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**MEDITERRANEAN ACTION PLAN
MED POL**

Extraordinary Meeting of MED POL National Coordinators

Mytilini (Greece), 26-28 March 2007

**Report of the Extraordinary Meeting of MED POL National
Coordinators**

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Introduction

1. Pursuant to a recommendation of the 14th Meeting of the Contracting Parties held in Portoroz, Slovenia, in 2005, an extraordinary meeting of MEDPOL National Coordinators was held at the University of the Aegean, Mytilini (Lesvos), Greece, on 26-28 March 2007, with kind contributions from the University of the Aegean and the Government of France.

Participation

2. National Coordinators or their representatives from the following Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention attended the meeting: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Cyprus, Egypt, European Community, France, Greece, Israel, Italy, Malta, Monaco, Morocco, Slovenia, Spain, Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia and Turkey. Observers from Montenegro were also present.

3. The following United Nations bodies and specialized agencies were represented: the Marine Environmental Studies Laboratory of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA-MESL), the International Centre for Science and High Technology of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (ICS-UNIDO) and the World Health Organization (WHO).

4. MAP's Regional Activity Centres for Cleaner Production (CP/RAC), Information and Communication (INFO/RAC) and Specially Protected Areas (SPA/RAC) were also represented.

5. The full list of participants is attached as **Annex III** to this report.

Agenda item 1: Opening of the meeting

6. Mr. Andreas Troumbis, Rector of the University of the Aegean, opened the meeting and welcomed the participants to Lesvos. He said that the choice of the University as the venue for the meeting reflected the importance of involving academic institutions in the protection of the Mediterranean Sea, and he looked forward to its conclusions.

7. Mr. Michael Angelides, Department of Environmental Studies, University of the Aegean, also welcomed participants in their important common effort to protect the Mediterranean.

8. Mr. Francesco Saverio Civili, MED POL Coordinator, thanked the University of the Aegean for hosting the meeting and the Government of France for its financial contribution, which had enabled the attendance of a larger number of country representatives. The present meeting represented a turning-point for MED POL. Implementation of Phase IV now required integration of its activities into the Strategic Action Programme (SAP) and relevant Protocols to the Barcelona Convention and operational linkage with regional and international conventions. It would also require

management and programmatic adaptation in view of the application of the ecosystem approach and coordination with the ongoing evaluation of MAP.

Agenda item 2: Election of officers

9. The meeting unanimously elected the following officers:

Chairperson: Ms Sylvie Ravelet (France)

Vice-Chairperson: Ms Fatma AbouShouk (Egypt)

Vice-Chairperson: Ms Valentina Turk (Slovenia)

Rapporteur: Ms Marina Argyrou (Cyprus)

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

10. The meeting adopted the provisional agenda contained in document UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG. 312/1, which appears as **Annex I** to this report.

11. The Rules of Procedure for the meetings and conferences of the Contracting Parties to the Convention for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea against Pollution and its related Protocols (UNEP/IG.43/6, Annex XI) applied *mutatis mutandis* to the extraordinary meeting of MED POL National Coordinators.

Agenda item 4: Scope and purpose of the meeting

12. Mr. Civili briefly presented the background, scope and purpose of the meeting. He recalled that the MED POL Secretariat had been asked by the Contracting Parties to organize an extraordinary meeting of National Coordinators specifically to examine a draft operational document of MED POL Phase IV; draft elements to be used in preparing future legally binding programmes and measures as a follow-up to the current SAP; and the draft MED POL information system, which would be an important tool for policy-makers, scientists and others. In response to a question regarding the purpose of the draft operational document of MED POL Phase IV (2006-2013) (Document UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG. 312/3), he said that it was expected to outline how the Secretariat would implement or help countries to implement each aspect of Phase IV. After possible revision, the document would eventually be adopted by the Contracting Parties.

13. Requests were made for short presentations of the conclusions of the working group that had met in Barcelona, Spain, in February 2007 to review long-term implementation of the national action plans (NAPs); the conclusions of the meeting of government-designated experts on application of the ecosystem approach by MAP, held in Athens in February 2007; and the status of the new Global Environment Facility (GEF) Strategic Partnership.

14. Mr. Fouad Abousamra, MED POL Programme Officer, said that the aim of the meeting in Barcelona had been to review an updated strategy for implementation of NAPs and the SAP and to further discuss application of a differentiated approach to pollution reduction. The differentiation criteria reviewed by the meeting were based on environmental limit values (ELVs) that would be further elaborated through scientific and

technical discussions. At the same time, the Contracting Parties would, in line with the gradual application of the ecosystem approach, begin setting environmental quality objectives (EQOs), which would be adopted by 2015 as a replacement for the ELVs. Implementation of the NAPs could, however, continue without change.

