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MEDITERRANEAN ACTION PLAN

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**Progress Report by the Coordinator
(December 1996 - April 1997)**

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Introduction

1. The present progress report is the first progress report to be submitted by the MAP Coordinator in compliance with the Terms of Reference of the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development (MCSD). The report covers progress achieved and problems encountered in the implementation of the various decisions taken during the first meeting of the Commission (Rabat, 16-18 December 1996).

I. Brief history of the MCSD

2. The post-Rio era was an important period in the history of the Mediterranean Action Plan (MAP) during which the Governments of the Mediterranean region and the European Community started the process of translating and adapting UNCED principles to the Mediterranean context through the preparation of Agenda MED 21, reorientation of MAP, the Barcelona Convention and its protocols and the creation of a Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development (MCSD).
3. The Commission was established in 1995 within the framework of MAP, as an advisory body with the following mandate:¹
 - to identify, evaluate and assess major economic, ecological and social problems set out in Agenda MED 21, make appropriate proposals thereon to the meetings of the Contracting Parties, evaluate the effectiveness of the follow-up to the decisions of the Contracting Parties and facilitate the exchange of information among institutions implementing activities related to sustainable development in the Mediterranean;
 - to enhance regional cooperation and rationalize the inter-governmental decision-making capacity in the Mediterranean basin for the integration of environment and development issues.
4. At their Extraordinary Meeting (Montpellier, 1-4 July 1996), the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention adopted the Terms of Reference and the composition of the Commission.² According to the Terms of Reference (see Annex I to this report), the Commission is composed of 36 members, consisting of high level representatives from each of the Contracting Parties (21), representatives of local authorities, socio-economic actors and non-governmental organisations (15), working in the fields of environment and sustainable development (see Annex II to this report). Strongly believing that the role of the local authorities, socio-economic actors and NGOs is very important during this new era of MAP, the meeting of the Contracting Parties approved a new dimension in MAP relations with these three groups by accepting that they shall participate in the work of the Commission as fully fledged members on an equal footing as the case with the Contracting Parties.

II. First meeting of the Commission

5. During its first meeting (Rabat, 16-18 December 1996), the Commission agreed on a programme built around short-term and medium-term activities corresponding to some

¹ UNEP(OCA)/MED IG.5/16, Annex XIII, (IV-a)

² UNEP(OCA)/MED IG.8/7, Annexes V & VI

of the priority needs of the Mediterranean region. Two themes were identified as being areas for action in the short-term because sufficient work had already been undertaken to permit the development of policy and strategy proposals (sustainable management of coastal regions and management of water demand). Other six subjects were identified as medium-term priority themes (sustainable development indicators, tourism, information, awareness and participation, free trade and environment, industry and sustainable development and the management of urban and rural development) for which end-products planned for submission to the meeting of the Contracting Parties to be held in 1999.

6. In order to implement efficiently and usefully these activities and to ensure larger participation, the Commission designated Task Managers and Thematic Working Groups to deal with each selected theme (see table). The MAP funds allocated to the MCSD will be considered as seed money since the task managers are expected to look for the necessary additional human and financial resources and expertise for the activities of the thematic working groups. However, the countries involved are willing to support as far as possible these activities through the provision of human and financial resources, being confident that if the Commission selected priority activities that are sound in their substance and organization, they would raise greater interest from donors.³
7. The first meeting also designated a Bureau composed of eight members, a president, six vice-presidents and a Rapporteur. The present Bureau is headed by H.E. Mr. Nouridine Benomar Alami, Minister of the environment of Morocco. The other members are representative from the Association of Chambers of Commerce of the Mediterranean (ASCAME), Centre des Région Euroméditerranéennes pour l'environnement (CREE), Croatia, Egypt, EC, Tunisia and EcoMediterrania.
8. The meeting also accepted the invitation of Spain to host the second meeting of the Commission in early May 1997 and took note of the invitation of France to host the third meeting in France in October/November 1997.

