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**MEDITERRANEAN ACTION PLAN**

Government-Designated Expert Meeting  
on the application of the Ecosystem Approach  
by the Mediterranean Action Plan

Athens (Greece), 20-21 February 2007

**UNEP(DEPI)/MED IG.17/Inf.12**

**REPORT OF THE GOVERNMENT-DESIGNATED EXPERT MEETING ON THE  
APPLICATION OF THE ECOSYSTEM APPROACH  
BY THE MEDITERRANEAN ACTION PLAN**





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## Introduction

1. With a view to the possible application of the ecosystem approach by MAP, the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention, at their 14th Ordinary Meeting (Portoroz, Slovenia, November 2005), recommended that the Secretariat "follow the initiative of the European Commission concerning the project to be implemented by MED POL to review the implications of applying the ecosystem approach to the management of human activities in the Mediterranean region.... with a view to the possible application of the ecosystem approach by the whole MAP system".

2. The project, launched in 2006 and expected to be completed in May 2007, was implemented by MED POL, on behalf of MAP, in close cooperation with the Regional Activity Centres (RACs) and experts. It led to the preparation of a draft document which highlights a number of essential elements of the ecosystem approach and proposes a road map for the gradual application of the ecosystem approach by MAP.

3. Therefore, the Secretariat convened a Government-designated expert meeting to review the draft document and agree the basic steps presented in the road map and a number of specific proposals. The meeting was held at the "Holiday Inn" Hotel, Athens (Greece) from 20 to 21 February 2007.

## Attendance

4. Government-designated experts from the following Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention attended the meeting: Albania, Algeria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cyprus, Egypt, European Commission, France, Greece, Israel, Italy, Malta, Monaco, Montenegro, Morocco, Slovenia, Spain, Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia and Turkey.

5. The MAP Coordinating Unit was represented by the MAP Coordinator, the MED POL Coordinator, the MEDU Programme Officer, the MED POL Programme Officer, the WHO/MED POL Senior Scientist, the GEF Project Manager and the MAP/MED POL Consultant.

6. All the MAP Regional Activity Centres – Blue Plan, CP/RAC, INFO/RAC, PAP/RAC, REMPEC and SPA/RAC – were also represented by their Directors or Deputy Directors.

7. The following officials also attended: the Coordinator of the Regional Seas Programme, UNEP, a Fisheries Officer from the Fisheries Resources Division of FAO, the Representatives of the HELCOM and OSPAR Commissions and the Representatives of the NGOs Greenpeace and MIO-ECSDE.

8. The full list of participants is attached as **Annex I** to the present report.

## Agenda item 1: Opening of the meeting

9. Mr Paul Mifsud, Coordinator of the Mediterranean Action Plan (MAP) opened the Meeting. Welcoming participants to Athens, he stressed the fact that this first expert meeting was also the first step toward the possible application by MAP of the ecosystem approach in the Mediterranean region. The initiative went back to the November 2003 Contracting Parties Meeting in Catania which had requested the Secretariat, in the general framework of the strengthened MAP-EC cooperation, to associate itself with the process of formulation and implementation of the Marine Strategy of the EU, which highlighted the need to use the ecosystem approach as a tool for the management of human activities. The initiative had become more concrete at the Portoroz Meeting (November 2005), which requested that the

MED POL carry out a project on the implications of the ecosystem approach. However, MED POL was given the mandate to carry out this project on behalf of the whole MAP system and in cooperation with all the Regional Activity Centres. This was the reason that all MAP components were represented at the current meeting, since it was a MAP, rather than just a MED POL approach.

10. The meeting had before it a working document which traced the background and fundamental elements of the ecosystem approach and which included a road map for the Mediterranean, established jointly with the EC. The meeting had to agree the next steps with a view to the possible adoption and application of this approach by the Barcelona Convention. MAP was not the first regional organization to begin this process. For instance, the OSPAR and HELCOM Commissions had already experience in this area that could be useful to the discussions since they had accepted MAP's invitation to attend the meeting, just like UNEP's Regional Seas Programme represented by its Coordinator. Finally, in addition to the implications of the ecosystem approach for the coastal and marine waters, one should not forget the component "fresh waters", within the general framework of the strategy and policies on water just adopted for the 2007-2012 period, by UNEP's Executive Council and the World Environment Ministers Forum.

11. Mr Elik Adler, Regional Seas Programme Coordinator, conveyed the greetings of Mr Achim Steiner, UNEP's new Executive Director and confirmed that, during the last Executive Council meeting of UNEP and the World Ministers Forum attended by representatives of 140 countries, the ecosystem approach was at the heart of a whole series of themes and issues, like the threat of the possible total extinction of commercial fishing resources by the year 2020. Already in certain seas of the planet, like the China Sea, the Gulf of Thailand or part of NW Atlantic, the existing fish stocks could no longer cover human consumption, but only animal consumption. In view of such alarming perspectives, there was urgent need to introduce in the management of our environment and resources a concept formulated more than 20 years ago and incorporated since in many legal instruments and declarations adopted at world level.