15. Mr Gabriel Gabrielidis, MED POL Consultant, said that at the meeting in Athens in February 2007, government-designated experts had examined the implications of application of the ecosystem approach to the management of human activities in the Mediterranean region. The meeting had recommended a 'road map' for application of the approach, to be submitted to the Contracting Parties for adoption. For gradual integration of the approach, an ecological vision of the Mediterranean was defined, along with common strategic goals, which were based on the policy documents already adopted by MAP. After their adoption by the Contracting Parties, a gradual process would start for the definition of the areas of application of the approach and, accordingly, of operational objectives and related actions.

16. Mr. Civili explained that the GEF Strategic Partnership comprised two components - regional capacity-building and an investment fund managed by the World Bank intended to assist countries in the implementation of the NAPs and the SAP. There had been some adjustments to the Project proposal following policy changes in the GEF management, but it had now been finalized and was before the GEF Council for approval. The Partnership had been very well received by the countries and other stakeholders: a highly positive development was that there was already a larger-than-expected counterpart contribution to the Partnership initiative. If approved, the Partnership would be operational by the beginning of 2008.

17. Another promising development was the approval by the European Commission (EC) of a new policy for the reduction of pollution in the Mediterranean, known as the Horizon 2020 initiative. One of the major actors in the initiative was the European Investment Bank (EIB), which had singled out MED POL and specifically the NAPs as the best framework for Horizon 2020 pollution reduction projects eligible for EIB funding. EIB had worked in partnership with MED POL to review all NAPs and had drawn up a list of "bankable" NAPs. The relevant Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention had been kept informed of the initiative and would shortly be receiving expert missions to refine a shortlist of projects. MED POL National Coordinators were invited specifically to prepare the ground for the expert missions.

18. The presentation gave rise to a number of comments and questions. By way of general comment, it was observed that all activities and means of action, including those associated with the recent initiatives and developments mentioned, should be recapitulated in the operational document, and certainly in the tables in the addendum, in order to give a clear overall picture of implementation.

19. In response to the questions made, Mr. Civili assured participants that the MED POL Coordinators had been and would continue to be kept fully informed of developments. The beneficiary countries would be contacted directly by the Bank in connection with the forthcoming expert missions. Regarding selection criteria, MED POL had submitted all NAPs to the EIB experts and the selection was proceeding on the basis of the Bank's own criteria. He understood that soft loans were the intended form of funding, although it had been suggested that EC "incentives" might be provided, possibly to be interpreted as leaving the door open for other ways and means. Finally, he specified that UNEP/MAP was the executing agency for the GEF Strategic Partnership.

Agenda Item 5: Review of the draft operational document of MED POL Phase IV

20. Introducing documents UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG. 312/3 and Addendum, Mr. Civili stressed that the operational document was intended to outline how the MED POL Phase IV programme was to be implemented, and would be submitted to the Contracting Parties for approval. Changes agreed upon at the current meeting would be incorporated into the document for submission to the meeting of MED POL National Coordinators in June 2007. The addendum was to be seen as a practical guide/summary of the activities for policy makers.

21. With reference to the scope of MED POL Phase IV, he drew attention to the basic principle adopted at the 14th Meeting of Contracting Parties in Portoroz that the main components of MED POL Phase III would continue to be the backbone of Phase IV. A more holistic approach, however, would be applied to take account of new developments in and outside the region, as described earlier, and of matters requiring further expansion. The document should not be considered exhaustive, as room should be left for adjustment to an evolving situation and in particular to future decisions related to the application of the ecosystem approach and the differentiated approach.. He proceeded to highlight the main points contained in sections 3.1.1 to 3.1.3 of the document, covering implementation of the Dumping, Land-based Sources (LBS) and Hazardous Wastes Protocols.

22. In the ensuing discussion, a number of representatives, after expressing appreciation for the comprehensive document, considered it too general in some parts. Some restructuring and additional information were needed in order to present a road map in the form of a clear plan of deliverables or products, together with expected outcomes, lines of responsibility, contributors, target dates or time-frames and sources or potential sources of financing, including external resources. Particular emphasis was placed on the addendum to the document as an operational guide to implementation and an innovative management tool. At the same time, the document, which might take the form of a 'rolling plan', should be flexible enough to allow for adjustment to change. Several speakers considered that financial resources should be addressed in a separate section of the document. It was generally agreed that any reference to possible external financing should be added to the table in the addendum.¹

23. Responding to comments, Mr. Civili assured representatives that missing details would be included in the document. He doubted the feasibility of precise planning for a seven-year period, however, given the need for flexibility and dynamism in an evolving situation. In fact there was an in-built mechanism for adjustment in the meetings of National Coordinators and Contracting Parties, which reviewed programme implementation every two years. The degree of detail in the document had been the fruit of a compromise taking that need for flexibility into account.