III. First meeting of the Bureau of the Commission

9. During its first meeting (Athens, 20-21 February 1997), the Bureau reviewed the progress achieved in the work of the Task Managers relevant to the two short-term themes, namely, "Sustainable management of coastal regions", and "Management of water demand".
10. The Bureau noted that consultation between the Task Managers, the members of the Thematic Working Groups and the supporting RACs had been limited, due to the short time available and the complexity of the themes. Nevertheless, tangible process has been achieved towards these two short-term themes.
11. During the discussion on this item, members of the Bureau made various concrete comments on the programme of work of the two Task Managers and their proposals for future work.⁴

³ Report of the First Meeting of the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development (document: UNEP(OCA)/MED WG.120/4)

⁴ First Meeting of the Bureau of the Commission (document: UNEP/MCSD/BUR/1/5)

TABLE
THEMATIC WORKING GROUPS

Themes	Task managers	Members of the group	Support from MAP ⁵
Short-term (over about a one-year period)			
- Sustainable management of coastal zones	Morocco and MEDCITIES	CREE, European Community, Greece, City of Rome, Spain, EcoMediterrania, Monaco, WWF, Italy, EOAEN, Cyprus, France, Tunisia, MIO-ESCSDE, Egypt, Malta	RAC/Priority Actions Programme, RAC/Blue Plan, RAC/Environment Remote Sensing and RAC/Specially Protected Areas
- Management of water demand	Tunisia and Morocco	Libya, WWF, APNEK, European Community, Egypt, Italy, France, CEFIC, MIO-ESCSDE, Malta, Spain, EcoMediterrania	RAC/Blue Plan and RAC/Priority Actions Programme
Medium-term (until 1999 Contracting Parties meeting and beyond)			
- Sustainable development indicators	France and Tunisia	European Community, Morocco, EcoMediterranean	RAC/Blue Plan
- (Eco)Tourism	Spain, EOAEN and Egypt	Malta, Monaco, Cyprus, Croatia, European Community, Greece, EcoMediterrania, WWF MIO-ESCSDE	RAC/Blue Plan and RAC/Priority Actions Programme
- Information, awareness and participation	MIO-ESCSDE and CREE	European Community, WWF, France, APNEK, Croatia, Egypt, Morocco, MEDCITIES, EcoMediterrania	MED Coordinating Unit
- Free trade and environment in the Euromediterranean context (strategic impact assessment)	FIS	Tunisia, France, European Community, APNEK, Morocco	MED Coordinating Unit
- Industry and sustainable development (cultural, economic, technical and financial aspects of progressive elimination of land-based pollution)	Italy	WWF, Israel, EOAEN, ASCAME, CEFIC, Spain, European Community	MED POL, RAC/Clean Production
- Management of urban/rural development	Egypt	MEDCITIES, FIS, MIO-ESCSDE, Spain, Morocco, France, Malta (Turkey, Bosnia and Herzegovina)	RAC/Blue Plan and RAC/Priority Actions Programme

⁵ The Coordinating Unit and the Regional Activity Centres will each provide the necessary support to the different working groups according to their expertise.

12. With a view to enhancing and speeding up the work of the Task Managers and the Thematic Working Groups, the Secretariat approached all Task Managers (March 1997) urging them to undertake the necessary consultations with their Thematic Working Groups in order to prepare a working programme, including timetable, of their relevant themes for presentation to the present meeting of the Commission.
13. As it is also envisaged that a workshop for each Thematic Working Group is to be held, the Secretariat has already engaged in a consultation process with donors in order to solicit financial resources for these workshops.
14. In this connection, intense consultation with METAP III is being undertaken, with a view to coordinating MCSD activities with those of METAP priorities, and avoid overlapping. Keeping in mind that the overall budget of METAP III for the period 1996-2000 is about \$118 million Dollars, there would be a good chance for the Commission to benefit from this financial programme.

IV. Relationship with the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development (UNCSD)

15. In conformity with the Terms of Reference of the Commission, that the MCSD shall maintain relations with the UNCSD, the first meeting of the MCSD (Rabat, December 1996), agreed that the Commission should submit a short report to the forthcoming fifth meeting of the UN Commission (New York, 8-25 April 1997) and the Special Session of the General Assembly (New York, 23-27 June 1997), on the establishment of the MCSD, supported by useful background information on the situation with regard to sustainable development in the Mediterranean region.
16. A draft report prepared by the Secretariat was presented to the first meeting of the Bureau of the Commission (Athens, 20-21 February 1997), under the title "The Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development - A Tool for Mediterranean Strategy and a Regional Bridge between Global and National Levels". The Bureau thoroughly reviewed the draft report, made certain modifications and requested the Secretariat to finalize it with a better presentation, in order to obtain wider dissemination during the meetings. The Bureau also suggested that the MAP Coordinator represent MAP in these two U.N meetings.
17. The Report on the MCSD was amended, finalized and sent in many copies to the U.N for distribution (see Annex III to this report). As for representation, UNEP agreed to MAP's request that the Coordinator of MAP be included in the UNEP delegation to the fifth meeting of the UNCSD for the second week of the meeting.

