interested in establishing closer cooperation through formal partnerships or Memoranda of Understanding with RAC/SPA, and negotiations are in some cases going ahead, for example with IUCN. They emphasize that such partnerships would not only be a way to achieve more concrete conservation action, but would also be a way for RAC/SPA to generate additional outside funding (as it has already done in the case of SAP/BIO and MEDMPA). For such partnerships to be effective however, it will be very important for RAC/SPA to give full recognition to the role of the other body and to acknowledge their "ownership" of parts of the results.

G. Results of Interviews and responses to the questionnaire

The consultants drew up the questionnaire, not only to obtain the views of the many people met and interviewed, but also to focus their own ideas. As is often the case with such questionnaires, those completing them were reluctant to express their views on paper or by email (even though they had been assured of confidentiality), or if they did so, they tended to avoid difficult or controversial subjects, and were reluctant to commit themselves openly. As a result, face to face interviews, where the consultants were able to assure the interviewees that their views were "off the record" and that they would not be quoted directly, proved most efficient. In the following paragraphs, the consultants present a resume of the questionnaires returned and of the interviews conducted.

It should also be noted that the responses reflect the different levels of progress in conservation of biological diversity in different countries. Countries where limited progress has so far been achieved in establishment and management of Protected Areas (often paradoxically the countries where diversity is greatest!), often responded with requests for greater technical (but also financial) assistance from RAC/SPA in activities such as fundamental inventory of biodiversity or establishment of Protected Areas; they tended to emphasize the need for practical assistance on the ground, rather than scientific co-ordination; nearly all of these countries expressed high appreciation of the training courses organized by RAC/SPA, calling for more of these courses and more follow-up to courses already held. It seems likely that the calls for greater practical assistance can in future be answered through the SAP/BIO and MEDMPA projects.

On the other hand, countries where a network of protected areas is already well advanced tended to request more detailed technical and scientific co-ordination.

The headings below follow the format of the questionnaire (in bold type), and the resume of responses, drawn up by the consultants, are in italics.

1. Are you in regular contact with RAC/SPA **Yes / No**
If so, what is the nature of these contacts?

Yes and no. Most contacts arise through formal links with RAC/SPA (eg. as RAC/SPA or MAP Focal Points), or because of participation in training courses, involvement in SPAMI, SAP/BIO projects, implementation of action plans, or through visits from RAC/SPA consultants. Thus most contacts were with people working directly with RAC/SPA. Outside this inner circle, RAC/SPA is not well enough known, and should be more widely publicized.

2. What is your view of the objectives of RAC/SPA?
Does / Does not cover the field adequately / Too ambitious / Not ambitious enough
More detailed comments on the objectives.

In general it was felt that the centre does cover the field adequately, but despite the excellent work done by the scientific staff (notably C. Rais, M. Barbieri and G. Torchia), the achievement of the aims is sometimes poor because the number of experts at the centre is insufficient. There are sometimes insufficient possibilities for action on the ground. RAC/SPA has the potential to do much more, especially in the fields of regular working groups on Mediterranean species, and more regular training. It should devote more time to fund-raising to avoid budgetary constraints imposed by its current limited means.

Some of those contacted felt RAC/SPA should assist countries in drawing up and implementing regional and national strategies and action plans on different aspects of marine and coastal biodiversity conservation, and in public awareness programmes.

International organizations in particular, but some national contacts too, felt that it would be highly desirable to define the Centre's objectives better, through a document providing a medium term strategic vision. Even when a formal document such as a Memorandum of Understanding has been signed, questions may in practice remain unanswered on the relative roles of the bodies concerned.

3. Your views on RAC/SPA's success in achieving its objectives.

Successful / Not successful / Partially successful

More detailed comments on success in achieving the objectives, particularly on any items which have been specially valuable to you (eg success stories at regional or national level), on any aspects which have disappointed you, and on ways in which greater success could be achieved in future.