24. Speakers generally felt that there was a need for more clarity in the definition of tasks and responsibilities between MED POL and the Contracting Parties. Moreover, MED POL's position within the MAP structure and individual responsibilities within the MED POL Unit should be clearly specified, and references to cooperation with the RACs should be more explicit. Concerning the internal division of responsibilities, Mr. Civili recalled that the four professional members of MED POL's staff had clear-cut functions, which were, and should remain, thematic rather than country-based. He assured representatives of continued close coordination with the RACs.

25. The question of the non-ratification of the Protocols was raised, with one representative suggesting that the Secretariat might be asked to approach countries in an attempt to ascertain the reasons for non-ratification and to offer technical assistance where needed. Mr. Civili agreed that ratification of the Protocols remained a priority, as they formed the legal basis for implementation of Med POL Phase IV activities, although non-ratification had not precluded the substantial progress made in the implementation of the Protocol, marked by the preparation and endorsement of the NAPs.

26. The differentiated approach to pollution reduction was among the matters relating to implementation of the Protocols that some representatives felt had not been reflected in sufficient detail in the document. Mr. Civili explained that the process was under way and assured participants that the ongoing work on the differentiated approach, and indeed also on the ecosystem approach, in no way affected implementation of the NAPs, given that they had been endorsed at the meeting in Portoroz and that they had started being implemented.

27. Some interest was expressed in possible amendments to the Dumping Protocol concerning the matter of CO₂ injections into underwater geological structures in the Mediterranean. It was explained that work was ongoing with the London Convention in that regard, and that any developments under that Convention and under other regional conventions would be duly reported and would serve as input for future amendments to the Dumping Protocol. After its entry into force, the Protocol could be open to possible further amendments on such matters as brine and artificial reefs, mentioned by one participant.

28. Clarification was sought of some of the points made in connection with implementation of the Hazardous Wastes Protocol, including the pilot project to establish inventories of lubricating oils in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the preparation of an inventory of batteries. Mr. Abousamra, describing the projects, informed the meeting that details of the activities were posted on the MED POL website; the Tunisian experience in battery management would be taken into account for future activities. With regard to implementation of the LBS Protocol, particular emphasis was placed on the use of hydrodynamic modeling as a crucial resource for estimating pollutant inputs. In response to several comments, explanations were given regarding the ongoing work on diffuse sources of pollutants, including work in partnership with other regional bodies and the scientific community. Representatives were assured that additional information on other points raised, such as the development of regional ELVs, would be included in the document.

29. Mr. Civili, introducing section 3.1.4 of the document, explained the importance of compliance monitoring, which would be implemented during Phase IV through regular updating of national baseline budgets (NBBs) of pollutant emissions and releases. The numerous reference methods for monitoring that had been generated through the programme would be examined to determine which of them required updating. All the information would then be collated and made available through the MED POL portal. The regional data quality assurance programme, established in partnership with the IAEA-MESL, ensured that the collected data on marine pollution were some of the most accurate in the world. Although some indicators had been generated, countries varied widely in their ability to provide the necessary data. During Phase IV, it was anticipated that the region would begin using 'drivers pressures state impacts responses' (DPSIR) as indicator-based assessments.

30. One representative emphasized the importance of wider participation in the preparation of syntheses of regional data by MED POL, with input from Contracting Parties. He proposed that in planning monitoring activities, especially in the wider context of the ecosystem approach, all the relevant exercises conducted by RACs and relevant international organizations should be taken into account and harmonized or coordinated accordingly. One speaker, referring to quality assurance and quality control, said that the financial implications of those activities should be indicated.

31. Several representatives commented on the importance of monitoring atmospheric deposition of pollutant substances and of listing concrete actions to be taken. One speaker suggested that pollution from atmospheric deposition could be monitored by setting up a coastal station in each country around the Mediterranean. Another asked how climate change had been taken into account with respect to atmospheric deposition. It was pointed out that the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic (OSPAR Convention) addressed the problem of ocean acidification; however, one speaker said that MED POL should also monitor the situation.

32. Mr. Civili emphasized the importance of capacity-building and technical assistance. Collaboration would continue with all MED POL's partners, including IAEA-MESL (chemical monitoring), WHO (microbiological quality) and the University of Alessandria (Italy) (biological effects monitoring). In the area of assistance to countries in keeping pollutant release and transfer registers (PRTR), the Egyptian experience with a number of large industries had been very positive, and it was hoped to expand the activity making use, as in the past of the support and cooperation of ICS-UNIDO.

33. Greater efforts would be made to involve all stakeholders, including the private sector, non-governmental organizations and local authorities, in pollution control programmes. It was foreseen that the MED POL information system would also facilitate participation of the general public in the programmes. A holistic approach to monitoring and assessment was to be developed, which would ensure that monitoring was an integral part of achieving environmental quality in a specified ecosystem. Technical details would be added later, in cooperation with national experts. MED POL Phase IV would also aim to strengthen cooperation with the scientific community, through conferences, workshops and pilot studies on emerging issues. Pollution associated with fisheries and the environmental effects of maritime transport were new issues for MED POL and would be addressed within the ecosystem approach.