V. Draft rules of procedure of the MCSD

18. In accordance with paragraph B-4 of the Terms of Reference of the Commission, the Rules of Procedure of the Commission shall be the Rules of Procedure of the meetings and conferences of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention, until the rules of procedure of the Commission are proposed by the Commission and adopted by the meeting of the Contracting Parties.
19. At its first meeting, the Commission requested the Secretariat to prepare draft rules of procedure, which would be reviewed by the first meeting of its Bureau and submitted to its second meeting for review before submission to the Tenth Ordinary Meeting of the Contracting Parties (Tunis, November/December 1997) for final adoption.

20. The first draft of the Rules of Procedure was reviewed by the first meeting of the Bureau of the Commission (Athens, 20-21 February 1997). The members of the Bureau made several comments and stressed in particular, that the specificity of the Mediterranean, the innovatory character of the Commission and allowing for the required flexibility should be taken into consideration when finalizing the draft Rules of Procedure. Various concrete proposals were also made during the review process of the draft document, in particular in relation to the extraordinary meetings of the Commission, the accreditation procedure, and the languages of the Commission and its Bureau.
21. The revised draft Rules of Procedure of the Commission is contained in document: UNEP(OCA)/MED WG.124/4, for review by the present meeting.

ANNEX I

MEDITERRANEAN COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT TERMS OF REFERENCE

Introduction

1. In accordance with the recommendation of the Tunis Ministerial Conference, held in November 1994, as approved by the Conference of Plenipotentiaries meeting in Barcelona in June 1995, a Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development (MCSD) is hereby established as an advisory body to make proposals to the Contracting Parties within the framework of the Mediterranean Action Plan.
 - A. Purpose of the Commission
 2. The purpose of the Commission is:
 - (a) to identify, evaluate and assess major economic, ecological and social problems set out in Agenda MED 21, make appropriate proposals thereon to the meetings of the Contracting Parties, evaluate the effectiveness of the follow-up to the decisions of the Contracting Parties and facilitate the exchange of information among the institutions implementing activities related to sustainable development in the Mediterranean;
 - (b) to enhance regional cooperation and rationalize the inter-governmental decision-making capacity in the Mediterranean basin for the integration of environment and development issues.
 - B. Functions
 3. The functions of the Commission shall be:
 - (a) to assist the Contracting Parties by making proposals on the formulation and implementation of a regional strategy of sustainable development in the Mediterranean, taking into consideration the resolutions of the Tunis and Barcelona Conferences and the context of Agenda MED 21 and MAP Phase II;
 - (b) to consider and review information provided by the Contracting Parties, in accordance with Article 20 of the Barcelona Convention, including

periodic communications or reports regarding the activities they undertake to implement Agenda MED 21, and the problems they encounter, such as problems related to the integration of environment into national policies,

capacity-building, financial resources, technology transfer, and other relevant environment and development issues;

- (c) to review at regular intervals the cooperation of MAP with the World Bank and other international financial institutions, as well as the European Union, and to explore ways and means for the strengthening of such cooperation, and particularly to achieve the objectives of Chapter 33 of Agenda MED 21;
 - (d) to consider information regarding the progress made in the implementation of relevant environmental conventions, which could be made available by the relevant conferences or by the parties;
 - (e) to identify technologies and knowledge of an innovative nature for sustainable development in the Mediterranean region and to provide advice on the various means for their most effective use, in order to facilitate exchanges among the Contracting Parties and to enhance capacities for national development;
 - (f) to provide reports and appropriate recommendations to the meetings of the Contracting Parties, through the MAP Secretariat, on the basis of a comprehensive analysis of reports and issues related to the implementation of a regional strategy related to MAP Phase II and Agenda MED 21;
 - (g) to undertake a four-year strategic assessment and evaluation of the implementation by the Contracting Parties of Agenda MED 21 and decisions of the meetings of the Contracting Parties and of actions by the Contracting Parties relevant to sustainable development in the Mediterranean region and propose relevant recommendations thereon;
the first strategic review should be undertaken for the year 2000 (with ministerial participation), with the objective of achieving an integrated overview of the implementation of Agenda MED 21, examining emerging policy issues and providing the necessary political impetus.
The Commission shall make the best use of the main results of MAP activity centres in the field of sustainable development, and those of the MAP Mediterranean Environment and Development Observatory, as well as those of national environmental observatories;
 - (h) to assume such other functions as are entrusted to it by the meetings of the Contracting Parties, to further the purposes of the Barcelona Convention, MAP Phase II and Agenda MED 21.
4. The rules of procedure of the Commission shall be the Rules of Procedure of the meetings and Conferences of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention, until the rules of procedure of the Commission are proposed by the Commission and adopted by the meeting of the Contracting Parties, considering that the Commission shall not have any voting system.

