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MEDITERRANEAN ACTION PLAN

Meeting of the MED POL National Coordinators

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**REVIEW OF ACTIVITIES CARRIED OUT BY MED POL DURING
THE BIENNIUM 2000-2001**

1. Coordination

With the recruitment of Ms Çolpan Polat Beken for the post of MED POL Programme Officer, during the biennium 2000-2001 all the MED POL posts have been filled. As planned, in addition to the post of MED POL Coordinator (Mr F.S. Civili), one post (Mr F. Abousamra) is related to the technical and policy aspects of the implementation of the SAP and the LBS, Dumping and Hazardous Wastes Protocols, and the other post (MS C. Beken) is related to the formulation and follow up of the monitoring activities, data management, research and other scientific aspects. The WHO Senior Scientist is continuing to work full time on the MED POL Programme dealing with the sanitary aspects related to the SAP and LBS Protocol, compliance and enforcement.

Work has continued with the UN Cooperating Agencies for the implementation of specific activities. Cooperation with IAEA/MESL has been fundamental for the Data Quality Assurance activities related to chemical analyses through training, intercalibration, scientific visits, purchase of instruments, advice and quality control in participating laboratories. WMO has continued to assist MED POL in the implementation of airborne monitoring and research projects and IOC has assisted the work on marine litter and other research.

During the 2000-2001 biennium, as a result of negotiations aiming at a closer cooperation in the framework of the MED POL Programme including the SAP, an MOU was signed with ICS-UNIDO describing the fields in which the Agency will contribute to the programmes. In particular, ICS-UNIDO will be assisting financially and technically the implementation of the PRTR activities and the development of the SAP and the Mediterranean GEF Project in relation to industrial pollution.

An important agreement related to the biennium 2000-2001 was signed with the Centro Interuniversitario per la chimica e la biologia dei metalli in traccia of the University of Genoa in the field of training and intercalibration for biological effects monitoring. The agreement is expected to provide, in cooperation with RAMOGE, an important contribution to the development of the biomonitoring techniques and to the enlarging the participation of Mediterranean laboratories in the MED POL biomonitoring programme.

Close contacts have been maintained with MED POL Coordinators for the implementation and coordination of MED POL activities in the countries. In spite of that, a smaller than expected number of monitoring agreements was finalized. Although an ad hoc meeting will be held by the end of 2001 to review and discuss the monitoring activities, the present meeting may wish to discuss the reasons which are delaying the finalization of monitoring programmes.

During the biennium 2000-2001 closer contacts were established and exchanges of information were made with the UNEP/GPA Secretariat in The Hague. In view of the advanced steps made by MAP in the implementation of the principles and recommendations of the GPA (implementation of LBS and SAP), UNEP in fact considers MAP experience a very valuable model for other regional seas programmes. In particular, in view of the convening of the first Intergovernmental Meeting on the Implementation of the GPA in Canada in September 2001, the GPA Secretariat has asked MAP/MED POL to liaise with the Mediterranean region countries in order to collate national reports on the implementation of the GPA that could be used and presented at the Intergovernmental Meeting in Canada. A letter was sent in March 2001 to all National Coordinators to that purpose and the first national reports have been received by the MAP/MED POL Secretariat.

The GEF Project was formally approved by the GEF Council on 12 April 2000 and has become fully operational starting from January 2001. A number of activities related to the implementation of the SAP has already started being implemented. MED POL will play a major role in the implementation of the Project that is expected to create a solid technical and institutional basis for the long-term implementation of the SAP.

2. Pollution assessment

The process of preparing MED POL National Monitoring Programme continued in all countries aiming at the formulation and implementation of new national programmes covering trend monitoring, biological effects monitoring and compliance monitoring.

Six countries finalized monitoring agreements (Albania, Croatia, Cyprus, Greece, Slovenia and Turkey) and draft programmes were prepared for Algeria, Lebanon, Tunisia and Syria. Negotiations have started with Bosnia and Herzegovina, Egypt, Israel, Libya, Malta and Morocco. As a result, and considering the somehow slow progress noted until now in advancing the negotiations, the Secretariat foresees further delays in the finalization of all the above programmes. Efforts should be made by the countries and the Secretariat to identify and solve the problems inherent to the formulation and implementation of the programmes. Countries that do not usually receive financial assistance for the preparation and implementation of MED POL National Monitoring Programmes (France, Italy, Monaco and Spain) have also been contacted and urged to submit their monitoring proposals for MED POL Phase III. Only with Monaco the negotiations have progressed and a Programme is expected to be finalized by 2001.