34. Lastly, Mr. Civili described proposed changes in institutional arrangements at national level and in the MED POL Unit, which would result in smoother running of the programme. He also mentioned that countries should consider the possibility to second a national officer to work in Athens for MED POL for a period of time, which would facilitate both the working relations with that country and the work in the Secretariat.

35. In the ensuing discussion, one speaker commented that, under the LBS Protocol, MED POL was required to monitor the absorptive capacity of marine environments; that aspect should be included in Phase IV of its activities so that MED POL acted as an early-warning system for pollution. Such monitoring should be included in the addendum, as should modelling, which was an important activity in that respect. It was pointed out, however, that absorptive capacity was not applicable to all substances.

36. Concerning scientific collaboration, a number of representatives agreed that MED POL, preferably through its National Coordinators, should maintain close contacts with

the scientific community. It was stressed that MED POL was not a research centre but should use research findings to its benefit. One suggestion was that it would be useful to establish links with the scientific programmes funded by the EC through the Framework Programme of Research, with particular reference to the fast-track services available under its Global Monitoring for Environment and Security (GMES) component.

37. One representative said that it was essential to focus on the pollution aspects of tourism. Tourism-related activities should be limited to the fields that had been approved by the Contracting Parties for Phase IV and take into account the work carried out by the Blue Plan, PAP/RAC and CP/RAC.

38. One representative suggested that a database of available technical assistance in the area of waste management should be established. Indeed, much greater emphasis should be laid on the problem of marine litter management, which was set to grow more acute, forewarning of the need for rigorous measures. The speaker said that his country, Israel, had submitted to the Secretariat a scientific paper on its clean coasts project and was ready to offer assistance on the subject to any other country which so requested. The representative of CP/RAC suggested that the existing CP/RAC database on pollution prevention could also be linked to any MED POL database initiative. Additional input in that area, as well as in that of pollution treatment, would be welcome. Another representative added that provision should also be made for measures in the increasingly important area of desalination.

39. On the subject of cooperation, information and public participation, one representative suggested that stakeholder involvement and public outreach were closely intertwined and should not therefore be treated as separate issues. Another representative emphasized the importance of involvement by the private sector and non-governmental organizations, and of direct investments and public-private initiatives. It was also pointed out that the public was keenly awaiting the MAP information and communication strategy, which had still not materialized after six years in the pipeline.

40. On the subject of the causes of environmental degradation, not only social and economic factors but also the costs of inaction should be taken into account. Another extremely important issue was recognition of the potential consequences of the MAP reform process, to which some reference should be made. It could be stated, for example, that MED POL was aware of and ready to fulfil any new planning requirements. A further issue raised was the need for a glossary that would guarantee a common understanding of the terms used.

41. Concerning institutional arrangements, one representative said that the recommendation for each country to establish an inter-ministerial committee for MED POL activities was hard to accept, a view which was shared by a number of other representatives, considering that it touched internal matters. Similarly, any decision as to new responsibilities for MED POL National Coordinators was rather for ministers alone to take. With regard to the MED POL Unit, it was suggested that governance-related tasks should be included among its responsibilities and also that the support from national structures to be sought by the Secretariat should be covered in more specific detail.

42. In response to the concerns raised in connection with the establishment of inter-ministerial committees for MED POL activities, Mr. Civili said that the Secretariat wished only to express its view - and nothing more - that such a measure was the optimum method for arranging the coordination of activities. Naturally, it was for countries to

decide whether to act on that view. Following a discussion of appropriate methods by which to convey the right message, he proposed that the best way forward would be to prepare at a later stage an information document containing suggestions for specific activities which, from the MED POL point of view, would constitute beneficial institutional arrangements. The paragraph on the new responsibilities for MED POL National Coordinators would follow the decisions of the external evaluation of MAP which included MED POL as well.

43. In respect of the other issues raised, he said that capacity-building in the ecosystem approach had to be considered to a later stage in which the relevant tasks would be identified. He confirmed that the cost of inaction would be monitored and also that the suggested method of financing research would be pursued. A sustainable financing platform was also needed to bridge the gap between opportunities and needs, to which end the establishment of an initial structure was anticipated as part of the future GEF Strategic Partnership. Any interested country would therefore be very welcome to assign a suitably qualified person to assist in the functioning of that unit. He endorsed the suggestion for the establishment of a database, which could also be linked to the MED POL information system, and said that public-private partnership was a basic target.

44. Lastly, he gave a brief report of the outcome of the discussions of the informal drafting group on the structure of the addendum to the draft operational document, which had taken into account comments made during the meeting. After further discussion of an amended version of the addendum, the meeting agreed to a structural revision of the table contained therein, with new column headings.