Successful / partially successful. Activities specifically mentioned as successful by a number of persons contacted included projects and training workshops on marine turtles (often in co-operation with other organizations) and also sea grass. The SAP/BIO operation was also generally seen as a success story.

It was generally agreed that there is a need for better monitoring of the success in achieving the objectives.

Some participants found it difficult to respond to this question because of unclarity about the precise objectives of RAC/SPA. While one of the Centre's main concerns is obviously the implementation of the SPAMI Protocol, the Centre is involved in many different activities, and it is difficult to find a simple statement of the Centre's aims and objectives. This could be set out more clearly in a "strategic vision" document. That said, there was much admiration for the amount of work done with minimal resources.

Several respondents noted that it was impossible to do more without greater resources.

4. In which areas of its work has RAC/SPA not fulfilled your expectations, and how would you suggest this be improved?

In general it is necessary to improve collaboration with countries and potential partner organizations, and to ask them for better participation, both by experts and National Focal Points. Such cooperation should be sought at the preparatory/ design stages of any project, not when the project document has already been finalized.

When RAC/SPA provides consultants, it should ensure that they provide reports rapidly.

There is a need to pay greater attention to practical follow-up of recommendations and their implementation on the ground. One respondent noted a lack of good concise guidelines on practical implementation, particularly as regards Action Plans; documents remain in the form in which they are submitted to meetings, and are rarely developed into practical guidelines.

More funds for research are also required in participating countries.

5. Should RAC/SPA give greater weight to marine or coastal issues?

Marine / Coastal / Mixture of each

More detailed comments on the balance between marine and coastal issues.

Absolute priority should be given to the marine environment. In the framework of existing international agreements, ASPIM must be devoted mainly to the sea. Nevertheless, given the amendments made to the Barcelona Convention, the impact of coastal issues on marine life must not be forgotten, so that a mixture of both issues should be sought.

6. Quality of RAC/SPA's scientific work.

Good / Moderate / Poor

More detailed comments on the quality of scientific work.

Good and moderate. Much very good work done by some experts of the RAC/SPA. Reports from external experts and consultants are sometimes poor and not validated by centre staff. Greater care needs to be taken in selection of consultants, some of whom are chosen on the basis of convenience or familiarity rather than scientific merit. While it may be invidious to single out individuals, respondents to the questionnaire and persons interviewed were unanimous in their praise for the work of Mr Chedly Rais, both in terms of his extreme hard work and of the quality of the work produced. It is no exaggeration to say that RAC/SPA would probably collapse if he were to leave in the near future.

One respondent noted that scientific reports and documents rarely led to formulation of guidelines on practical action on the ground, as happened in other UNEP Conventions. Another noted that good scientific work (eg on Posidonia) had not been followed up with practical conservation work.

7. Quality of RAC/SPA's publications (Preparation of documents for wide distribution; proceedings of meetings)

Good / Moderate / Poor

More detailed comments on the quality of publications.

Good to moderate.

It is necessary to improve the diffusion and distribution of scientific and technical documents. There was a widespread feeling that the website needed much more attention and more regular updating (one comment was that it was "not operational"). It was generally felt that the Centre produced many excellent publications and technical reports, but that these were often little known because of the difficulty of obtaining them. All such documents should be posted on the website.

One respondent commented that some RAC/SPA website entries are taken, without acknowledgement, from publications by national bodies. Another called for more publications in Arabic. One respondent from the eastern Mediterranean felt it was important to make greater use of English. One respondent noted that if documents were available in Spanish, they would be very useful for promoting regional co-ordination work in Latin America.

Some respondents felt that papers for meetings of the Focal Points arrived too late for proper consideration before the meeting.

8. Balance between scientific coordination and practical conservation work

Good / Moderate / Poor

Should RAC/SPA devote more attention to practical conservation tasks / projects?

More detailed comments on the balance between scientific coordination and practical work.