C. Composition

5. The Commission shall be composed of a maximum of 36 members, consisting of representatives from each Contracting Party to the Barcelona Convention and representatives of local authorities, socio-economic actors and non-governmental organizations working in the fields of environment and of sustainable development. All representatives shall participate in the Commission on an equal footing.

D. Observers

6. In accordance with the Rules of Procedure adopted by the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention, any State which is a member of the United Nations or the specialized agencies, and any other inter-governmental organizations the activities of which are related to the functions of the Commission, may participate in the Commission's work as an observer.

E. Meetings of the Commission and responsibilities of the Secretariat

7. The Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development shall hold ordinary meetings at least once every year, up to the year 2000, then shall meet at least once every two years. The meetings shall be convened at the premises of the Coordinating Unit of MAP, without prejudice to the convening of its meetings in other Mediterranean venues upon a recommendation of the Commission approved by the Meeting of the Contracting Parties.
8. At the opening of each session, the Commission shall elect a Bureau composed of a President, four Vice-Presidents and a Rapporteur, from among its members on the basis of an equitable geographical distribution and among the various groups.
9. The Coordinating Unit of MAP, serving as the Secretariat of the Commission, shall provide for each session of the Commission an analytical report containing information on relevant activities to implement Agenda MED 21 and other sustainable development activities recommended by the meetings of the Contracting Parties, the progress achieved and emerging issues to be addressed.

F. Relationship with the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development and with national and regional commissions on sustainable development

10. The Commission shall maintain relations with the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development, and shall facilitate the exchange of information and experience among national and regional commissions on sustainable development.
11. The Commission, in discharging its functions, shall take into account the experience and expertise of the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development, and shall submit relevant reports to the United Nations Commission through the Contracting Parties' meetings on any issues that may be of interest for sustainable development in the Mediterranean region.

12. The Commission and the Contracting Parties shall, as far as possible and taking into account the particular needs of the Mediterranean countries, utilize the existing reporting system of the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development, with a view to streamlining and avoiding duplication of work.

G. Relations with specialized agencies, intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations

13. The Commission shall, through the Secretariat, strengthen its activities with the relevant United Nations specialized agencies and other inter-governmental bodies within the United Nations System, including international, regional and sub-regional financial and development institutions, in particular regarding projects for the implementation of the regional Mediterranean strategy related to Agenda MED 21 and the decisions of the Contracting Parties.
14. The Commission shall, through the Secretariat, enhance the dialogue with, and the participation of, relevant non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the independent sector, and receive and analyse their inputs within the context of the overall implementation of the Mediterranean regional strategy for sustainable development.

ANNEX II

MEDITERRANEAN COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (MCSD)

COMPOSITION OF THE COMMISSION *

(a) NUMBER OF REPRESENTATIVES

1. The Commission shall be composed of 36 members, consisting of representatives from each Contracting Party to the Barcelona Convention and representatives of local authorities, socio-economic actors and non-governmental organizations working in the fields of environment and sustainable development.
2. In particular:
 - a. each Contracting Party to the Barcelona Convention shall be represented by one high-level representative (total 21), who may be accompanied by such alternates and advisers as may be required, in order to ensure interdisciplinary participation of relevant ministerial bodies of the Contracting Parties (e.g. ministries of environment, tourism, economy, development, industry, finance, energy, etc.).
 - b. each of the three categories mentioned in section C.5 of the text of the Terms of Reference, i.e. local authorities, socio-economic actors and non-governmental organizations, shall be represented by five representatives (total 15) and an equal number of alternates, to be selected by the meeting of the Contracting Parties.
3. All 36 members shall participate in the Commission on an equal footing.

* This criteria may be modified by the Contracting Parties in the light of experience.