Agenda item 6: Review of elements to be used for the implementation of the preparation of the legally binding text as per Art. 15 of the 1996 LBS Protocol

45. Mr. Civili, introducing document UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG. 312/4, recalled that it being presented pursuant to a decision by the Contracting Parties at their 14th Meeting. It was not being submitted for approval or amendment but was intended to initiate the process that would eventually lead to the preparation and adoption of a legally binding text that would follow up the current SAP, as provided for in Article 15 of the 1996 LBS Protocol. Participants were reminded that, under that Article, such a text should be approved by the Contracting Parties within one year of the entry into force of the amendments to the Protocol. The deadline was therefore open. The meeting might be considered a brainstorming session to point the way forward. Mr. Civili then outlined the main points in the document, which covered the legal framework of the new legally binding text, lessons learned from implementation of the LBS Protocol and the current SAP, the evolution of the international and regional contexts, the role of the NAPs, principles to be considered for preparation of the new legally binding text and a proposal for the scope of the text.

46. During the discussion, representatives said they appreciated the difficulties involved in elaborating a new SAP. Several considered it premature to be discussing a legally binding text before the amended Protocol had entered into force, as further new developments and trends would have to be taken into account. Others said that, when the time came, an updated and revised document would be needed in which each Contracting Party found its place and which at the same time reflected a common

Mediterranean identity; such a document should be developed on the basis of experience, the current SAP and the Protocol.

47. One speaker questioned the need for any change at all, arguing that new international developments would not necessarily call for a new SAP but might be catered for by coordinating the NAPs, which were revised every five years. In countries that had not yet ratified the Protocol, a new SAP might stall the ratification process. Assuming there was such a need, the first step would be to include in the document an analysis of gaps between the existing SAP and new requirements. Several speakers agreed that a gaps analysis was needed, one stating that gaps between countries' needs and the actual situation should also be identified.

48. It was generally agreed that a sound legal basis was required for the exercise ahead, together with a common understanding of what was to be done. It was observed that a new SAP would become obligatory with the entry into force of the Protocol, whereas the current SAP had not been adopted with that in mind. Countries would be unwilling to agree to obligations that had been accepted under other circumstances. Another speaker noted that the legal framework for the forthcoming exercise was to be found essentially in Articles 5 and 15 of the Protocol, from which it emerged that, although regional action plans and programmes were required, it was only the measures and timetables contained therein that were, strictly speaking, legally binding (Article 15.3). Other speakers shared that view. The need to specify the kinds of measures envisaged, which should not be confined to discharge limitations, was stressed. One representative said that the meaning of 'legally binding' should be specified, arguing that anything adopted by the Contracting Parties, including strategies and approaches, could be considered legally binding. An approach should therefore first be adopted by the Contracting Parties, from which a SAP could be derived.

49. Reference was made to the recent ruling by the Court of Justice of the European Community that international agreements ratified by the European Community must be applied by the Member States and, where the provisions of such an international agreement were clear and operational, they could be applied directly. That ruling explained why European Union Member States were now particularly cautious about adopting legally binding texts. That being said, they wished a spirit of cooperation to prevail and very much preferred a commonly agreed programme, none being in favor of resorting to an "opt-out" clause. It was pointed out that one aspect of that ruling that had a bearing on the matter under discussion was the requirement that an impact assessment be made before any piece of legislation was adopted by European Union Member States and that it should include an assessment of administrative, social and economic costs. Another point made in that connection concerned the requirement in some countries for legal texts to be passed by their parliaments.

50. Ms Tatiana Hema, MEDU Programme Officer, said that it was correct that only measures and timetables were legally binding under Article 15, but that did not preclude the preparation of a broader SAP. In connection with the debate on the meaning of "legally binding", she pointed out that failure to implement the provisions of the legal instruments would place Contracting Parties in a situation of non-compliance, and drew attention to the ongoing work within MAP on a compliance mechanism, which would clarify the issue. Mr. Civili, recalling that the Contracting Parties' decision made it mandatory to undertake the process now in hand, said that the next step might be to conduct a gaps analysis, as requested by several representatives, or, more broadly, an evaluation of SAP implementation to date, including difficulties encountered. He would,

however, welcome further indications regarding a broader implementation programme or strategy.

51. On the issue of the implications of legally binding texts, one representative emphasized the need to concentrate, in the preliminary phase, on identifying measures in a very limited number of sectors, rather than aiming at the unrealistic goal of reaching region-wide agreement on a series of measures. Mr. Abousamra, agreeing that priorities should be set, drew attention to the difficulties experienced by countries in addressing all the pollutant substances listed in the current SAP. A gaps analysis should first include that issue; two other major gaps related to the time-frame for implementation and the percentage targets. The Secretariat would welcome very clear terms of reference for a gaps analysis, and he invited representatives' views. As a starting point, one representative drew attention to section 8 of the document, subheadings i) to v) of which could form the basis of such an analysis. Concise background information on those points could provide very useful input for further discussion on the crucial issues in subheadings vi) to x) of that section.