Views extremely varied. Some respondents pointed out the high level of degradation of the Mediterranean marine environment, and called for more attention to practical, on the ground conservation follow-up to reports and recommendations; but some pointed out that RAC/SPA, with its present limited staff, cannot be expected to do work on the ground, and that such work is in any case best carried out by local authorities and NGOs. Any practical work should be concentrated in the southern and eastern states of the Mediterranean which

have less local capacity for such activities.

As regards scientific co-ordination, RAC/SPA technical staff need to be aware of what practical work is going on and to act as a catalyst for in-country projects carried out at local level. The MEDMPA and SAP/BIO projects provide great opportunities in this regard. However, given again the limited resources and staff, RAC/SPA staff cannot be expected to coordinate scientific activities in the marine and coastal fields throughout the Mediterranean. Their task is not to be a scientific centre, but the secretariat for a Protocol, operating mainly through expert meetings, syntheses of scientific work, thus acting rather as programme officers than as scientists.

In both practical work and scientific activities, their role is as a catalyst or facilitator, to encourage governments and others to undertake practical conservation work, to help to increase capacity at national level, and to encourage the establishment of national scientific centres and databases.

9. Cost / benefit analysis (“value for money”) of RAC/SPA’s work.

Good / Moderate / Poor

More detailed comments on the value for money of the centre’s work.

It is difficult to judge. It is necessary for the National Focal Point to have the materials to make this judgement.

10. Which in your opinion are RAC/SPA’s most important activities?

Action Plans / Protocol on Special Protected Areas of Mediterranean Importance / Workshops / Training courses / Documentation and data collection / Others

More detailed comments on the most important activities.

Certainly the follow-up of the implementation of the Protocol and Action Plans, together with offering assistance to countries, is a very important task. The relationship between the National Focal Point, the person(s) responsible for SPAMIs, and persons attending meetings of the Contracting Parties of the Barcelona Convention must be improved.

More should be done to encourage documentation and data collection. The most important work is the classification of benthic habitats and the development of criteria to select those important for protection. For countries that are members of the European Union, the list of marine species to be protected is very important because the Habitat Directive (CEE 92/43) is very weak for the marine environment. Mediterranean countries of the European Union are asking for specific references to be made to SPAMIs in documents related to marine habitats and species.

For many countries short of trained scientific and technical staff, training courses are the most important issue, since they enable direct application of the Protocol and Action Plans. There is a need to expand this activity, so that more than one trained person per country is produced each year. However, it is important to take a structured approach to training (“trainees should not disappear into a black hole after training”). Contact should be maintained with trainees to ensure that their training is used in their work.

Also the SAP/BIO is a very important project, which could be improved. Indeed, one respondent suggested that SAP/BIO is likely to become the most important activity of the Centre, because of the great potential for funding and networking which it entailed.

Some respondents suggested that pilot projects should be carried out as a demonstration.

11. Among the seven current and future Action Plans which is / are the most important and successful?

Monk Seal; Cetaceans; Marine Turtles; Marine Vegetation; Invasive species; Cartilaginous fish; Birds.

More detailed comments on the importance and efficacy of the Action Plans.

Respondents were particularly appreciative of the Action Plans on Cetaceans, Turtles and Invasive Species. As for importance - they are all important as far as the conservation of single species and awareness are concerned. The Vegetation and Invasive Species Action Plans could play an important role in the future of marine biodiversity conservation.

One respondent noted that the success of the Marine Turtle Action Plan was largely due to great involvement by one or two individuals in the main countries concerned; giving responsibility to a small number of active persons might be a model for improved implementation of other Action Plans.

Birds are covered by many other international agreements and there was doubt as to the necessity of a specific Action Plan from RAC/SPA. The same goes for fishery impact, which is dealt with by a subcommittee of SAC of FAO-CGPM.

The need for financial support for implementation was mentioned, as was the need for more regular monitoring of the results of the Action Plans, perhaps every three years.