**Agenda item 2: Election of officers**

12. In accordance with Rule 20 of the Rules of Procedure and after informal consultations which had taken place before the opening of the meeting, the meeting unanimously elected the following Bureau:

Chair :	Mr Mitja Bricelj	(Slovenia)
Vice-Chair:	Mr Zennir Youcef	(Algeria)
Vice-Chair:	Mr Nenad Smodlka	(Croatia)
Rapporteur:	Mr Ufuk Kucukay	(Turkey)

**Agenda item 3: Adoption of the agenda and organization of work**

13. The Secretariat proposed and the meeting adopted the provisional agenda contained in document UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG.300/1 attached as **Annex II** to the present report. It was agreed that a summary of conclusions would be adopted at the last session of the second day and that a draft report would be sent later to participants for comments and approval.

**Agenda item 4: Background, objective and expected results of the meeting**

14. Mr Francesco Saverio Civili, MED POL Coordinator, briefly outlined the background to the introduction of the ecosystem approach in the MAP programme in 2003 and stressed the active participation of MED POL on behalf of MAP, in the formulation of the European Marine Strategy which resulted, in the final version of the document, in a better reflection of the needs and specificities of the Mediterranean. Two years later, just after the Portoroz meeting, MED POL was given the mandate by the EC to carry out a project to study exclusively the implications for MAP and the Contracting Parties of the possible application of the ecosystem approach and establish a road map to this effect. With the sponsorship of the EC, MED POL had organized two small expert working groups to prepare the road map and on the other hand, had offered the services of a MAP/MED POL consultant to coordinate all the activities for the preparation of the road map and the current meeting.

15. Therefore, the meeting was invited to give the Secretariat clear indications on a number of questions highlighted in the working document before it and thus enable the Secretariat to launch the necessary studies and activities and to plan the adoption and gradual application of the ecosystem approach in the region, if the Contracting Parties so decide at their next Ordinary meeting in December 2007. Before that, the road map, as reviewed and revised by the experts, would be submitted to the meetings of focal points of the various MAP components so that they could review and adapt their future activities accordingly.

16. Mr Gabriel Gabrielides, MAP/MED POL Consultant, presented the introductory part of the working document entitled "Applying the ecosystem approach in the Mediterranean" (UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG 306/2). First he stressed that we are dealing here with the ecosystem approach to the management of human activities that may affect the marine environment. He reviewed the definitions, concepts, goals and objectives of the approach by stressing that, in the MAP context, the point was to promote gradually the comprehensive integrated management of human activities on the basis of the best scientific knowledge available about the ecosystem and its dynamics. One should insist on the terms "best available knowledge" in order to put the body of knowledge we possess in context, knowledge which would always be insufficient but which today, if compared to what it was twenty or thirty years ago, enabled us solidly to document and underpin our action.

17. The speaker also stressed that the ecosystem approach is embedded in the concept of sustainable development and that our vision for a clean and healthy environment remains the same but we have to approach objectives and problems in a more systematic and coordinated manner not neglecting that man is part of the ecosystem. In other words, it was no longer a question of fixing, more or less arbitrarily, reduction percentages for pollutant X or Y along with a timetable to achieve those reductions, but to start from a set of ecosystem objectives, while emphasizing certain key concepts like integration, coordination, adaptive management, stakeholder involvement, monitoring and review. Mr. Gabrielides pointed out that the ecosystem approach had been included in several large-scale binding international legal instruments (Convention on the Law of the Sea, CBD, Climate change, Ramsar etc.); he then indicated that before moving ahead with the review of the working document, it would be useful to listen to the representatives of regional and international organizations that had already made significant progress in the application of the ecosystem approach.

**Agenda item 5: Review of the process of application of the ecosystem approach by other international/regional organizations**

**OSPAR**

18. Mr Alan Simcock, former Executive Secretary of the OSPAR Commission (North-East Atlantic) explained how OSPAR had tried to make the ecosystem approach operational; he stressed, however, that the geographical scope of this Convention and the ecosystems concerned were very different from those in the Mediterranean and that the measures taken and the underlying principles were therefore not necessarily transposable from the one region to the other. The starting point for OSPAR had been fisheries. A 1993 report on the state of the environment had shown that it was fisheries that suffered the most serious impact of human activities (fishing and shipping); in 1997 the Bergen Ministerial Conference on fisheries and the environment had undertaken the commitment to adopt the ecosystem approach and to elaborate for this purpose a long-term strategy.