52. A number of precise suggestions were made concerning the next steps to be taken. The Secretariat was asked to solicit comments from National Coordinators on questions covering subheadings vi) to x) of section 8. The answers would reveal the common understanding of the measures and targets and would identify the main substances and sectors that the National Coordinators considered should be addressed. The aim of the exercise would be to improve the SAP in such a way that all countries would share its content and could comply with its requirements. The conclusions of the working group that had met in Barcelona in March 2007 to review the long-term implementation of NAPs might be used as a starting point for identifying gaps between goals and national capacities. NAPs, which had laid emphasis on the differentiated approach, were the most important tool for implementing the SAP, as they identified the priorities that countries set for sectors and substances.

53. Concerning the possible approach to be used in the new SAP, it was proposed that models of the application of the proposed measures be prepared: one for a representative substance, such as mercury, which could be found in a number of sectors, and the other for a specific sector, such as refineries, in which a number of hazardous substances could be found. Those would serve to define the format for all measures to be taken with regard to the priorities that had been identified. The Secretariat made proposals concerning other possible substances and sectors that could be used as examples.

54. Another speaker suggested that the Contracting Parties should be involved in defining the measures, as they would be required to follow up with legislation. Consideration should be given to whether ministries of the environment should be asked to address the political aspects of the exercise.

55. An approach was proposed whereby the Secretariat would prepare a summary of the best available knowledge and a gap analysis regarding subsections i to v of section 8 of the document, which would be prepared for the next Meeting of National Coordinators. The meeting generally agreed that the proposed approach would prepare the ground for a fruitful discussion at the next meeting of the National Coordinators.

56. A request was made that the background document to be prepared by the Secretariat be made available in Arabic as well, as it would be difficult for some stakeholders to comment on a text that was available only in English.

57. Mr. Civili said that the MED POL Secretariat would do its best to respond to the suggestions that had been made in time for the next meeting of National Coordinators.

Agenda item 7: Presentation of and discussion on the draft MED POL Information System

58. Mr. Civili, introducing document UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG. 312/5, said that the MED POL information system represented a prime example of cooperation with the RACs. The expertise of INFO/RAC, moreover, had served as a major asset to MED POL in the development of its Info System, which had been a long-standing objective. It was an integrated system for which the need had now become crucial. It would be tested in 2007 and become fully operational in 2008.

59. Mr. Marco Montuori (INFO/RAC) gave a presentation of the MED POL Info System, the aim of which was to improve the reporting, management and analysis of MED POL data. He outlined the standard development procedure which had been followed, the background history, the phases involved in developing the Info System, its benefits, the main components of the graphical user interface (GUI) and future planned functionalities, such as modules for data plotting and geographical information systems (GIS). He also outlined the longer term plans for further development of the MED POL Info System, as well as the proposed implementation elements.

60. In response to various questions from the floor, Mr. Montuori said that customization of the interface was an option and that links with other databases could be created. It would also be possible to modify data, where appropriate. In fact, all options were possible but at a cost.

61. Replying to questions about the provision of Info System training, Mr. Civili said that the intention was to hold one or two regional training sessions for individual focal points, who would then be responsible for imparting the relevant instructions and information to users of the Info System in their respective countries. In special cases, however, requests for on-site assistance from INFO/RAC experts would be considered. One representative suggested that such training should instead be available to two persons from each country, one of whom should be familiar with information technology and the other with the relevant data. Another said that the experience gained from the environmental assessment process could serve as a useful basis for such training.

62. Another issue raised was that of the compatibility of the MED POL Info System with national databases and with GIS, to which end guidelines would be useful. In that connection, Mr. Civili confirmed that plans had already been made for INFO/RAC personnel to contact countries for the purpose of checking compatibility with existing national systems and creating linkages. One representative said that it was important to include both national and historical data in the MED POL Info System for purposes of comparison and assessment. In addition, the Info System should be flexible enough to take into account new developments and in that connection the question of data renewal intervals was a matter for consideration. The Info System should also incorporate a mechanism for monitoring the reliability of data, as well as an emergency response facility, and provide an overall picture of pollution in the Mediterranean, using the GIS model. Another speaker proposed that his country, Tunisia, which was in the process of establishing its own database on pollution, could work with INFO/RAC in order to explore methods of unifying the data concerned. Another speaker said that the Clearing House developed within the SMAP RMSU project financed by EC EuropeAid, co-lead by APAT

(Italy) and SYKE (Finland), on the five SMAP topic areas (waste management, desertification, hot spots, water, ICZM) contains also information which could be relevant to the MED POL Info System. The SMAP RMSU project is currently in the phase out stage and is working with INFO/RAC and the EEA to ensure the works so far carried out to be fully integrated in existing institutional settings at the regional level. The speaker also underlined the need to build on the database using a data population approach, in line with the Horizon 2020 initiative, while another mooted the possibility of introducing a user code for the purpose of downloading information. One representative said that a glossary of terminology relating to the Info System would be a useful asset.

