



UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME

*UNEP Regional Seas Programme:
the Eastern African experience*

UNEP Regional Seas Reports and Studies No. 53

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REGIONAL SEAS PROGRAMME OF UNEP

The 1972 United Nations Conference on the Human Environment (Stockholm) outlined a "masterplan" for the protection of the world's environment which linked environmental assessment, environmental management and supporting measures as basic and inseparable elements of a global strategy.

In the decade since the Stockholm Conference, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) has served as a focal point for environmental action and co-ordination within the United Nations system for the implementation of the Action Plan adopted at Stockholm.

The early meetings of the UNEP Governing Council endorsed a regional approach to the control of marine pollution and the management of marine and coastal resources. Consequently, in 1974 the Regional Seas Programme of UNEP was initiated (UNEP, 1982).

The substantive aspect of any regional programme is outlined in an "action plan" which is formally adopted by an intergovernmental meeting of the Governments of a particular region before the programme enters an operational phase. In the preparatory phase leading to the adoption of the action plan, Governments are consulted through a series of meetings and missions about the scope and substance of an action plan suitable for their region. In addition, with the co-operation of appropriate global and regional organizations, reviews of the specific environmental problems of the region are prepared in order to assist the Governments in identifying the most urgent problems in the region and the corresponding priorities to be assigned to the various activities outlined in the action plan. UNEP co-ordinates directly, or in some regions indirectly through existing regional organizations, the preparations leading to the adoption of the action plan.

All action plans are structured in a similar way, although the specific activities for any region are dependent upon the needs and priorities of that region. An action plan usually includes the following components:

- (a) Environmental assessment. This concerns assessing and evaluating the causes of environmental problems as well as their magnitude and impact on the region. Emphasis is given to such activities as: baseline studies; research and monitoring of the sources, levels and effects of marine pollutants; eco-system studies; studies of coastal and marine activities and social and economic factors that may influence, or may be influenced by, environmental degradation; and the survey of national environmental legislation. Environmental assessment is undertaken to assist national policy makers to improve the management of their natural resources in a more effective and sustainable manner and to provide information on the effectiveness of legal/administrative measures taken to improve the quality of the environment.
- (b) Environmental management. Each regional programme includes a wide range of activities in the field of environmental management. Examples of such activities are: co-operative regional projects on training in environmental impact assessment; management of coastal lagoons, estuaries and mangrove ecosystems; control of industrial, agricultural and domestic wastes; formulation of contingency plans for dealing with pollution emergencies.

- (c) Environmental legislation. An umbrella regional convention, elaborated by specific technical protocols, most often provides the legal framework for co-operative regional and national actions. The legal commitment of Governments clearly expresses their political will to manage individually and jointly their common environmental problems.
- (d) Institutional arrangements. When adopting an action plan, Governments agree upon an organization to act as the permanent or interim secretariat of the action plan. Governments also are expected to decide upon the periodicity of intergovernmental meetings which are to be responsible for reviewing the progress of the agreed workplan and for approving new activities and the necessary budgetary support.
- (e) Financial arrangements. UNEP, together with selected United Nations and other organizations, provides "seed money" or catalytic financing in the early stages of regional programmes. However, as a programme develops, it is expected that the Governments of the region will progressively assume full financial responsibility. Government financing is usually channelled through special regional trust funds to which Governments make annual contributions. These funds are administered by the organization responsible for the secretariat functions of the action plan. In addition, Governments contribute by supporting their national institutions participating in the programme or by financing specific project activities.

At present, in accordance with the decisions of the Governing Council, there are eleven regional sea areas where action plans are operative, under development or to be developed (see figures 1 and 2): the Mediterranean region (adopted in 1975); the Kuwait Action Plan region (adopted in 1978) (UNEP, 1983); the West and Central African region (adopted in 1981) (UNEP, 1983 a); the Wider Caribbean region (adopted in 1981) (UNEP, 1983 b); the East Asian Seas region (adopted in 1981) (UNEP 1983 c); the South East Pacific region (adopted in 1981) (CPPS/UNEP, 1983); the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden region (adopted in 1982); the South Pacific region (adopted in 1982) (SPC/SPC/ESCAP/UNEP, 1983); the Eastern African region (under development, adoption expected in 1985); the South Asian Seas region (to be developed, adoption expected in 1986), and the South-West Atlantic region (to be developed).

As part of the action plans mentioned above, regional conventions for the protection and management of the marine and coastal environment have been adopted in six regions (Mediterranean region, convention signed in 1976, entered into force in 1978 (UNEP, 1982 a); Kuwait Action Plan region, convention signed in 1978, entered into force in 1980 (UNEP, 1983 d); West and Central African region, convention signed in 1981, entered into force in 1984 (UNEP, 1981); the South-East Pacific region, convention signed in 1981 (UNEP, 1984); Red Sea and Gulf of Aden region, convention signed in 1982 (UNEP, 1983 e); Wider Caribbean region, convention signed in 1983 (UNEP, 1983 f)). Negotiations concerning the adoption of a regional convention are at an advanced stage for the South Pacific region and for the Eastern African region. In all regions, the conventions that have been adopted may be described as "umbrella agreements". Each convention is designed to be elaborated by specific technical protocols.