19. At the same time, OSPAR had developed six specific strategies and organized its work around the concept of Ecological Quality Objectives (EcoQO) as a means to set verifiable objectives of progress accomplished toward the general objective of a healthy and sustainable marine ecosystem. Ecosystems had a natural variability and it was not possible to specify a unique state for each of them. Therefore, the focus should be on the "framework" within which there would be reasonable assurance that the ecosystem was healthy and sustainable. OSPAR had identified "aspects of ecological quality": commercial fish species, marine mammals, seabirds, fish communities, benthic communities, plankton communities, threatened and/or declining species, threatened and/or declining habitats, eutrophication. To each question corresponded one or several "elements of ecological quality" and to each element an EcoQO or level to be achieved. A pilot project was launched in 2002 around 21 EcoQOs. Mr Simcock mentioned two concrete examples to illustrate the application of these principles (oil discharged from ships and seabird populations). He then highlighted the links of the EcoQO system with the European Marine Strategy, the Water framework Directive, the "bird" and "habitat" Directives, the EU Common Fisheries Policy (CFP), as well as with other international instruments. In conclusion, he pointed out that the ecosystem approach was not "a new start" but rather a means to integrate what had been accomplished in terms of international/national obligations and commitments and show that what was being undertaken now was coherent and exhaustive.

20. During the ensuing discussion, in answer to a question by the Chairman on problems encountered in the application of the ecosystem approach, the OSPAR representative referred to the lack of necessary funds to apply the EcoQOs, given the significant effort involved and also to the fact that even now there was difficulty, for some objectives, in finding countries to lead the way that could invest the time and funds needed. Another significant problem was data; as time went by, the data required could be obtained, but in the beginning, the data available, collected for instance over the previous decade, were very often partial and one had to resort to more or less arbitrary interpretations or extrapolations. Thus, the ecosystem approach should be launched on a solid basis of monitoring and adequate financial resources. Another participant pointed out that most of the EcoQOs seemed to concern the marine environment rather than the coast; Mr Simcock indicated that the inputs of land-based pollutants, the tourist activities along the Atlantic coasts, the wind-energy parks, the works for the protection of coasts and sand extraction were high on the list of OSPAR activities used to measure the impacts on the ecosystem and particularly on reproduction sites.

21. Another representative wondered on the number of persons needed to implement this activity and whether this might not have a deterrent effect on decision makers; the representative of OSPAR stressed that the ecosystem approach should not be considered as



an additional operation which would need a new administrative structure, but rather as a way to rethink and rationalize the existing management methods for the various traditional sectors. Finally, in reply to other questions, Mr Simcock indicated that each regional sea had its own specificities, but that the ecosystem approach, to have a good start, should be based on a very complete evaluation of the state of the environment, "since approach and evaluation are the two sides of the coin"; in this connection, the on-going exercise of evaluation of the world environment, based on regional evaluations, could prove very useful. Regarding the progression of the application of the ecosystem approach, it too had to take a rhythm specific to each region, be realistic and not defined *a priori*. Moreover, concerning the legal instruments which very often did not include the concept of ecosystem approach, there too, the approach should not be considered as dictated by a rule, regulation or provision of a protocol, but as another way of working within the framework of existing processes, which might mean simply decisions or recommendations of the Contracting Parties meeting or of another body.

22. Concluding the discussion, the Coordinator of MAP thanked the OSPAR representative for the relevance of his presentation, which provided the opportunity for a first fruitful exchange of views on the theme of the meeting. Mr Mifsud noted, in regard of the evaluation of the world environment referred to, that MAP had been contacted by UNEP, directing the process, to associate itself with it, within the framework of the evaluation of the Mediterranean environment.

### **HELCOM**

23. Mr Hermanni Backer, HELCOM representative (Commission for the protection of the Baltic Sea), stated that he was not going to focus on the ecosystem approach, but give an overall view of the on-going HELCOM activities. He particularly mentioned the preparation of the Baltic Sea Action Plan assorted with a new Strategy, to be adopted by the Baltic Sea Ministerial Conference of the Contracting Parties (including the EU) scheduled for November 2007 in Krakow (Poland). This Action Plan would launch a new phase in HELCOM action, which for the past 30 years or more had made significant achievements in combating pollution. Mr Becker reviewed the main geographic, oceanographic and demographic data on the Baltic region and its nine coastal states; he stressed the particular vulnerability of this sea – especially to nutrient inputs and eutrophication phenomena – given its semi-enclosed character and its low water exchange rate. He recalled the various ministerial Declarations, which by following developments, had completed the texts of the 1974 Helsinki Convention, updated in 1992; he especially highlighted the 2003 Declaration, which had included the application of the ecosystem approach in the priority issues of the near future, along with the conservation of biodiversity, the monitoring and assessment of pollution, maritime safety (in cooperation with IMO), combating eutrophication and hazardous substances. The ecological objectives, which reflected a common vision of a healthy marine environment, were part of the ecosystem evaluation concept elaborated for the EcoQO project. HELCOM was concluded in 2005, with a final report. However, the ecological objectives would be at the centre of the Action Plan in preparation.