63. The issue of data confidentiality and security was also raised by numerous representatives. Mr. Abousamra stressed the crucial importance of defining a clear policy on access to and use of the data held in the Info System, not all of which should be freely available to every user. Feedback received following the six-month period of alpha- and beta-testing would be instrumental to any adjustments to be made in that respect before the Info System became fully operational. Mr. Civili pointed out that the problematic issues to be discussed, including policy, were outlined in the document. One representative additionally suggested that a paper on data-control strategy issues could serve as a useful basis for discussion of the issues surrounding data input and output. A further point made was that the issue of data accessibility should be discussed in the light of the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-Making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (the Aarhus Convention). In that context, one representative said that the provision of some confidential data, including non-environmental data, would be essential for the broader monitoring of industrial emissions and discharges, for instance.

64. Ms Hema also drew attention to the provisions of article 15 of the Barcelona Convention and article 8 of the draft LBS Protocol, both of which related to public information, noting that the Secretariat prepared assessment reports on the basis of information submitted to it, which was not made available to the public. Such decisions lay instead with the Contracting Parties. Mr. Abousamra added that a policy document would be prepared for discussion at the next meeting of the MED POL Coordinators, while emphasizing that only the findings derived from information provided and not the information itself would be made available to the public. Participants would be informed of the outcome of the discussion to be held at the forthcoming meeting on MAP reporting concerning the integration of technical data into national reporting systems under the Barcelona Conventions and Protocols, bearing in mind also compatibility with the Horizon 2020 initiative. One representative suggested that a wise approach would be to make immediate use of the Info System to introduce a web-based reporting system in the interest of avoiding overlap and reducing the number of formats and portals in use. Another representative stressed the importance of the MED POL information and communication strategy, which would eventually serve as an interface with the public and improve the visibility of MED POL. He therefore suggested that a first draft of the strategy should be produced as soon as possible for discussion.

65. Mr. Civili underlined the importance of ensuring the sustainability of the MED POL Info System and said in response to a question from the floor that the cost of developing the MED POL Info System had thus far costed to MED POL 25,000 Euros, the rest being paid by INFO/RAC, which represented a good investment for MED POL. That amount would, however, increase when the system became operational, in which connection he was sure that INFO/RAC would continue be in a position to make a contribution. As requested by some representatives, he also hoped to convene a

meeting for information technology experts on the subject of the Info System in early 2008, subsequent to the testing phase, but stressed that resources were lacking. Mr. Abousamra added that the testing phase would involve only two databases and no changes other than the need to submit data in an electronic format designed to be compatible with the format used in the European Union/European Economic Area. Lastly, he said that the concerns raised by one representative with respect to the calculation of estimates based on raw data were among the matters yet to be discussed.

Agenda item 8: Other business

66. There was no other business.

Agenda item 9: Conclusions and Recommendations

67. The meeting considered a set of draft recommendations prepared by the Secretariat which were adopted after discussion and amendment. The revised recommendations are attached as **Annex II** to the present report.

Agenda item 10: Closure of the meeting

68. Following the customary exchange of courtesies, the Chairperson declared the meeting closed at 5.40 p.m. on Wednesday, 28 March 2007.

ANNEX I

AGENDA FOR THE EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF MED POL NATIONAL COORDINATORS

MYTILINI, GREECE, 26-28 MARCH 2007

- | | |
|------------------------|---|
| 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. | Scope and Purpose of the Meeting |
| Agenda item 5. | Review of the Draft Operational Document of MED POL Phase IV |
| Agenda item 6. | Review of elements to be used for the preparation of the legally binding text as for Art. 15 of the 1996 LBS Protocol |
| Agenda item 7. | Presentation of and discussion on the draft MED POL Information System |
| Agenda item 8. | Other Business |
| Agenda item 9. | Conclusions and Recommendations |
| Agenda item 10. | Closure of the Meeting |

ANNEX II

Recommendations (adopted on 28 March 2007)

The MED POL National Coordinators reviewed document UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG. 312/3 and its Addendum, which described the operational details of implementation of MED POL Phase IV. The Coordinators considered that, after the Secretariat had revised the document on the basis of the discussions, it could be presented to the next meeting of MED POL National Coordinators for approval and subsequent submission to the Contracting Parties for adoption.

