



## **Environment Friendly Cities for the Mediterranean**

Coastal urbanization has significantly increased in the four decades since the Barcelona Convention was adopted, with coastal cities turning into key actors for the implementation of the Convention and its Protocols. During this period, the population from Mediterranean countries concentrated in the shorelines grew from 95 million inhabitants in 1979 to 155 million in 2010, with most of this population living in cities. According to the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, in 2010 there were 15 Mediterranean coastal cities with more than 1 million inhabitants and 11 with more than half a million representing a total of almost 50 million people living in large cities along the Mediterranean coast.

Ministers are expected to address the policy, programmatic and behavioral responses at regional, national and local level that reduce urban environmental impacts on the Sea and Coastal Areas. In particular, they may focus on two pressures particularly relevant for the marine and coastal environment which are driven by urban development: the impact of urban sprawl on the coastal space and the growing challenge of marine litter and waste to the good environmental status of our Sea.

### Urban sprawl

Over the past decades Mediterranean coastal cities have sprawled over surrounding areas. In the North of the Mediterranean where population has stabilized, housing and tourism activities continue to spread along the coast. In the South the pressure is largely driven by population growth and the rural exodus. Deficiencies in urban, coastal and marine planning and infrastructure exacerbate the impact of sprawl. High among them are management challenges associated to the increased volumes and hazardousness of all kinds of waste, weather wastewater, solid or industrial and losses of up to 30% of fresh water resources due to inadequate water supply networks. Moreover, half of the new constructions built annually are unregulated and under-equipped with informal settlements reaching up to 33 per cent in some coastal cities.

Urban spread degrades the marine and coastal environment, often the estuaries, beaches, steep sloped and mountainous habitats. The city and coastal space gets fragmented while the separation between dwelling and workplace generates traffic and air pollution. By the last years of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century close to 2,000 km of the Mediterranean coast have been transformed to “artificial shorelines” such as defense structures and ports, a figure which significantly multiplies if the urban built up surface is added. As a consequence, the very high economic, social and aesthetic value of the goods and services provided by the Mediterranean ecosystems and landscapes have diminished and at times have become irreversible lost, offsetting the potential of coastal areas to improve livelihoods. Action is needed now as the cost of restoration is frequently higher than that of prevention. Last September the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reminded us on the urgency to act. Acknowledging that global sea levels are increasing unusually fast, they estimated that the rise in the Mediterranean could be between 0,4 and 0,8 in the next 80 years.

The Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention showed global leadership in 2008 by adopting a Protocol to the Convention on Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) which has entered into force in a record time for international law and now holds 23% of the Mediterranean Coasts under its protection. In 2011 the Contracting Parties agreed on a ten

year Action Plan to support implementation of the Protocol. Several countries are adopting legislation to limit urban sprawl and programmes to recover sensitive degraded coastline. However, efforts need to be accelerated.

### Marine Litter and waste management

Marine litter in the Mediterranean is in great part generated by cities and is associated with the growth of municipal solid waste which exceeds 3% annually. Despite recent efforts under the National Action Plans (NAPs) approved in the framework of the LBS Protocol of the Barcelona Convention which identified 108 Waste Water Treatment Plants (WWTP) and 156 landfills as priority investments, there is still a predominance of uncontrolled dumpsites particularly in lower income countries with 50% of household waste being disposed in open dumps. While most countries have developed solid waste management strategies, programmes and legislation and some important initiatives have been taken at regional level, waste reduction remains low and at source separation is practically non-existent as households have little incentives to separate waste. Expert estimate that a no action scenario will result in a difficult to manage situation by 2025 with waste volume doubling from its 2000 levels.

Moreover, solid waste management is hindered by ineffective management as it is still heavily centralized while medium size municipalities at times lack the scale to efficiently embark in the investments and operations necessary to soundly manage waste. In addition, there are still few effective programmes to prevent the high increases of litter during the tourism season. The importance of addressing marine litter in a coordinated manner is show-cased by the fact that marine litter reduction was the only new target agreed at the Rio+20 summit of Heads of State and Government in 2012.

The Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention are taking a lead by acting towards a marine and coastal environment free of litter. The Regional Action Plan proposed for adoption at this Meeting includes measures that ensure the full implementation of the provisions of the Barcelona Convention and its related protocols regarding marine litter management. It proposes to: fully integrate litter management into solid waste management strategies; adopt innovative solutions to prevent, manage and reduce litter including through ensuring environmentally sound solid waste management, reducing waste volumes, recycling and promoting sustainable patterns of consumption and production; enhancing partnerships among stakeholders and regional cooperation; and, establishing reduction targets accompanied by a rigorous monitoring programme. The efficient implementation of the measures in the Plan will require major efforts at all level.

The results of the discussions around the theme of Environment Friendly Cities by Ministers and Heads of Delegation will guide priority measures to undertake under the respective Regional Action Plans adopted under the Barcelona Convention.

Ministers may want to address the following issues:

1. How to efficiently address and halt the negative effects of urban sprawl in the Mediterranean?

Food for thought:

- Lessons learned from national and local experiences at legal, policy, strategic

and programmatic level to limit urban sprawl.

- Successful experiences of horizontal (inter-sectorial, between neighbouring governance units or neighbouring countries) and vertical (central government to local government) processes and cooperation effective in improving coastal urban planning and management.
- What should Integrated Coastal Zone Management provide and remediate. Main opportunities and threats confronted by municipalities in adequately balancing the use of coastal and marine resources and their protection so as to ensure the sustainable development of marine and coastal areas.
- Successful measures in addressing particularly acute challenges such as the fight against erosion, controlling unregulated constructions in sensitive areas or deficiencies in wastewater infrastructure.

2. What are priority actions recommend for ensuring environmentally sound litter and solid waste management?

Food for thought:

- Necessary effective measures for the effective implementation of the marine litter Regional Action Plan and ultimately the reduction of litter such as reducing waste and litter volumes, recycling and raising co-responsibility.
- Experiences of inter-sectorial cooperation in addressing litter and waste (ex. municipalities, port reception authorities, Ministries, etc.).
- Obstacles to adequately use market based instruments such as deposit refunds, product charge or incentives such as waste charge so as to more accurately reflect environmental costs from production to final disposal.
- Additional measures required and partnerships to be established with a view to progress in implementing the waste management hierarchy (reduce, re-use, recycle and recover).

3. How to ensure cities effectively manage solid waste and marine litter in an integrated manner?

Food for thought:

- Moving towards an enhanced partnership with local authorities for the purposes of improving their ownership and effectively manage waste.
- Concrete successful experiences associating municipalities in the fight against litter and waste including through financial decentralisation and budgeting.
- Experiences and challenges in applying the waste management hierarchy at municipal level.
- Inter-municipal cooperation to ensure implementation of the waste

management hierarchy and particularly recycling for small and medium size cities in hot spot areas.

- Priority capacity building and investment programmes.
4. What are priority actions to be taken in the framework of UNEP/MAP and/or other regional initiatives (for ex. Horizon 2020) and investment programmes to enhance cooperation in the Mediterranean towards a marine litter free sea and better managed coastal and marine areas?