24. Concerning the pollution "hot spots", the success was commensurate with the challenge, since of the 162 listed in 1992, 81 had been eliminated and the remaining 81 were to be struck out of the list by 2012, given the new strides made in terms of treatment stations for industrial effluents and municipal sewage and in the field of clean technologies. The new Action Plan also provided for active participation of all stakeholders at all levels. The social and economic impacts of the measures proposed were being carefully assessed, as were also the environmental benefits which harmonized perfectly with the ecosystem approach. Finally, Mr Becker emphasized the harmonization of the HELCOM recommendations with the EU Directives and OSPAR decisions and recommendations.

25. Following the presentation, two representatives of Contracting Parties wondered about the timetable, capacities and legislative measures of the concerned countries for the application in the Baltic Sea of the ecosystem approach; they welcomed the ambitious objectives and great successes of HELCOM in important areas like the "hot spots", but noted the absence from the Action Plan to be adopted at the end of the year of the questions of fisheries and aquaculture. The HELCOM representative stated in reply that certain regional instruments, like the European Marine Strategy, were binding for the HELCOM States members of the EU but not for Russia and it was necessary in the region concerned to find a minimum base of understanding, unless certain questions like fisheries management and aquaculture exploitations were excluded, questions which in any event concerned other sectors beyond the environment. In this connection, the Regional Seas Programme Coordinator of UNEP estimated that the HELCOM action plan to be adopted shortly was a golden opportunity to update a platform for action that would be relevant for the next 10 or 20 years. On the other hand, in the Mediterranean, there was MAP – Phase II which went back to 1995 and the problem was to adopt the ecosystem approach without being able yet, at least for the foreseeable future, to change the existing legal instruments. It would thus be useful for MAP, if OSPAR and HELCOM shared periodically their comments and lessons learned from the process of application of the ecosystem approach. For the time being, in the Mediterranean, the exercise being launched concerned more the methodology of the approach and the modalities of its possible application.

26. The OSPAR representative, going back to the question of legislation, indicated that OSPAR was not competent in certain areas like fisheries or shipping management, and therefore that it was necessary to seek the appropriate level – national, regional or international – in order to find solutions e.g. at IMO or AIEA, after careful analysis.

27. One representative wondered whether everything that was currently being done in the Mediterranean, within the MAP context, was not in fact applying the ecosystem approach without being yet aware of it. If that were the case one could envisage the situation more simply, in a thematic, cross-cutting, well thought-out manner. Another participant argued along the same lines and pointed out that in the case of the SAP-BIO the ecosystem approach had widely been taken into consideration; therefore what was needed now was not to compartmentalize and carry out analyses and actions by sector, but to envisage them as a whole. The question was not to create or innovate but to adapt the action according to the principle already referred to.

### FAO

28. Ms Gabriella Bianchi, FAO representative (Fisheries Resources Division) first reviewed the concerns that had led FAO to conceive, define and adopt an ecosystem approach to fisheries, particularly the realization of the interactions among fisheries resources, and between them and the ecosystem, the poor performance of the current management practices and the realization that there was a whole series of societal interests in marine ecosystems. The underlying principles were not new but went back to instruments, such as the 1982 Convention on the Law of the Sea, or Declarations such as the one by UNCED; however they were now reorganized on a more mandatory and rational basis.

29. From the conventional approach to fisheries, i.e. sectoral, predictive and focused on target and non-target species, FAO had moved to an approach which was ecosystem-based, integrated and cross-sectoral adaptive, focused on biodiversity and the environment, while striving to balance the various societal objectives by taking into consideration the knowledge and doubts on the biotic, abiotic and human components of ecosystems. It was in this spirit that FAO had established a *Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries*, international plans concerning seabirds and sharks, the management of fishing capacities and combating illegal fishing. FAO had also issued, starting in 1995, several sets of technical guidelines,

particularly on the ecosystem approach to fisheries (2003) and aquaculture (2007). In the field, FAO was carrying out a large number of related activities, e.g. on interactions between sea turtles and fisheries and on strengthening the body of knowledge for the application of the ecosystem approach to marine fisheries in the developing countries. In conclusion, the ecosystem approach to fisheries made the principles of sustainable development more concrete; however, a major challenge was still pending, i.e. to reconcile the short-term socio-economic benefits with long-term sustainability.