There was some concern about the legal status of Action Plans, particularly in relation to formal agreements under the Convention on Migratory Species. The proposed strategic document should review the roles of Action Plans: should they be seen as guidance for the implementation of formal legal agreements? Should they perhaps be given a limited time frame, and be revised or abandoned when the operational period is finished?

12. What is your view of RAC/SPA's cooperation / partnership with other bodies?

Good / Moderate / Poor

Are there cases of overlapping competence and/or competition with other bodies?

More detailed comments on cooperation and competition.

Good, but could be improved, in particular to avoid overlapping of activities. On the other hand some respondents felt that RAC/SPA should participate more systematically in meetings of other bodies, such as the Ramsar, CMS and Berne Conventions. Some glaring absences were noted eg at the Azores Alien Species workshop. Some overlap is inevitable, but can lead to synergy.

Many international respondents emphasized the need for more partnerships and synergy with other interested bodies, notably NGOs.

13. What is your view of RAC/SPA's administrative status and its relationship with the host country, Tunisia?

Good / Moderate / Poor

More detailed comments on the administrative status and relations with the host country.

Moderate, but people do not really have the necessary information. One suggestion was for a change of status in order that RAC/SPA (and other regional activity centres) becomes a strong UN body with more possibilities for practical conservation tasks. One opinion was that Tunisian influence on the Centre is too strong and 70% of activity of the staff of the centre is devoted to activities of the Tunisian Ministry. There may be benefits if at least the Director of all Regional Activity Centres was recruited internationally - and if they come from a relevant

discipline. If Directors of RACs were selected directly by the MAP Coordinating Unit, under UN rules, this might alleviate some problems. No doubt this could also cause problems, not the least of which might be financial ones. If the status of RACs and the present procedures cannot be changed, the MAP Coordinator and/or his/her representative may need to sit on a selection committee for the candidates for Directors at country level. This may, to a degree at least, safeguard MAP's wider interests and aims.

14. What is your view of RAC/SPA's relationship with your own country or organization?

Good / Moderate / Poor

More detailed comments on relations with your own country / organization.

Good but could be improved, notably by ensuring that National Focal Points are at the appropriate level. While the National Focal Point should preferably be a government official responsible for implementation of conservation policy (at not too high a level), it is important for RAC/SPA to have contacts with scientists and technical experts in each country. Ideally the National Focal Point should make sure he/she is supported by a small group of experts in marine issues, to whom documents could be submitted for comment.

It was also suggested that regular visits be organized to each country, every six or twelve months, by RAC/SPA staff, to follow up on all outstanding issues.

It was also suggested that existing bilateral co-operation agreements between the RAC/SPA host country and other countries might be the framework for expanded co-operation.

The Sixth Meeting of RAC/SPA Focal Points at Marseille discussed the possibility of holding more frequent (perhaps annual) meetings of the Focal Points. While this suggestion met with some support at the Meeting, some respondents to the questionnaire felt it was more important to hold a larger number of expert technical meetings.

15. How have the member countries fulfilled their obligations towards RAC/SPA (eg. participation in meetings organized by RAC/SPA, submission of documents requested, appointment of appropriate correspondents)?

Good / Moderate / Poor

More detailed comments on member countries' participation in RAC/SPA activities.

Generally good, though participation in SAP/BIO by some European countries (such as Italy and France) was poor. The response and interest of the countries is related to their (implicit) evaluation of the usefulness of RAC/SPA activities and to how they can benefit from, or provide help in, such cooperation.

One respondent noted that an ad hoc multi-disciplinary committee of marine conservation experts had been established at national level to follow up on implementation of Action Plans. This seems an excellent initiative.

16. What are your suggestions about the future orientation of RAC/SPA?

Maintain current options / New directions / Any specific problems requiring solutions?

More detailed comments on future developments.

Maintain current options, and at the same time improve and increase work on practical conservation tasks (e.g. protected areas, monitoring), and on training courses and workshops.