(b) METHOD OF NOMINATION OF CANDIDATES OTHER THAN THOSE REPRESENTING THE CONTRACTING PARTIES

a. Method of nomination of candidates

(i) local authorities

As the legal and administrative status of local authorities differs from one country to another, the representatives of the local authorities, their groups or networks, will be selected through proposals from the governments of the Contracting Parties, which transmit their candidatures to the Secretariat of MAP.

(ii) Socio-economic actors

As the legal and administrative status of the socio-economic actors differs from one country to another, the representatives of the socio-economic actors, their groups or networks, will be selected through proposals from the governments of the Contracting Parties, which transmit their candidatures to the Secretariat of MAP.

(iii) NGO's

1. The criteria and the list of MAP/NGO partners approved by the Ninth Ordinary Meeting of the Contracting Parties (Barcelona, 5-8 June 1995), shall be used as the reference text for any NGO that wishes to participate in the Commission's work.
2. Three categories of NGO's shall be represented in the Commission:
 - NGOs with international scope and multidisciplinary interest recognized in their status, especially those contributing to Mediterranean cooperation and concerned with matters covering a substantial portion of MAP's field of activity;
 - NGOs with regional scope covering more than one country in the whole Mediterranean area and covering a portion of MAP's field of activity;
 - NGOs with national or local scope covering a portion of MAP's field of activity.

3. The selection of five NGOs from this category will be done through NGO networks in the region and through direct applications to be submitted to the MAP Secretariat.

b. Method of nomination of members of the MCSD

1. The meeting of the Contracting Parties shall nominate the members of the Commission, other than those representing the Contracting Parties.
2. For the first meeting of the Commission (Fez, Morocco, December 1996), the Bureau of the Contracting Parties shall make the selection of the members of the Commission, following consultation with the Contracting Parties.

(c) SELECTION CRITERIA FOR MEMBERS OTHER THAN THOSE REPRESENTING THE CONTRACTING PARTIES

The following general selection criteria are proposed:

1. The criteria and the list of MAP/NGO partners, approved by the Ninth Ordinary Meeting of the Contracting Parties held in Barcelona, 5-8 June 1995 (document: UNEP(OCA)/MED IG.5/16), shall be used as a reference text for selection of members representing NGOs.
2. Priority for selection shall be given to Mediterranean local authorities, socio-economic actors and NGOs that are concerned with environmental and sustainable development issues in the Mediterranean.
3. The principle of equitable geographical distribution should be respected (north/south and east/west).
4. Fragile and island ecosystems will be given due consideration.
5. With reference to the three specific categories, the following are the selection criteria, giving priority to the groups or networks concerned:

(i) local authorities

1. Local authorities to be selected should be concerned with environmental and sustainable development issues.

(ii) Socio-economic actors

1. Selection within this group should take into consideration the major problems and decisive factors in the Mediterranean as well as the following factors:
 - north/south representation
 - developed/developing countries
 - rural/urban
 - past and current activities at the Mediterranean level.
2. Priority of selection shall be given to socio-economic networks active in the Mediterranean.

(iii) NGOs

1. The members representing NGOs should be selected from the list of MAP/NGO partners.
2. The members should be selected from among three NGO categories:
 - NGOs with global scope
 - NGOs with regional scope
 - NGOs with national and local scope
3. The NGOs to be selected should have a concrete and action-oriented approach towards the Mediterranean.

(d) DURATION OF THE MANDATE

1. The duration of the membership of the Commission shall be as follows:
 - a. all Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention shall be permanent members of the Commission (21);
 - b. representatives from each of the three categories (local authorities, socio-economic actors and non-governmental organizations), shall be selected for a duration of two years by the meeting of the Contracting Parties (15).

ANNEX III

MEDITERRANEAN COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: REGIONAL CHANNEL FOR AGENDA 21

20 years of working together for sustainable development in the Mediterranean

For over 20 years, the concept of eco-development and its successor - sustainable development - have been the guiding philosophy of the Mediterranean Action Plan (MAP), adopted in 1975 by Mediterranean countries and the European Community.

In the 1970s, it became obvious to countries in the region that the Mediterranean, the epitome of a regional sea, could not be viewed solely from the perspective of marine pollution: human activities at sea of course led to marine pollution, but its origin was to an even greater extent to be found in land-based activities. The speed of socio-economic development in Mediterranean countries, together with the inadequacy of coastal zone planning and environmental management, had had a negative impact on the quality of the marine environment and ecosystems, and on the coastal landscape. Protecting the Mediterranean meant going beyond simply combatting pollution and called for the integration of environmental concerns upstream, in the region's development policies.