30. One representative asked why FAO adopted the ecosystem approach for fisheries alone. Ms Bianchi replied that the Organization dealt only with one production sector – aquaculture, fisheries and agriculture – and that its mandate stopped there. FAO obviously could not dictate to other sectors a line of conduct and could only be normative where fisheries were concerned; this was the reason for a certain institutional gap at inter-sectoral level. Four representatives praised the presentation just made and the focus on the inter-sectoral approach, but expressed doubts as to the real capacity of the countries, especially to integrate and coordinate, if the Ministries of the Environment must assume, as Ms Bianchi had suggested, such a complex task by turning to other Ministries and if there were not at the top a body mandated to take over the tasks of coordination and integration. It was obvious that the various sectors were at variance on this question; therefore all involved had first to change their way of thinking. How then to reinforce the powers of the Ministry of the Environment? Ms Bianchi was of the opinion that certainly no body in most cases could assume such a task and to entrust the Ministry of the Environment with it was only a proposal on her part, perhaps not really relevant in many countries. However, the example of Australia proved that the situation could be unblocked if there were at the highest level a political decision which imposed the ecosystem approach and all the sectors involved were obliged to comply.

31. The OSPAR representative added that the national delegations participating in the OSPAR Commission meetings were doing so on behalf of their respective governments and not the ministry from which they emanated; it was not conceivable to give one ministry a blank cheque to represent several sectors concerned by such a cross-cutting issue as the ecosystem approach. Each country had its own state structures but it was always the government that took the final decision at the highest level.

### **EEC**

32. Mr José Rizo-Martin, European Commission representative (DG Environment) explained that, rather than giving a general vision of the status of the ecosystem approach in the EU, he preferred to show how this approach in the course of being elaborated and applied at European level, was based on a common interpretation of what it was at world level. For the European Union, the process of the European Marine Strategy had been launched four years before in the framework of a general consultation in which had participated all stakeholders – among them MAP, OSPAR and HELCOM. At the same time, ICM had prepared an excellent document, very technical on the ecosystem approach. Shortly, on the basis of a decision of the European Council, the Member States would have a Directive, legally binding for the implementation of the marine strategy at three levels, European, regional and national; the obligations would concern the definition of objectives, targets and monitoring. The involvement of regional conventions was an established principle but the modalities were still being debated.

33. The speaker then reviewed the objectives, management goals and sets of political measures which characterized the ecosystem approach and formed a coherent whole, from impact monitoring and environmental quality assessment to the evaluation in order to form a vision focused on sustainability, to setting and implementing objectives concerning the

desired state of the environment. However, the obstacles to the application of the ecosystem approach were not negligible and demanded the mobilization of all those responsible in order to overcome them; conflicts between objectives and stakeholders, inadequate capacities of the management bodies already fully occupied with the objectives and mandates of several conventions, limitations of subsistence modalities, scientific knowledge still inadequate and incomplete.

34. Several concerns were expressed after this presentation, whose relevance was greeted by participants. One representative noted that the ecosystem approach was an integral part of the sustainable development policy and recommended a more detailed evaluation of what its application would mean at the national level, with possibly some guidelines in order to make it easier to link the strategic and operational objectives of NAPs with the new concept. For the developing countries, the constraints were obviously more serious in the socio-economic sphere and it would be useful to provide for a transition period and forms of assistance. The FAO representative pointed out that her Organization, in its guidelines on ecosystem approach, had recommended that incentives and other enabling factors be put in place for the socio-economic sector. It was also pointed out that conflicts of interest among sectors would immensely complicate the approach and that the Mediterranean, divided in an Eastern and Western basin, in a North and a South rim contrasting strongly, could not be homogeneous like other regional seas. In this connection, one expert suggested to opt for the sub-regional scale in the implementation of pilot projects which could attract financing. Three participants referred to the necessary involvement of stakeholders; one of them however cautioned against the dangers of a superficial consensus: to try and satisfy all sectors by associating them to the process without really clarifying the prime importance of the ecosystem could lead to grave misunderstandings or total inaction at the time of decisions. One expert expressed the opinion that, before involving the stakeholders, one had to make sure that the adoption of the ecosystem approach with its long-term missions and objectives would benefit from solid and resolute support at the highest political level – Prime Minister, President, or the whole Government, depending on the State concerned. However, for another expert, the first consideration should be the ecosystem itself, in other words to decide what it meant at the local level on the basis of best available knowledge, in order to know which eco-region one was dealing with and then be able to move forward by involving stakeholders and government.