The main task of RAC/SPA must be to improve knowledge of marine biodiversity (habitat

and species) of the Mediterranean with a view to better protection. For this it is necessary to improve collaboration between countries in taxonomic experts, reference collections, identification guides (for species and habitats), and common surveys along the Mediterranean coast. One respondent commented that it is important to regard the Mediterranean as one ecosystem, where actions in one place have effects elsewhere; hence the emphasis should be on issues like habitat classification and better systematics.

At the same time there is a need to develop the existing training programmes, to provide staff capable of implementing the practical conservation work.

RAC/SPA itself undoubtedly needs to be strengthened (both in terms of manpower - especially in professional technical staff - and in funding) as its mandate is getting more important and pressing, and its workload is increasing. At the same time the Centre also needs to streamline its working methods and avoid bureaucracy, which evidently causes dysfunction within the Centre and in its relations with others. The Centre obviously needs to overcome some of the functional problems it has and develop incentives for the staff working there to stay. There seem to be serious problems of staff continuity.

Communications with the Centre, especially informal ones, can be improved from both ends. There is a need for individual countries to review their appointments and their arrangements for communications.

There is an urgent need for the Centre raise its profile, to advertise its results much more through a programme of public relations and contacts with the media. This applies not only to RAC/SPA but to MAP in general, and is perhaps part of the UNEP culture in general. The MAP coordinating unit could seek greater publicity and recognition for itself and for all Regional Activity Centres.

H. General conclusions

The overall conclusion is that many positive results have been achieved by RAC/SPA; there are nevertheless a number of ways in which its operations could be improved, both at institutional level and with regard to scientific and technical issues. Several respondents expressed a sense of frustration that RAC/SPA had fallen short of its considerable potential for promoting conservation of marine biodiversity in the Mediterranean.

(a) Strengths of RAC/SPA

Among the positive items must be placed the strong involvement and support of the Government of Tunisia. This has been manifested through the establishment of a formal Agreement on the Headquarters (lacking in some other Regional Activity Centres), by the provision of buildings and facilities and by the appointment or secondment of staff to run the centre. RAC/SPA is thus a functioning operation on a permanent stable basis.

While the work of RAC/SPA clearly covers the whole of the Mediterranean basin and deals with all the countries in the region, the fact that it is the only Regional Activity Centre based on the southern and eastern shores of the Mediterranean is of enormous importance. There was an initial danger, with the much greater number of well-resourced scientific institutions along the northern shores of the Mediterranean, that the views of northern countries would outweigh the views, and overlook the needs, of the south and east. It is very clear that countries of the south and east take great reassurance from the fact that at least one RAC is

in “their” area, and feel as a result that the views of the developing countries in the Mediterranean are given proper weight.

The Barcelona Convention has itself gone through a process of reform, which included the development of the Protocol on Special Protected Areas of Mediterranean Importance. The negotiation of this Protocol was largely the work of RAC/SPA, which has taken the lead in its subsequent implementation, while maintaining its traditional work on Action Plans on particular marine species and issues.

One of the most effective activities of RAC/SPA in recent years has been the development of training courses and workshops on marine and coastal issues, which have been particularly appreciated in countries of the southern and eastern Mediterranean. At the same time, RAC/SPA is developing two major projects, SAP/BIO and MEDMPA, which will allow it to dispose of resources for the necessary practical work on the ground. The SAP/BIO project has received special funds and is very important, because for the first time, it will produce a census of the knowledge of marine and coastal biodiversity of the Mediterranean, of the problems and priority needs. All countries are invited to present national plans for priority actions dealing with protection and conservation of the biodiversity.

RAC/SPA is one of the most important of the MAP Centres. While the renegotiation of the Barcelona Convention extended its range to cover coastal as well as marine sites, RAC/SPA has a special competence in marine issues, which is not met elsewhere. There are other conventions and organizations dealing with coastal areas, but only one RAC/SPA dealing at international level with the marine environment. RAC/SPA plays a crucial role in the implementation of the SPAMI Protocol that is essential for protection and conservation of marine biodiversity. There are no other international agreements so strictly devoted to marine life, in the Mediterranean Sea in particular. European Union countries, because of the gaps in the Habitat Directive (92/43 EC) as regards the marine environment, consider SPAMI a very important reference, in particular for the lists of habitats and species to be strictly protected. The RAC/SPA has an important role in preparation and follow-up of the Action Plans, assistance to member countries, training experts in different fields, publication of guides and manuals. Though all these activities could be improved, they are positive and well accepted.