Financial assistance was provided for the implementation of the activities in 2000 to Albania, Croatia, Cyprus, Egypt, Greece (for biomonitoring), Lebanon, Libya, Slovenia, Syria and Turkey for a total of US \$ 510,000 including purchase of equipment by IAEA, expert assistance to formulate the programme and cash for the local purchase of equipment and material. During 2000-2001, additional contacts were made with Albania, Cyprus, Croatia, Slovenia and Turkey for the submission of a new programme for 2001. Data were received from Croatia, Cyprus, Greece, Slovenia and Turkey. A preliminary evaluation of the data and results was made by the Secretariat and comments were sent to the countries.

Work started during 2001 to prepare a new data base adapted to the needs and requirements of MED POL Phase III, i.e. to accommodate and manage data from trend, compliance and biological effects monitoring. Several scientists were contacted in and outside the region to make use of the experience gained, ensure compatibility with other data banks and avoid duplication of work. At present, new formats are available in EXCEL worksheets. More information of the work being carried out on the management of MED POL data is contained in document UNEP(DEC)/MED WG.183/Inf.5. Efforts were also made to present in a final report including a CD ROM all the data available (MED POL Phase I and II). The report will be completed during 2001 and will be widely distributed.

Concerning Data Quality Assurance, work was continued under the technical coordination of IAEA/MESL. During the 2000-2001 biennium, five intercomparison exercises were carried out covering trace metals, methylmercury, petroleum hydrocarbons, chlorinated pesticides and sterols, and two new reference materials were prepared and made available to participating laboratories. Two training courses were organized on the analysis, respectively, of chlorinated pesticides and PCBs and trace metals that were attended by eleven scientists. Frequent contacts were also maintained by IAEA/MESL technical staff with the participating laboratories. It is worth noticing that IAEA/MESL on several occasions integrated MED POL participating scientists in the capacity building programme of the IAEA Project RAF-7 at no cost to MED POL.

In field of biomonitoring, through the agreement signed with the Centro Interuniversitario per la chimica e la biologia dei metalli in traccia of the University of Genoa for the period 2000-2001, intercalibration activities were organized for all the participating laboratories as well as a training course. An additional training course will be organized at the end of 2001. Several issues of an information bulletin for the exchange of information on the MED POL biomonitoring techniques and the enhancement of exchanges between participating laboratories were prepared by RAMOGE and widely distributed in the region.

As a follow up to a consultation meeting held in Athens in December 1999 to discuss the outline of a coastal litter management programme to be implemented in the framework of MED POL, a questionnaire was prepared and sent to the countries in order to identify gaps and problems and to contribute, as a first step, to the preparation of an up-to-date assessment of the situation. A document was prepared and is submitted to the present meeting as UNEP(DEC)/MED WG.183/Inf.4. It includes a review of the state of the art of coastal solid waste management in the region and proposes guidelines to be considered at national and regional levels to reduce the adverse impacts of solid waste on the Mediterranean marine and coastal environment. The long-term aim of the activity, which is part of the implementation of the Strategic Action Plan (SAP), is to prepare a regional strategy for coastal litter management and help the countries in the elaboration and formulation of National Action Plans.

During the biennium, negotiations initiated for the launching of a Pollutants Releases and Transport Registers (PRTR) Mediterranean programme. In view of the possible difficulties arising from the launching of such a programme at the regional scale, it was felt necessary to set up and implement, as a model, a pilot project in a Mediterranean country where steps had already been made to implement in the past PRTR. The pilot project, which will be carried out in Egypt, would therefore consist of setting up the institutional and technical arrangement that would permit the implementation of the PRTR concept for a defined numbers of industrial activities and chemicals. The negotiations with the Egyptian EEAA in view of the implementation of the Mediterranean PRTR pilot project in Alexandria were completed and an MOU was signed with the Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency (EEAA). UNIDO-ICS has offered to contribute to the implementation of the project and contacts were made with UNEP/Chemicals and UNEP/TDIE for a joint implementation. A meeting was held in Athens between MED POL and ICS-UNIDO to prepare the launching of the project. It was agreed to organize a workshop in the premises of EEAA-Alexandria to explain the objectives of the project, the technical implementation process at the level of EEAA and the local industries and define the modalities of the participation of NGOs and local media information systems. Following the launching procedure, the EEAA-Alexandria branch would ensure the follow-up to the implementation of the activity. First contacts were made to investigate the possibility to launch additional similar pilot projects in other countries.