35. The Coordinator of MAP stated that, while listening with great attention to the various interventions which followed the four presentations, he had the impression of re-living, three or four years before, the discussions on the formulation of the Mediterranean Strategy on Sustainable Development (MSSD), when, in the various expert meetings and workshops in which participated many stakeholders from the region, the same questions were asked time and again: what was the place of environment in sustainable development? How to associate stakeholders? How to implement the recommendations and proposals for action at local level? How to avoid complexity? Where to find financing? In today's questions, the ecosystem approach replaced the MSSD. The Mediterranean region had, to be sure, its specificities and contrasts, and once the MSSD was adopted, each country was able to adapt it to its own conditions, rhythm, degree of socio-economic development and environmental issues. The same would happen with the evolutionary process that MAP wanted to launch now; the questions would in time become clearer by themselves. The challenge for the time being was to decide on a road map. The Secretariat had simply prepared a proposal which the Consultant would formulate and explain; the role of the expert meeting consisted in revamping it on the basis of its reactions, suggestions and even concerns, but always with the idea of going forward and knowing in which direction.

**Agenda item 6: A road map for the gradual application of the ecosystem approach in the Mediterranean: review and discussion**

36. Mr Gabrielides, MAP/MED POL Consultant, continued his presentation of the ecosystem approach on the basis of the working document UNEP(DEPI) MED WG.306/2, the introductory part of which he had already summarized. He first noted that all the organizations that had launched the application of the ecosystem approach had established a road map. To do this, one had first to define the ecosystem in question, then assess the knowledge available on it, establish its state and set the "vision", i.e. the state of the ecosystem one wishes to reach. Then, by comparing the vision with the current state, one had to determine the properties of the ecosystem which were particularly important and the elements affected by human activities, to set strategic goals, to elaborate ecological objectives, to deduce from them the operational objectives with indicators and target levels and finally to reformulate the management plans and implement them, while readjusting them through periodic updating.

37. The first two steps – Vision and objectives – were readily available to the present meeting, since it was sufficient to use the many documents that MAP had prepared throughout the years up to a very recent past. For instance, for the ecological vision, there was MAP-Phase II, the "Vision for sustainable development" and MED POL Phase IV. The vision proposed was the following: A Mediterranean Sea and coast that were clean, safe, healthy, productive and biologically diverse, for the benefit of the present and future generations". For the objectives, there was the MSSD and its seven priority fields of action, the last of which consisted in "promoting sustainable management of the sea and coastal zones and taking urgent action to put an end to the degradation of coastal zones ". On the basis of the objectives, orientations and actions approved for this priority field of action one could establish a number of strategic goals that are proposed in the document. After setting the strategic goals one should decide on management areas i.e. whether the approach should be implemented at the level of the whole Mediterranean or in specific areas. Then ecological and operational objectives should be developed together with indicators and target levels. Finally, a management plan integrating all actions and measures concerning the Mediterranean Sea and its coasts should be formulated. This would imply that the sectoral approach would be abandoned, i.e. dealing separately with various uses and diverse constituent elements of the ecosystem. One must therefore reiterate that with the introduction of the ecosystem approach, MAP, its structure, components, its institutional and legal framework would not be turned upside down, but would be placed in a new perspective on the basis of principles like integration, adaptive management, monitoring and periodic assessment.

38. At the end of his presentation, Mr Gabrielides asked participants to take document UNEP(DEPI) MED WG. 306/2 and refer to section 3 and move specifically to the road map proposed for the Mediterranean, in order to formulate their comments, views and suggestions and thus amend the text of the Secretariat.

39. All participants that took the floor considered that the road map proposed in its current version was relevant and congratulated the Secretariat for the excellent work accomplished in the document under discussion. The comments made were on very specific points, such as the need to clarify in greater detail the orientations concerning the application of the ecosystem approach, the need to determine whether it would concern the coastal environment in addition to the marine environment, , the type of monitoring which would be implemented, the importance of defining the management units, the assistance to countries, the modalities for taking into consideration the extensive work already carried out by MAP (SAP, NAP, MSSD) and putting it in the new perspective.

40. At this point in the discussion, the Coordinator of MAP thought it advisable to recall the objective of the meeting: at its conclusion, the experts should have provided the Secretariat with clear indications on the road map, which would be submitted to the Contracting Parties next December for possible future application of the ecosystem approach; the experts should methodically review and amend the text of the Secretariat in the successive order of its elements, as had just now done very appropriately one participant by deleting from the vision all references to activities. The mandate given to the experts by the Contracting Parties was both precise and limited and one ought to comply with it.