The quest for sustainable development in the Mediterranean led to the adoption of the Barcelona Convention on protection of the marine environment in 1976.

The adoption of this Convention of regional scope was followed by the creation of an instrument to be used to acquire scientific knowledge and to carry out ongoing monitoring of the environment: the MED POL. Within the framework of Blue Plan activities, it encouraged strategic and long-term thinking about the development of countries in the Mediterranean basin and the consequent environmental impact on coastal zones and natural resources. It also led to the elaboration of a Priority Actions Programme so as to find technical, economic and political responses together and achieve better development-environment interaction for integrated coastal zone management.

After the Earth Summit in Rio in June 1992, the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention naturally wanted to give effect at the Mediterranean level to the Agenda 21 resolutions adopted by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED).

Drawing on their experience of working together within MAP, as well as on the conclusions they had already reached regarding sustainable development, Mediterranean countries rapidly became involved in the Rio process.

The region's governments and the European Union, have given a practical demonstration of their commitment to sustainable development by building upon instruments that already existed or by adopting new means of action. The last two years have been marked by the following:

- the approval of Agenda MED 21 in 1994, setting out the regional partners' commitments in respect of sustainable development. Agenda MED 21 adapts the provisions of Agenda 21, sets out a framework to permit the elaboration of a Mediterranean strategy and fixes the goals, together with a timetable;
- the revision of the Barcelona Convention in 1995 in order to give the commitments made at Rio legal status;
- the revision of the Mediterranean Action Plan, setting more ambitious goals (MAP Phase II);
- the creation of the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development (MCSD) in 1996.

The establishment of the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development, by strengthening still further the regional solidarity of Mediterranean partners, in itself reflects the Rio spirit. It responds to UNCED's desire to see regional and subregional cooperation develop to a level deemed adequate to promote the integration of ecological concerns in development policies.

By doing so, the Mediterranean has once again reaffirmed its position as an eco-region and its coastal States now have the forums for dialogue and the instruments for action that allow them to tackle environmental problems not only at the local and national levels but also at the regional level.

Sustainable development: the characteristics of the Mediterranean

As the studies carried out in the context of the Blue Plan show, the Mediterranean is a very typical example of the problems of sustainable development.

Its natural resources, notably its soil, forest and water resources, whose availability and quality are under threat in the long or even medium term, are subject to overwhelming pressure. The trend towards increasingly intensive exploitation of agriculture and fisheries has a significant impact on natural resources and on the marine environment. Coastal zones in particular are especially vulnerable to intensive urban and tourism development that affects outstanding landscapes, historic sites and coastal ecosystems.

Issues related to the environment, housing, transport and quality of life have begun to predominate in large Mediterranean cities that are undergoing rapid expansion. Urban areas, industrial zones and ports whose development has been inadequately controlled, that lack effective sewage facilities and adequate waste treatment systems, constitute a series of "hot spots" that contribute towards the pollution of the marine environment, the coast and the atmosphere. Studies carried out on energy, transport and urban waste have underlined the need to move towards more rational and sustainable production and consumption. Policies on harnessing energy and promoting renewable energy sources in particular must be seen as a priority.

Taken together, these studies show clearly that the sustainable management of coastal areas is a decisive factor for the Mediterranean's future. They also demonstrate, however, that the management of environmental issues can only be effective if it is included within a development perspective. This is the only way of obtaining new financial resources, acquiring the scientific, technical and administrative capacity that will allow States, local authorities, enterprises and non-governmental organisations to enhance their capabilities and their ability to deal with environmental problems. Lastly, improvement of the environment and the quality of life will only become a reality if the public is better informed and educated, if citizens of the Mediterranean are involved, especially women and children.

Inter-institutional collaboration that is already well established

The above conclusions constitute a solid reference framework for the Mediterranean's sustainable development partners and they have already been embodied in a series of complementary measures:

- at the State level, through the preparation and adoption of national sustainable development strategies, often implemented under the auspices of national sustainable development commissions;
- at the Mediterranean level, through combined action by the European Union, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Bank, and the European Investment Bank (EIB), which have drawn up a Mediterranean Environment Technical Assistance Programme, the METAP;
- at the Euro-Mediterranean level, through the establishment of the partnership decided upon at the Barcelona Conference.