The Coordinators asked the Secretariat to revise the document on the basis of the following comments:

General comments on doc. WG.312/3

- The document should describe the activities in more detail and should include more information on modalities of implementation and possible partnerships, giving special attention to cooperation with RACs.
- A glossary of terms should be added.
- The document should include a statement that ratification of the Dumping, LBS and Hazardous Waste Protocols was essential, as they formed the legal basis for implementation of MED POL Phase IV activities.

Specific comments on doc. WG.312/3

- The document should indicate that, once the Dumping Protocol had entered into force, possible amendments could be made to cover CO₂ injections into underwater geological structures, taking into account the results of the related London Convention assessment.
- The document should indicate that technical details related to monitoring and assessment (e.g. assessment of inputs from rivers) should be developed at a later stage, in cooperation with national experts.
- The document should indicate the cost-effectiveness of the proposed QA/QC activities.
- The document should envisage extending the work on marine pollution indicators to cover the necessary indicators for implementation of the ecosystem approach.
- The document should extend the capacity-building and transfer of technology programmes to cover all fields of action of MED POL Phase IV, including implementation of the ecosystem approach.

- The document should give more importance to the issues related to desalination and marine litter management.
- The document should take into account the work of METAP on the costs of inaction.
- The document should limit work on tourism to the fields that had been approved by the Contracting Parties for Phase IV and take into account the work carried out by the Blue Plan.
- In view of application of the ecosystem approach, the document should envisage harmonization of the monitoring and assessment activities with those undertaken by the RACs.
- The document should highlight the need to associate MED POL with relevant international and regional research initiatives in order to optimize reciprocal efforts.
- The document should emphasize the role of public/private partnership in the implementation of relevant activities.
- The document should indicate the need to use modeling tools to facilitate estimations of inputs from diffuse sources into the marine environment, evaluation of the absorbing capacity of the marine environment and preparation of reports on the state of the marine environment.
- The document should indicate that the management of the MED POL Programme will be adapted in line with the ongoing optimization of the MAP management.
- The position of the Secretariat on the need to establish inter-ministerial committees and on the functions of MED POL National Coordinators for better coordination of country activities should be included in the report of the meeting and not in the document.

Comments on the Addendum to doc. WG.312/3

The National Coordinators considered the table in the addendum to be a very useful tool for proper follow-up of implementation of MED POL Phase IV activities. In order to optimize its use, they amended its headings, as attached. In addition, the Coordinators asked the Secretariat to include in the table relevant information, as amended, derived from the discussions and decisions made at the meeting, and also to include (1) the relevant activities required for preparation of the legally binding programmes and measures, as for Art.15 of the amended LBS Protocol; (2) the activities required for application of the differentiated approach; and (3) MED POL-related activities for application of the ecosystem approach.

Comments on doc. WG.312/4

The MED POL Coordinators reviewed and discussed document UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG. 312/4. They considered it a good basis for launching the preparation of legally binding programmes and measures, as for Art. 15 of the amended LBS Protocol.

While noting that the timeframe for implementation of the process will depend on the entry into force of the LBS Protocol, the Coordinators decided to undertake a number of steps without delay, as follows:

- To ask the Secretariat to pursue section 8 of the document and to develop paragraphs i to v into a short document (i.e. a comparative analysis of the commitments of the current SAP with the related international, regional and European legal instruments and agreements). The document should be based on the available data and information, and should also include the legal rationale for preparation of the legally binding programmes and measures.
- To ask the Secretariat to contact MED POL Coordinators formally, to elicit their positions vis-à-vis the objectives, measures, timetables and approaches described in paragraphs vi to x of section 8 of the document. The short document mentioned above should be sent to National Coordinators at the same time.
- To ask the Secretariat to prepare a model describing the possible measures for the reduction of inputs of one pollutant (e.g. BOD) from the relevant sector.
- To ask the Secretariat to prepare an analysis of the answers received from National Coordinators and to present it to the meeting of MED POL National Coordinators in June 2007.

Conclusions on the discussion on the preparation of the MED POL Information System

The MED POL Coordinators expressed satisfaction for the progress made by MED POL in cooperation with INFO/RAC in the launch of the first phase of the Information System covering the portal and the report submission module.

They reviewed the work programme for the year 2007 which include the testing of the system by MED POL and the national experts as well as plans for the phase ii. As to the testing, it will be launched during the second half of 2007 with the support of the appropriate testing protocol to be prepared by INFO/RAC and the direct assistance of MED POL and INFO/RAC according to the needs.

The Coordinators stressed the need for MED POL to formulate as soon as possible an appropriate strategy for information and communication covering the appropriate use of the Information System. As a result, they asked the Secretariat to prepare a draft policy paper to be presented to the next Meeting of MED POL Coordinators (June 2007) including the relevant legal background and the data reporting and dissemination policy.

As to medium-term plans, the Coordinators agreed on the need for capacity building for the proper use of the system at the national level. A training course for trainers should be organized at the beginning of 2008 covering managerial and technical aspects.

ANNEX III

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