41. Mr Gabrielides added that this was not the time to enter into all the details, but to act in a way that at the next meeting of the Contracting Parties the decision to adopt the ecosystem approach on the basis of the road map be taken. It was only then, if the green light were indeed given officially, that the process could become progressively more concrete in the following years, according to the steps envisaged and in the framework of the several expert meetings and workshops which would be entrusted with thinking and clarifying the new orientations and the actions required for the application of the ecosystem approach. For the time being, it would be appropriate to keep in the road map the very general guidelines and concentrate first and foremost on the vision and objectives for which the necessary appraisal elements were available and not to try and settle such a complex question as the ecosystem approach.

42. Mr Eirik Adler, UNEP Regional Seas Coordinator, suggested that the document under review remain as is and serve as basic document and information document; that another document, one or two-page long, be prepared to include the road map agreed by the experts along with the recommendations; this would be the output of the present meeting. The EU representative, partly agreed with this suggestion, but considered that there was confusion between two distinct road maps: one on the application of the ecosystem approach *per se* and the other on the activities to be carried out under the umbrella of the Secretariat for the application of the approach.

43. Mr Civili indicated that the Secretariat had already in mind to present at the end of the meeting a summary of conclusions and recommendations, which was similar more or less to Mr Adler's proposal on the "output" of the expert deliberations. On the road map, he thought that it could be the combination of the application of the ecosystem approach in terms of principles and what the Secretariat and the countries would carry out in terms of activities. Finally, it should be reiterated that the introduction of the approach was an evolution, not a revolution, putting in a new perspective and that this was an excellent opportunity in the life of MAP to accomplish it, when the new legally-binding text of the SAP MED was being prepared into which especially the principles of the ecosystem approach would be integrated. Therefore, nothing in the on-going processes of MED POL, SAP and the NAPs was going to stop, but on the contrary the new developments would reinforce them.

44. Following the clarifications provided by the Secretariat and the consensus that emerged on the procedure to follow, the meeting continued the review of section 3 on the road map by following the various parts in order. During the discussions, emphasis was given on the fruitful association of scientists and decision-makers on the spatial coverage appropriate for each component of the ecosystem. Some participants also cautioned against strategic objectives that would be too numerous and too strict, before an in-depth analysis of the current Mediterranean context and of the new information and scientific knowledge could give a more complete picture of the region. For its part, the Secretariat insisted that the text, which would result from the expert deliberations and would be submitted to the Parties in December 2007, contain a political element which would signify the adoption of the ecosystem approach by MAP if the Parties were to agree it.

45. During the ensuing discussion, additions, deletions and amendments were brought to the following headings: ecological vision, ecosystem properties and threats, strategic goals, ecological objectives, operational objectives with indicators and target values, reformulation of management plans. For the first phase of the road map the meeting agreed to recommend to the Contracting Parties a new formulation for the vision. Concerning the strategic goals, the meeting proposed three on the basis of priority action 7 of the MSSD and the experience gained by other regional and international bodies. Finally, the experts recommended a number of actions deemed necessary for the whole process of application of the ecosystem approach. The detailed output of this first review was put on record, to allow the Secretariat to establish the recommendations and conclusions of the meeting and submit them to participants for final approval.

**Agenda item 7: Other matters**

46. There were no matters raised under this agenda item.

**Agenda item 8: Summary of conclusions**

47. The Secretariat presented the summary of recommendations and conclusions. After a thorough review and several amendments to the substance and form, the meeting approved the text as it appears in **Annex III** to the present report.

48. The Coordinator of MAP congratulated participants for the intensive discussion they had carried out and their active and scrupulous contributions. The meeting had reached its objective by agreeing a text, which was concise, judicious, and effective to be submitted to the Contracting Parties, and which could launch a new determining phase in the MAP action for the years to come.

49. Mr Mifsud thanked especially the OSPAR, HELCOM and FAO representatives who had accepted MAP's invitation. They had enriched the discussion with their experience and competence in the field under review. Finally, he indicated that the detailed report of the meeting would be prepared at a future time by the Secretariat and sent to all participants for comments and approval.

**Agenda item 9: Closure of the meeting**

50. After the customary exchange of courtesies, the Chairman declared the meeting closed at 6 p.m. on Wednesday, 21 February 2007.





## ANNEX I

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## **Annex II**

### **Agenda of the meeting**

- |                |  |
|----------------|--|
| Agenda item 1. | Opening of the Meeting   |
| Agenda item 2. | Election of Officers   |
| Agenda item 3. | Adoption of the Agenda and organization of work  |
| Agenda item 4. | Background, Objective and expected outputs of the Meeting  |
| Agenda item 5. | Review of the process of application of the ecosystem approach by other international/regional bodies        |
| Agenda item 6. | A road map for the gradual application of the ecosystem approach in the Mediterranean: review and discussion |
| Agenda item 7. | Other business   |
| Agenda item 8. | Summary of conclusions   |
| Agenda item 9. | Closure of the Meeting   |



## ANNEX III

### Conclusions and recommendations

At their 14<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Meeting (Portoroz, Slovenia, November 2005) the Contracting Parties endorsed the cooperation with the EC in a project to be implemented by MED POL, on behalf of MAP, to review the implications of applying the ecosystem approach to the management of human activities in the Mediterranean region. The project should be implemented in cooperation with all Regional Activity Centres, with a view to the possible application of the ecosystem approach by the whole MAP system.