A number of bodies, both governmental and non-governmental, deal with Mediterranean marine issues. There is clearly quite enough to do for all of them to remain extremely busy, so it is important for each one to concentrate on its own strengths, and to work in partnerships with the others. The strengths of RAC/SPA may be outlined as follows:

- It is an intergovernmental organization, with specially good access to governments and governmental institutions
- It deals mainly with marine issues, though also with coastal issues which impinge on marine issues
- It is a pan-Mediterranean organization
- It has been particularly successful in organizing training courses

(b) Points where improvements could be made

Nevertheless, there are a number of ways in which the work of RAC/SPA could be improved, some technical and some institutional. The following paragraphs present suggestions on how these improvements might be achieved.

(i) Institutional issues

Under the Headquarters Agreement developed with the Government of Tunisia, the host country provides considerable funding and facilities for the centre. The Director of the Centre is appointed by the Tunisian Minister responsible for the Environment, and is a Tunisian civil servant. Hitherto, the main task of the incumbents has been to ensure the take-off of the centre and its effective functioning. In practice this means that RAC/SPA is not really an international body, so that it is difficult for the Director to influence other countries in the implementation of the Protocol and Action Plans. This status also means that RAC/SPA staff may be called upon by the Tunisian ministry to deal with issues which are Tunisian rather than Mediterranean. There is a need for RAC/SPA to be much more proactive vis-à-vis Contracting Parties, to encourage them to apply the Protocol and Action Plans, and to provide advice and assistance when and where difficulties arise.

As regards relations with other countries, cooperation is sometimes poor. In some countries the National Focal Points and experts are not familiar with the SPAMI Protocol, so that their contribution during meetings is null or confusing, and they are not able to transmit information and knowledge back to their own countries. Sometimes a Minister or Ministry without further name is appointed as the Focal Point, so that direct regular communication is impossible.

The following recommendations are made to overcome these shortcomings.

- 1) It is necessary to clarify the status of RAC/SPA: international body or national (Tunisian) structure? It would be preferable for it to have some higher international recognition, so that it may act more forcefully in monitoring of implementation of the Protocol. If it is decided to grant RAC/SPA international status, an International Executive Board needs to be established.
- 2) The senior staff, particularly the Director, even if financed by the Tunisian Government, must be recruited at international level and selected by an international panel, including representatives of MEDU and/or the Contracting Parties. The role and job of the Director must be clearly defined.
- 3) The role of the SPAMI Protocol is essential for the protection of marine biodiversity in the Mediterranean and RAC/SPA must be given the means to be more proactive in its implementation; to this end it should be better organized and if possible enlarged during special projects such as SAP/BIO.
- 4) It is necessary to improve monitoring of the Action Plans, and RAC/SPA must press countries to enforce them.
- 5) In the above actions greater continuity is necessary, both in terms of follow-up and in terms of length of service of staff. There have in recent years been several unexplained rapid changes of staff, which may have discouraged Contracting Parties from making secondments of staff.
- 6) Some of the administrative procedures of the centre appear to be unnecessarily heavy and could be lightened considerably. For example routing of emails through a single central point slows down communication considerably, and each technical and scientific staff member should have direct access to email and Internet.
- 7) Measures should be taken to help Contracting Parties improve their contribution to the work of the Centre through improvement of the input of Focal Points; RAC/SPA Focal Points should be representatives of governments or government agencies dealing directly with the implementation of the Barcelona Protocol (though at not too high a level), and should be supported by appropriate scientific and technical expertise. MEDU should be invited to suggest criteria to the Contracting Parties for the appointment of Focal Points. The Focal Points should be in closer touch with the headquarters of RAC/SPA, either through more frequent meetings or through more regular informal contacts by phone or email.

