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Consultation on Data Processing
Requirements for MAP

Athens. 14-15 March 1985

FINAL REPORT

MEDITERRANEAN ACTION PLAN

CONSULTATION ON DATA PROCESSING REQUIREMENTS FOR MAP

Athens, 14-15 March 1985

Final Report

1. The meeting was opened by Mr. Aldo Manos, Co-ordinator of the Mediterranean Action Plan, who gave an overview of the current activities of MAP. He stressed that this meeting was designed to prepare a plan for data operations within the six geographically separate centres which constitute the MAP co-ordinating network, taking into account the need for efficient use of limited economic and personnel resources. This plan, in the form of the report of the consultation, would be submitted to the Executive Director of UNEP for guidance in the preparation of data-related aspects of the proposals for 1986-87 to be presented to the next session of the Conference of Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention (Genoa, Italy, September 1985).
2. The Agenda, as shown in Annex I was approved. The list of participants is in Annex II. Mr. L. Jetic chaired the meeting and Mr. P. Lees acted as secretary/rapporteur.
3. In the general discussion which followed, it was agreed that, although the aim of MAP is to create a scientific basis for international co-operation in environmental management of the Mediterranean Sea, a purely scientific approach to work programme or to its data processing aspects is insufficient. The major task is that of co-ordination including financial and project management, preparation of meetings and maintaining appropriate links with all participating organisations.
4. It was further agreed that, although data collected specifically for MAP, through MEDPOL and other efforts, must form the basis for scientific assessment, other information currently held in locations outside the MAP network would also need to be used. These data files should not be repeated as MAP files but should be referred to and abstracted by the experts concerned in relation to specific projects or activities. In many cases this would require the use of computer facilities more sophisticated than those to be made permanently available to MAP. It was not presently intended that MAP files or computer systems would, in themselves, be sufficient for sophisticated modelling of the marine environment of the Mediterranean Sea.
5. The need for adequate methods of data and word processing document interchange between centres was stressed. It was noted that, for word processing, this is best done by having equipment from the same manufacturer at all centres if such proved practicable in terms of maintenance and operation. With regard to the transfer of large quantities of data the IOC/IODE representative introduced the concept of GF3, a standardized set of data interchange formats for magnetic tape data, stating that IODE would be willing to assist in the introduction of GF3 as a MAP data interchange format.

6. The consultant report prepared by Dr. Alagic of Yugoslavia was discussed and participants agreed with the secretariat conclusion that it described an ideal situation with respect to scientific data processing, but that it downgraded the needs for word processing and administrative and financial co-ordination processing much too severely. They accepted the conclusion that Wang equipment could fulfil the majority of present and anticipated needs, and that the large scale use of database technology was not necessarily advisable, although small data bases would probably be used extensively. In the case of the Blue Plan it was accepted that these two conclusions did not apply. Disappointment was expressed by the Director of the Priority Actions Plan RAC that Dr. Alagic had neither visited this centre nor taken its needs into account adequately.
7. An inspection of the current equipment for the Co-ordinating Unit was followed by discussions resulting in a recommendation that the configuration should be supplemented by a Wang PC terminal in 1985 (for diskette exchange), and by an additional disk unit and interactive telecommunications capabilities for connection to other computers in 1986. The acquisition of coastal mapping software was considered necessary and it was hoped that this could be achieved without cost to MAP.
8. The needs of the Blue Plan for replacement of the Digital Equipment VAX computer, previously available through MEDEAS, were discussed in detail. Two alternative proposals had been made by the Blue Plan secretariat; hire of equipment through a contract with PRINCIPIA (a private data processing organisation located adjacent to the Blue Plan premises); or purchase of a VAX for exclusive Blue Plan use.
9. The contract with PRINCIPIA was accepted by participants as the only feasible method of allowing data processing for the Blue Plan during 1985. At this time no confidential data would be involved and it was therefore recommended that 1985 funds be used for processing at PRINCIPIA.
10. Neither of the two methods suggested was considered as optimal for the period 1986-1987. A continued contract with PRINCIPIA would involve the use of confidential MED POL data on a commercial organization's machine, and this was directly in opposition to a decision by the Contracting Parties. The purchase of a VAX computer by the Blue Plan would involve additional costs and cause difficulties should the Blue Plan cease to operate in Sophia Antipolis.
11. One further alternative, that of processing over a leased data link to the International Computing Centre in Geneva was then suggested. It was decided that the costs of this should be investigated and, if they proved lower than the proposed VAX purchase costs with comparable service being made available, this alternative should be implemented. It was noted that such a change of equipment would involve additional costs to the Blue Plan for reprogramming, but would have benefits in the long run including those associated with continued access if the Blue Plan were to cease to operate after 1987. For word processing and document exchange capabilities the Blue Plan RAC should be provided with a Wang PC similar to that in the other locations.

12. The principle of supplying each of the RACs in Malta, Tunis and Split with a Wang OIS-50 word processor unit, including one normal work station, one Wang Professional Computer (PC) and one daisy wheel printer (costing approximately \$20,000), was accepted as a basis for operations in each of these centres. Participants agreed that, especially in the cases of Split and Malta, the need was urgent and they recommended that orders be placed as soon as possible.
13. For the Priority Actions Programme RAC the meeting further recommended that the proposed Wang word processor should have facilities for connection to large main-frame computer. For this purpose PAP/RAC will provide a full cost estimate for inclusion in the budget documents for the next meeting of the Contracting Parties.
14. For the Regional Oil Combating Centre, participants fully supported the request that appropriate budgets be allocated for computer word processing equipment, as listed above. These funds should be provided in 1985, if at all possible. In order to improve ROCC telex facilities, equipment costing up to \$8,000 should be made available in 1986.
15. For the Specially Protected Areas RAC the basic word processing equipment listed above was recommended, with no need for additional facilities being foreseen for the period 1986-1987.
16. Considerable discussion took place with regard to the provision of maintenance facilities for the RAC equipment. The meeting accepted the secretariat proposal that the IAEA electronic engineer (Mr. Barisic) who maintains scientific electronic equipment on behalf of MAP, should be trained in Wang OIS and PC maintenance. They further recommended that, instead of the secretariat suggestion of providing one spare high quality printer for temporary replacement of any defective RAC printer, each RAC should be equipped with a locally available (and maintainable) PC printer at a cost of about \$1,000 per unit.
17. Participants felt that the paper for the meeting prepared by the secretariat had been an extremely useful document which expressed the real needs of MAP centres for computer usage and satisfied these needs as nearly as possible within the constraints of limited expenditure and staffing. They recommended that it be modified in the light of discussions at the meeting and reissued as an integrated data processing plan for MAP.
18. The meeting closed at 11.30 on 15 March 1985.

Annex I

MEDITERRANEAN ACTION PLAN

CONSULTATION ON DATA PROCESSING REQUIREMENTS FOR MAP

Athens, 14-15 March 1985

Agenda

- 1 Opening of the meeting
- 2 Approval of Agenda
3. Discussion of general objectives and methodology for MAP data
4. Discussion of specific items relative to each centre
 - (a) The Coordinating Unit (Athens)
 - (b) The Blue Plan RAC
 - (c) The Region Oil Combatting Centre
 - (d) The Priority Actions Programme RAC
 - (e) The Specially Protected Areas RAC
 - (f) The IAEA International Laboratory of Marine Radioactivity
5. Adoption of report including recommendations on general principles, short and long term objectives, equipment and personnel
6. Closure of the meeting

Annex II

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