In the framework of this project, two expert consultations were held which produced document WG. 306/2. This document was the basic working document of the meeting of Government Designated Experts on the application of the Ecosystem Approach by the Mediterranean Action Plan, (Athens, 20-21 February, 2007) which followed.

1. The meeting recommends that the following roadmap for the application of the ecosystem approach be submitted to the Contracting Parties for adoption:

- a) Progressively apply the ecosystem approach to the management of human activities that may affect the marine and coastal environment.
- b) Initiate a process, involving scientists and policy makers, and when appropriate, with other competent bodies/organizations/authorities, aiming at the gradual application of the ecosystem approach which would include the following steps:
  - i) Definition of an ecological Vision for the Mediterranean.
  - ii) Setting of common Mediterranean strategic goals.
  - iii) Identification of the important ecosystem properties and pressures\*.

Ecosystem properties include *inter alia*: physical and chemical features, habitat types and biological features. Pressures and Impacts include physical damage and other physical disturbance, interference with natural hydrological processes, contamination by hazardous substances, nutrient and organic matter enrichment and biological disturbance.

- iv) Development of a set of ecological objectives corresponding to the Vision and strategic goals.

Ecological objectives should relate to ecosystem health, structure and/or function and should take into consideration the analysis of ecosystem properties and pressures.

- v) Derivation of operational objectives with indicators and target levels.

Operational objectives, the achievement of which requires action, should be derived from the ecological objectives. On the basis of the initial assessment made, a comprehensive set of environmental targets and associated indicators should be set with the aim to guide progress towards achieving good environmental status in the marine and coastal environment. A target level is a specific value of an indicator associated with a particular objective. This value can be set as an objective that must be achieved. When deciding on targets and

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\* From this step onwards, it is necessary to consider the appropriate spatial and temporal scale of application of the approach

indicators the relevant existing environmental targets, set out at national or international level in respect of the same waters should be taken into account, ensuring that these targets are mutually compatible.

- vi) Revision of existing monitoring programmes for ongoing assessment and regular updating of targets.
- vii) Redrafting the management plans.

In drafting the management plans all relevant work already undertaken within MAP, will be taken into consideration. Management plans will also include supplementary activities such as monitoring, research, capacity building, information, etc

- c) Consider the launching of pilot projects as a model for the application of the ecosystem approach.

2. As far as the first step is concerned the meeting agrees to recommend to the Contracting Parties the adoption of the following ecological vision:

*A Mediterranean with marine and coastal ecosystems that are healthy, productive and biologically diverse for the benefit of present and future generations.*

3. As far as the strategic goals are concerned, on the basis of the objectives of the relevant priority field of action of the MSSD and the experience gained by other international and regional bodies, the meeting proposes the following three goals for marine and coastal areas:

- a) *To protect, allow recovery and, where practicable, restore the structure and function of marine and coastal ecosystems thus also protecting biodiversity, in order to achieve and maintain good ecological status allowing for their sustainable use.*
- b) *To reduce pollution in the marine and coastal environment so as to ensure that there are no significant impacts or risk to human and/or on ecosystem health and/or on uses of the sea and the coasts.*
- c) *To preserve, enhance and restore a balance between human activities and natural resources in the sea and the coasts and reduce their vulnerability to risks.*

4. The Meeting also agrees that, throughout the process of applying the ecosystem approach, a number of actions would be necessary. In particular,

- i) Study the socio-economic consequences of the proposed management actions and put forward ideas for alleviating them.
- ii) Use the best available scientific information for setting the target levels. In addition, ensure that the capacity exists to determine the indicators at the required accuracy, precision and frequency. In this regard, it should be noted that assessment, monitoring, and scientific research are required to provide a sound scientific basis for identifying ecological objectives, selecting indicators, and assessing the effectiveness of measures taken by providing regular evaluations of the ecosystem status.
- iii) Initiate and maintain a process to inform the public and involve the stakeholders in the entire course of implementation, in particular, a) prepare an information package on the objectives for the benefit of the stakeholders and the general public and b) obtain feedback from all stakeholders on the management actions and tools proposed.
- iv) Assist countries, where necessary, in the implementation of the management activities.



5. In implementing the management plans, the Contracting Parties will apply the ecosystem approach principles especially adaptive management, periodic reviews and updates, and the principle of decentralization to the lowest appropriate level.