In the biennium 2000-2001 and under the research component, it had been planned to convene a small scientific meeting with Mediterranean experts and the competent UN Cooperating agencies to identify emerging pollution issues which may deserve more in depth assessment and possibly suggestions for action to the countries. As a result, a two-day brain storming meeting was held in Rome on 31 May - 1 June 2000, co-sponsored by the Italian scientific Agency ENEA. Twelve well known Mediterranean experts were invited, together with the competent UN Agencies, to prepare short papers about environment and pollution emerging issues, which were discussed during the Meeting. The report of the Meeting was sent to all National Coordinators. A number of issues were identified, such as eutrophication, airborne pollution, marine antifoulants and climatic changes. A second meeting will be held in September 2001 in the framework of the CIESM General Assembly.

In the context of cooperation with EEA, a meeting was organized in Athens on 23-24 October 2000 to review the flow of monitoring data from European Mediterranean countries taking into account EEA and MAP/MED POL requirements. The meeting, sponsored by EEA, was attended by all the EU-member Mediterranean countries and resulted in a useful exchange between EEA and MED POL reporting systems and procedures.

Concerning the review and development of indicators, being carried out as part of the activities of the MCSD, the Secretariat has closely cooperated with BP/RAC and EEA to elaborate a set of marine pollution indicators that could be applied in the unified MAP Reporting System.

3. Pollution control

A meeting of experts was organized by WHO/MED POL in the context of the MED POL Programme in Athens from 21-22 March 2000 to initiate the process of reviewing the list of pollution hot spots and to facilitate the preparation of a priority list by using common criteria and standards for the classification of the hot spots. The Meeting was held as part of the process which will be implemented through the Mediterranean GEF Project on the implementation of the SAP initiated January 2001. Twelve experts from Mediterranean countries participated together with a METAP representative.

A Consultation Meeting of Experts to discuss and agree on transboundary criteria for the selection of pollution hot spots as part of the GEF Project, was convened in Athens on 5-6 April 2001. The meeting, attended by eleven experts from both eligible (eight participants) and non-eligible (three participants) GEF countries, examined the proposed criteria for review and comments. The results of the Meeting are being sent to National Coordinators.

At the Workshop of Experts on Compliance and Enforcement of Legislation in the Mediterranean for Control of Pollution resulting from Land-based Sources and Activities (Athens, 16 to 18 March 1999), it was recommended to the Secretariat to establish an informal regional network aiming, among other, at: (i) facilitating and creating contacts with other environmental protection professionals in the region, (ii) establishing contacts with other regional networks and relevant international frameworks that have similar exchange programmes in other regions.

The Secretariat started contacting similar networks and in particular the International Network for Environmental Compliance and Enforcement (INECE), that covers the subject all over the world. The Secretariat felt that collaboration with such a network would represent an added value to the work towards compliance with, and enforcement of, environmental laws in the region. As a follow up to an agreement by the Bureau of the Contracting Parties, The Secretariat became a partner of the INECE; as a result, it will have the opportunity to participate in activities relating to the sectors of: (i) networking; (ii) capacity building; and (iii) cooperation.

During the regional training courses on Sewage Treatment Plant Management and Operation held in Greece and France in May 1998 and April 1999, the participants expressed the wish to obtain the training material for use at future national courses. In order to fulfil this need and assist national lecturers in their task, up-to-date training material has been prepared. The material, comprising transparencies and explanatory notes for lecturers, has been prepared in such a way as to facilitate translation and desktop publishing in any of the Mediterranean languages and has been sent to international experts for review and comment before distribution.

The Italian National Environmental Protection Agency (ANPA) has developed a training programme for environmental compliance and enforcement based on North-South cooperation. Due to the involvement of MED POL in this activity, ANPA has expressed the wish to cooperate and to join efforts for better results at the regional level. For this reason a meeting was held in the ANPA premises in Rome from 8-10 March 2000 to discuss the modalities of such collaboration and cooperation. ANPA would in fact financially contribute to the implementation of joint activities in the framework of MED POL. As a result of the cooperation, ANPA hosted a number of Mediterranean experts in two training courses held during 2001.