So today there is genuine inter-institutional collaboration at the regional level in which the European Union is called upon to play an increasingly important role.

Organisation of the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development

The Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development was recommended by the Mediterranean States and the European Union in 1994, approved in 1995 and established in 1996.

The MCSD is an advisory body set up as a forum for dialogue, exchanges of views and proposals to the Contracting Parties and their partners for the purpose of defining a regional sustainable development strategy in the Mediterranean.

Bearing in mind the decisions of the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development (UNCSD), the task of the MCSD is to deal with the practical and concrete aspects of sustainable development in the Mediterranean. It studies major environmental and development issues in the Mediterranean, taking as a basis the work carried out by MAP's Regional Activity Centres, regional and national observatories, and by specialised international agencies and qualified expert centres (universities, research bodies...).

The Commission follows up the decisions made by the Contracting Parties, reviews the problems encountered, in particular with regard to the integration of the environment in national policies.

The MCSD identifies and publicises innovative environmental methods and technologies adapted to the Mediterranean context. It endeavours to facilitate exchanges among its members and to promote the enhancement of their capacity for environment-related action.

It makes recommendations to strengthen MAP's cooperation with international financing institutions present in the Mediterranean and with the European Union.

The MCSD is responsible for drawing up a strategic assessment of the implementation of Agenda MED 21 by the Contracting Parties over a four-year period. The first assessment is expected in the year 2000. It will help to take stock of the achievements and to review problems faced by countries as well as their causes, and will also assist in making recommendations on pursuing the Commission's work.

A pluralist commission

The MCSD is composed of a maximum of 36 members. These represent each of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention, as well as local authority networks, socio-economic actors and environmental and sustainable development NGOs.

All the members participate in the Commission on an equal footing, which is a significant innovation. The Contracting Parties are standing members of the Commission, but the other members sit for two years so that there is greater rotation

and consequently broader participation.

The MCSD's conclusions and recommendations are adopted by consensus.

The Commission will hold plenary sessions at least once a year until the year 2000 and once every two years thereafter.

The MAP Coordinating Unit, located in Athens, Greece, acts as the Commission's Secretariat and at each session it informs members of the progress of implementation of Agenda MED 21, activities to promote sustainable development at the regional level, and issues that require consideration.

The Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development will base its work on the experience of the UNCSD and will have to establish working relations with the latter.

It will participate in the exchange of information and experience among national and regional sustainable development commissions.

As far as possible, it will utilise the system for establishing reports already existing within the UNCSD so as to rationalise work and avoid duplication of effort.

The MCSD's initial work

Basing itself on Agenda MED 21, the MCSD decided that rather than dealing with every chapter separately it would focus on a limited number of issues that were vital for the Mediterranean, including those on which real progress could be expected.

In 1997, the MCSD will concentrate on two subjects on which considerable knowledge and experience has already been gained:

- sustainable management of coastal zones, particularly from the strategic and political decision-making perspective;
- water resource management, focusing on demand.

Six other subjects have been identified and will be considered by the MCSD in a second phase between 1997 and 1999: sustainable development indicators; (eco)tourism; information, promotion of awareness and involvement; free trade and the environment; industry and sustainable development; management of urban and rural development.

A task manager is responsible for each of the eight subjects and is leader of a thematic working group that meets between sessions; each thematic group receives technical support from MAP and its regional activity centres. MCSD members from States and the major groups volunteered to act as task managers and to participate

in thematic working groups according to their own areas of interest.

For its working methods, the MCSD adopted the aspects it considered the most innovative and effective in the UNCSD mechanism. The task manager system in particular was one of the most positive cooperation models in Agenda 21, reinforcing the UNCSD's work and establishing an improved sustainable development synergy within the United Nations system.

MAP has allocated funds to the MCSD as "start-up capital" to allow the task managers to catalyse the activities of the thematic groups and, where necessary, to receive support in the form of technical expertise. The MCSD also hopes that the importance of the subjects dealt with will encourage Mediterranean countries and international organisations concerned to add to its resources, either financially or by making staff available.

The MCSD's regional nature and its composition constitute an innovative contribution to the implementation of the resolutions in Agenda 21. As a regional forum for dialogue and activities, it constitutes a bridge between the global impetus given at the Rio Earth Summit and the efforts of States at the national level.

It represents a promising framework for the definition of a genuinely Mediterranean sustainable development strategy, a vital factor for the Mediterranean in the 21st century.