



## Towards Sustainable Development in the Mediterranean Region



**MCS**  
The MEDITERRANEAN COMMISSION on SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT



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The Mediterranean Action Plan (MAP) is an action-oriented cooperative effort involving 20 countries bordering the Mediterranean Sea, the European Union, and a host of other concerned partners. MAP has been working to create a healthier Mediterranean environment since 1975.

Over the last decade, MAP's work has evolved in response to the heightened contemporary understanding of the close relationship between conservation and development.

In 1994, MAP responded to Agenda 21, a document highlighting the relevance of environmental concerns to all aspects of development, and publicised at the Rio Summit, with the presentation of Agenda MED 21, adapting Agenda 21 to the Mediterranean context. It represents the rising concern for the Mediterranean environment and the allegiance of Mediterranean states to the ideal of sustainable development.

MAP's remit was officially widened in 1995 to reflect the heightened contemporary understanding of the close links between conservation and development. Entering a new phase, MAP Phase II, it was renamed the Action Plan for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Sustainable Development of the Coastal Areas of the Mediterranean. The legal framework, constituted of the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols, was updated and made more consistent with the Mediterranean context and sustainable development.



Transnational and pan-Mediterranean sustainable development drives must work against a demanding backdrop of developmental, economic, political and religious differences.

The main objective of MAP Phase II is the improvement of the institutional capabilities of the Mediterranean countries in the sustainable management of their environment and its rational integration in development policies.

Coastal Area Management Programmes, for instance, are practical MAP initiatives lasting an average of 3–4 years aiming at the introduction of integrated coastal area management at local or national levels and institutional strengthening and capacity building in an effort to rehabilitate areas with the heaviest load of environmental problems.

Curbing pollution through marine and maritime monitoring and control, notably with the Strategic Action Programme for Land Based Pollution sources, remains a major MAP activity, whereas safeguarding natural and cultural resources is an increasingly important one.

In recognition of the fact that the sustainable development process needs the greater involvement of wider society, MAP has intensified its outreach work via a new, dynamic information strategy. This encompasses a range of accessible multilingual information for Mediterranean publics.

Today, MAP's work focuses on the sustainable management of marine and coastal resources and on integrating the environment into social and economic development and land use policies. MAP sets in motion corrective and preventative programmes, pushing green measures and sustainability higher up the list of national priorities.

The Mediterranean Declaration for the Johannesburg Summit reaffirms the dedication of regional states to assimilating and promoting the sustainable development conclusions reached.



### THE MCS

The establishment of the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development (MCS) in 1996, demonstrated the commitment of Mediterranean states to working towards integrating the environment and development in the entire region.

The MCS was set up as an advisory body and a forum for dialogue for MAP member countries and their partners for the purpose of defining and implementing a regional sustainable development strategy in the Mediterranean taking also into account the decisions of the Earth Summits.

A think-tank on policies for promoting sustainable development in the Mediterranean Basin, it exists to bridge the gap between the desire for sustainable development and its realisation in the Mediterranean region.

The Commission puts key local development decision-makers on a par with 21 representatives of Mediterranean states and the EU. It is made up of 36 members, consisting of representatives from each Contracting Party to the Barcelona Convention (MAP's legal framework), and 15 representatives of local authorities, socio-economic actors and environmental NGOs, which help ground the MCS in the everyday realities of social life.

The MCS functions by allocating working groups to look into specific sustainable development issues corresponding to some of the priority needs of the Mediterranean region. These groups go on to offer recommendations and proposals for action to Mediterranean states and their partners. A key recommendation with respect to tourism, for instance, is its diversification to take in year-round and new forms such as inland, rural and cultural ones.

In its relatively short life, the MCS has produced recommendations and proposals for action that encompass ones on water demand management, coastal area management, tourism, industry, urban development, free trade and the environment, public participation and awareness raising and sustainable development indicators.

The MCS strives to stay at the cutting edge of exploring paths to sustainability in the region. Issues now being examined include agriculture and rural development, urban waste management and consumption patterns, local governance and finance and cooperation for sustainable development.

### THE STRATEGIC REVIEW

Assessing the political and institutional progress made towards sustainable development in the Mediterranean, the recently published Strategic Review represents the first self-evaluation of the MAP and particularly of its instrument for fostering regional sustainable development, the MCS.

The Review offers a frank analysis of the teething problems of what is a complex and ambitious remit, and assesses how the measures agreed upon by the Mediterranean community have effectively been implemented. It also contains encouraging updates from Mediterranean countries charting the steady permeation of a sustainable development way of thinking into Mediterranean countries. Overall, it lays the ground for the forthcoming Mediterranean Sustainable Development Strategy.

Among the major stumbling blocks the Review highlights are the fact that environmental policies still have too little an impact on development policies, remaining too compartmentalised to address themes constituting integrated policy. The difficulty, at national level, in giving concrete expression to sustainable development measures decided on by the Mediterranean community, shows that this new concept hasn't yet managed to mobilise all spheres of society and that states have been slow to implement some of the decisions taken. It therefore encourages the creation of more National Commissions for Sustainable Development.

The Strategic Review highlights several basic elements that would boost the success of a Mediterranean Sustainable Development Strategy. These include the need for countries to draw on all elements of civil society, tourists included, to safeguard natural resources and the vitality of natural ecosystems with the aid of an ambitious public awareness drive.



### CONCLUSION

The Mediterranean sustainable development process requires the adoption of a shared vision by most concerned partners and actors, with a clear programme of action. It is encouraging that, at the start of the new millennium, the emerging driving forces in the Mediterranean region are positive ones. They include the commitment of MAP and MCS members and Partners to the principles of Sustainable Development, the overwhelming public environmental awareness, highly pluralistic decision-making processes and transparency, the presence of new actors and grassroots initiatives, strong national political environmental agendas and the UN Sustainable Development Agenda.



For further information, a detailed publication regarding the MAP and Sustainable Development is available at MAP Coordinating Unit.



United Nations Environment Programme  
Mediterranean Action Plan  
Coordinating Unit  
48, Vassileos Konstantinou Avenue | 116 35 Athens | Greece  
Tel: +30 210 72 73 100 | Fax: +30 210 72 53 196/7  
E-mail: unepmedu@unepmap.gr  
www.unepmap.org