The Meeting of the Informal Network on Compliance and Enforcement was held in Sorrento, Italy, from 15-17 March 2001. The Meeting was jointly organized with the Italian National Environmental Protection Agency (ANPA) and its counterpart body of the Campania region. It was attended by eighteen countries (Albania, Algeria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Cyprus, Egypt, Greece, Israel, Italy, Lebanon, Libya, Malta, Monaco, Morocco, Slovenia, Spain, Syria and Tunisia). The countries presented the situation prevailing in their own country in relation to the existing environmental inspection systems. During the discussions it was agreed that the meetings of the informal network should be held regularly, the information exchange should be intensified and the

capacity building component should be reinforced in order to strengthen the inspection systems. Countries would request assistance from the MED POL programme. Furthermore, it was agreed that preparation of guidelines for environmental inspections should be started and a discussion was held regarding the possible contents. The latter could be financed through the ongoing GEF project.

A document on "Municipal Wastewater Treatment Plants in Mediterranean Coastal Cities" was published (MAP Technical Reports Series No. 128). The document was prepared by WHO/MED POL and describes the state of treatment of municipal wastewater from Mediterranean coastal cities with populations over 10,000. The content of the document was approved by the meeting of the MED POL Coordinators and was updated in the year 2000.

4. Implementation of SAP/LBS and GEF Project

In the framework of the implementation of the SAP, the Mediterranean GEF project was launched and started in January 2001 with the recruitment of an acting GEF project Manager. In this context, the Secretariat held two meetings of the Interagency and Coordination committees of the project to discuss the operational details of the Project. The Meetings examined and discussed the role and duties of the project partners, the national institutional arrangements and budget issues. During these meetings the implementation strategy of each partner was also reviewed and discussed. The participants from 11 countries and 4 agencies stressed on the importance of the participation of NGOs in the implementation of the project.

As part of the implementation of the Strategic Action Programme to Address Pollution from Land Based Activities (SAP), MED POL started working on the concrete operational aspects of the implementation of the SAP which was adopted by the Contracting Parties in Tunis in 1997. The SAP would in fact become legally binding according to Art.15 of the revised LBS Protocol with its entering into force. A letter was sent to all MED POL National Coordinators asking to indicate the parts of the Programme which could require updating in view of the possible legal, scientific and technical developments occurring in the region. A number of countries replied and the Secretariat noted their remarks. Accordingly, MED POL prepared a "SAP operational document" that was presented and discussed by representatives from the Contracting Parties, NGO's and concerned UN bodies in Catania, Italy, on 28-30 March 2001. The Meeting was co-sponsored by FEM, the Municipality of Catania and the association of Italian municipalities "Amici per la vita".

The operational document was elaborated on the basis of 1) the remarks received from the countries who replied to the Secretariat's request for comments concerning the process of updating of the SAP and 2) the Secretariat proposals on the long-term implementation of the SAP ensuring the sustainability, effectiveness and measurability of the SAP related activities. The document was discussed in detail at the Catania Meeting and, as a result, a new revised document was prepared which is presented to this Meeting for approval in view of its transmission to MAP Focal Points and Contracting Parties for adoption (doc. UNEP(DEC)/MED WG.183/6).

5. Implementation of the Dumping Protocol

Under the provisions on the Dumping Protocol (arts. 4 and 6) the Secretariat prepared two new guidelines for the management of fish waste and platforms and other manmade structures which were sent to the National Coordinators for comments. The Guidelines were sent to Coordinators for comments and, amended as appropriate, are presented to this Meeting for approval in view of their transmission to Contracting Parties for adoption (UNEP(DEC)/MED WG.183/4 and UNEP(DEC)/MED WG.183/5).

6. Other activities

As a follow up to some contacts made to the Secretariat by a number of countries concerning problems and possible options related to the management and disposal of brine produced by sea water and brackish water desalination activities, the Secretariat has tried to gather data and information on the issue. It in fact appears that the common practices in the region and elsewhere consist of discharging or dumping the brine into the sea. According to some preliminary data collected in the Mediterranean and other non-Mediterranean regions, it appears that the amounts of brine produced and discharged are very large and that these practices 1) seem to have possible effects on the ecosystems in some specific conditions and locations, and 2) that in the Mediterranean region they have direct implications with the provisions of the Dumping and LBS Protocols. As a result, the Secretariat has prepared an assessment of the situation and an outline of the guidelines which may be considered by the Contracting Parties for the management of the brine discharges (UNEP(DEC)/MED WG.183/Inf.6).