



The Revision of the MAP Legal Framework



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The Barcelona Convention and its Protocols (the "Barcelona legal system") are a noteworthy case of the countries in a regional sea area fulfilling their commitment to cooperate for the protection of the environment and for the achievement of the ultimate goal of sustainable development.

The Convention, which was opened to signature in 1976 and entered into force in 1978, is the first in chronological terms of the regional seas agreements concluded under the auspices of United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).



IMPROVEMENTS TO THE BARCELONA LEGAL SYSTEM

Since 1994, the Barcelona legal system has undergone important changes and improvements.

The main objective of the revision has been to adapt the various legal instruments that make up the system to the evolution in international law on the protection of the environment, in accordance with the principles adopted at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (Rio de Janeiro, 1992).

In addition to incorporating a number of important general principles in the Convention, the Contracting Parties* have therefore seized the opportunity to strengthen the substantive and procedural provisions in the Protocols.

* Albania, Algeria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Cyprus, Egypt, France, Greece, Israel, Italy, Lebanon, Libya, Malta, Monaco, Morocco, Slovenia, Spain, Syria, Tunisia, Turkey and the European Community



The present Barcelona legal system includes the following instruments:

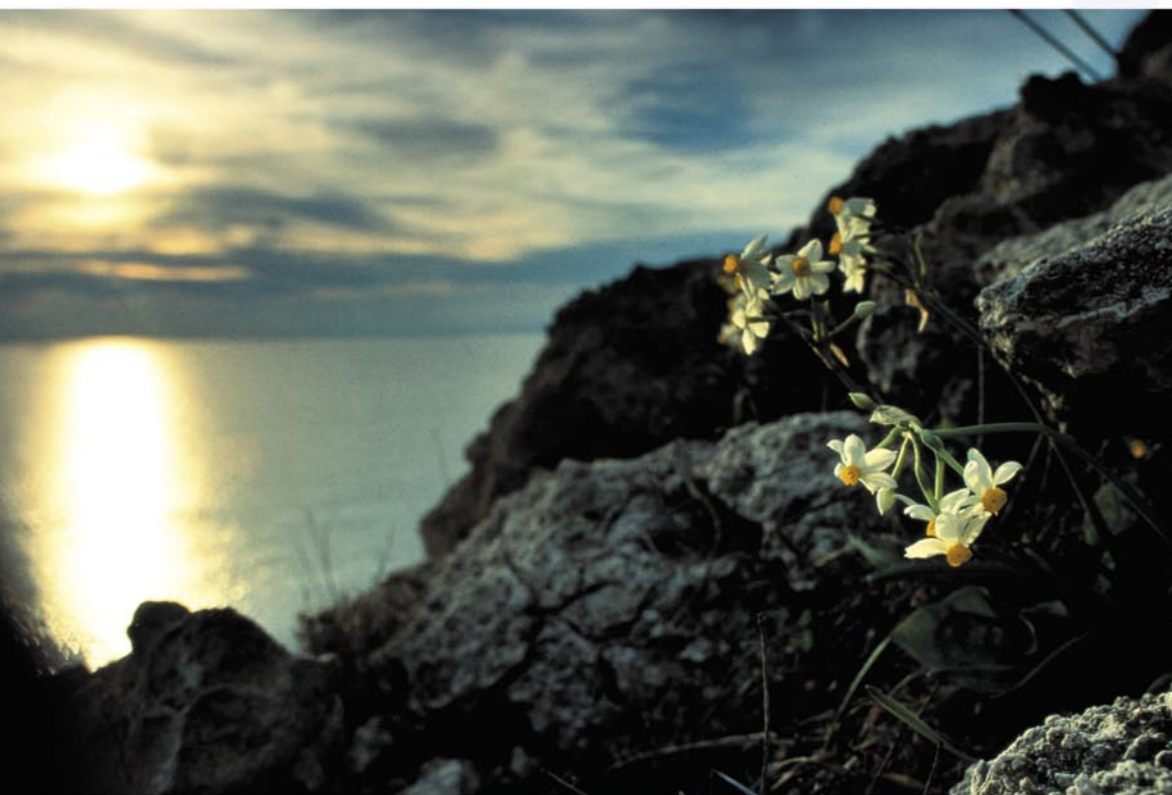
- the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean (Barcelona, 1976; amended in 1995);
- the Protocol for the Prevention and Elimination of Pollution of the Mediterranean Sea by Dumping from Ships and Aircraft or Incineration at Sea (Barcelona, 1976; amended in 1995);
- the Protocol Concerning Cooperation in Preventing Pollution from Ships and, in Cases of Emergency, Combating Pollution of the Mediterranean Sea (Valletta, 2002; intended to replace the 1976 Protocol);
- the Protocol for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea against Pollution from Land-Based Sources and Activities (Athens, 1980; amended in Syracuse in 1996);
- the Protocol Concerning Specially Protected Areas and Biological Diversity in the Mediterranean (Barcelona, 1995; replacing the 1982 Protocol);
- the Protocol for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea against Pollution Resulting from Exploration and Exploitation of the Continental Shelf, the Seabed and its Subsoil (Madrid, 1994);
- the Protocol on the Prevention of Pollution of the Mediterranean Sea by Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal (Izmir, 1996).

PIONEERING ROLE

In its original form, the Barcelona legal system served as an example for the development of other UNEP legal instruments for regional seas. Among other responsibilities, the revised Barcelona legal system continues to play a positive role in the international legal context for the protection of the marine environment and the sustainable management of coastal zones.

All the new instruments are fairly advanced in terms of their content. They constitute effective tools for the preservation of the Mediterranean heritage and address the common concerns of Mediterranean States.

They also confirm "the importance and unique nature of the Mediterranean as an eco-region and an arena for solidarity, as well as its vocation for bringing different cultures closer to each other" (Preamble to the Mediterranean Declaration for the Johannesburg Summit, adopted in November 2001 in Monaco by the XIIIth Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention).



For further information, a detailed publication regarding the Revision of MAP Legal Framework (the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols) is available at MAP Coordinating Unit.

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