(ii) Scientific and technical matters

- 8) For understandable reasons related to the establishment and functioning of the Centre in its first years, recent incumbents of the post of Director have been selected more for their administrative and organizational capacities, than for their expertise in marine conservation; though the very first Director was both head of RAC/SPA and the Tunisian Institute for Marine Research. While managerial skills are important for the Director, it would be highly desirable for any future Director to have technical expertise in marine sciences and (even more important) a strategic vision of the tasks of the Centre. Whatever long term decision is taken in this respect, there is currently no formally recognised Scientific Director, and it is suggested that a formal appointment be made with immediate effect, in recognition of the work currently carried out.
- 9) The Centre should produce a short strategic document, setting out this vision and the role of the Centre vis-à-vis other partners in the region. This role would be essentially as a catalyst and facilitator, rather than as a direct actor in implementation of conservation work, or as an overall scientific co-ordinator. The Centre should reflect on its own role in Mediterranean marine scientific and technical co-ordination, and should define this role very carefully. It cannot hope to co-ordinate and centralize data for the whole Mediterranean, but it must encourage each country to set up objective scientific national data bases as a basis for policy decisions on conservation of marine biological diversity.
- 10) The current balance of 70/80% of activities devoted to marine issues against 20/30% devoted to coastal issues should be maintained.
- 11) The role of the Action Plans should be reviewed: more monitoring of their results is required; should they have a defined timescale? how do they relate to other formal legal instruments on the same or related subjects?
- 12) The Centre needs to develop a greater openness, not trying to do everything itself. To this end, stronger scientific and technical links should be established with other conservation conventions active in the Mediterranean region, and with both governmental and non-governmental conservation bodies; the latter should be invited to co-operate at the planning stages of any project, not presented at the end with a finalized project. A greater number of formal partnerships and Memoranda of Understanding need to be developed, defining the role of partner organizations and acknowledging their "ownership" of certain aspects of the operation. Such partnerships are an excellent opportunity to raise funds outside the formal RAC/SPA budget; it might therefore be wise to revise the terms of the budget, so that they become oriented more towards objectives and less to funded activities.
- 13) The number of scientific staff is inadequate for the tasks of the centre, and the scientific personnel need to be increased in numbers, taking account of the need for continuity. This increase could be achieved not only through increased funding, but through imaginative use of partnerships and secondments.
- 14) The scientific and technical staff need to play a greater role in reviewing and commenting on scientific reports submitted by national governmental bodies, and on work by consultants.
- 15) The scientific and technical staff need to be supported by a much larger spectrum of advisors; consultants used in recent years seem to have been drawn from too narrow a circle. A wider circle of consultants should be established, perhaps developing permanent working groups on appropriate subjects as practised by the Berne Convention or IUCN.
- 16) More attention should be given to transforming these scientific documents into guidelines, to help practical implementation of their recommendations.
- 17) The work of RAC/SPA in training has been much appreciated. This aspect of its work should be maintained and indeed extended, though in a strategic framework,

choosing trainees carefully and following their future progress.

- 18) In recent years, problems have arisen in relation to SAP/BIO and at present many people from different countries have expressed negative or doubtful opinions as to the role and activity of the Centre in this respect. This needs to be investigated as a matter of urgency.
- 19) In order to assist the Director and the scientific staff in these matters, it would be advisable to consider appointing a Scientific Committee to provide guidance on scientific matters.
- 20) Awareness of the existence and knowledge of the activities of RAC/SPA is far too narrow throughout the Mediterranean. There is a need to develop greater publicity about the Centre (and not only RAC/SPA, but the whole UNEP/MAP operation); some attractive publications are produced but there is a need to develop a broad public relations strategy, in particular through improving the website, and through much broader links with the press and media.