It is essential to bear in mind that all components of a regional programme are interdependent. Assessment activities identify the problems that need priority attention in the region. Legal agreements are negotiated to strengthen co-operation among States in managing the identified problems. They also provide an important tool for national policy-makers to implement national control activities. Management

development of new ones, are one of the means by which States fulfill their treaty obligations. Co-ordinated assessment activities then continue to assist Governments by providing scientific information by which to judge whether the legal agreements and management policies are effective.

The key to the success of any regional seas action plan is the political agreement of the Governments concerned and the execution of the programme primarily by national and other appropriate institutions from the region in close co-operation with the relevant components of the United Nations system, regional organizations and other appropriate organizations. The successful implementation of any regional seas action plan also depends to a considerable degree on sound preparations which take into account the specific socio-economic and political situation in a given region, the priorities in environmental protection as defined by the Governments of the region, the recognized capabilities and needs of the national institutions which are participating in the action plan, and the results of past and ongoing activities.

Consultations with the Governments concerned, the United Nations system and other appropriate organizations are essential for the preparatory phase of a regional programme. As a result of such consultations the general strategy of developing a regional programme should be clarified, priority programme elements should be proposed, and the timing of, and responsibility for, substantive actions during the preparatory phase should be determined.

The procedures and activities that may be followed in developing an action plan are instrumental in determining the Governments' and experts' long-term commitment to the implementation of the plan's activities and whether or not the action plan corresponds to the real priorities and needs of the region. Without a strong governmental commitment and a realistic programme, efforts to promote regional environmental co-operation will be short lived. Consequently, the process leading to the adoption of an action plan is crucial.

In this presentation the Eastern African region (see figure 3) will be used to demonstrate the steps which have been followed in developing that regional programme. The Eastern African region should be of particular interest to this meeting as since from the very beginning Governments have assigned the highest priority to conservation concerns and conservation activities are likely to figure eminently when project development to implement the action plan is begun.

EXPERIENCE IN THE EASTERN AFRICAN REGION

Policy decision to initiate the regional programme

The decision to develop a regional programme within the framework of UNEP's Regional Seas Programme must be made by the Governing Council of UNEP. It is clear that if UNEP's staff and financial resources are to be devoted to formulating a programme then such activities must have support at the highest policy level of the organization.

A decision to initiate activities in a new region usually results from the initiative of one or more States from the region which are members of the UNEP Governing Council. For the Eastern African region, a decision was taken at the eighth session of the Governing Council in 1980. The draft decision was originally

Preparatory phase

As a first activity in Eastern Africa, in consultation with the Governments concerned, an exploratory mission was organized by UNEP which in late 1981 visited each State of the region. The mission was expected:

- (a) to assess each State's interest in participating in a regional programme;
- (b) to consult with Governments with a view to identifying activities that could usefully be included as part of a comprehensive action plan; and
- (c) to discuss with Governments the steps to be followed which might successfully lead to the early adoption of an action plan.

In order to involve the United Nations system and other organizations in the early formulation of the programme, UNEP invited seven organizations to assist it in organizing the mission. Specifically, each organization was invited to nominate a mission member in its field of competence as follows:

- (a) coastal land use management - United Nations (UN) and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO);
- (b) conservation of coastal and marine resources and ecosystems - International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN);
- (c) industrial pollution affecting human health and the marine coastal environment - United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO);
- (d) marine pollution - Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO);
- (e) pollution by hydrocarbons - International Maritime Organization (IMO);
- (f) public health problems in the coastal zone - World Health Organization (WHO).

A UNEP staff member assumed the responsibility of mission leader.

In addition to contributing to the overall objectives of the mission as mentioned earlier, each mission member, in co-operation with his sponsoring organization or organizations, was requested to write a sectoral report on the basis of the mission's findings and other available information. Each sectoral report was expected to give a preliminary assessment of a specific environmental problem in the region, to identify national institutions and experts that could participate in implementing an action plan once it is adopted, and to recommend activities that could usually be developed within the framework of the action plan.

On the basis of the mission's findings six sectoral reports were published (UN/UNESCO/UNEP, 1982); UNIDO/UNEP, 1982; FAO/UNEP, 1982; WHO/UNEP, 1982; IMO/UNEP, 1982; IUCN/UNEP, 1982) together with an overview study prepared by UNEP (UNEP, 1982 b). The mission concluded that all Governments of the region expressed political support at the highest level for the proposed regional programme. However, many Governments expressed their concern with regard to the limited possibilities for funding in the region.

A review on the general characteristics of the marine environment of the Indian Ocean and its pollution was also prepared by UNEP (UNEP, 1982 d) in order to provide

Having confirmed the political support for the programme and having gathered technical information on which to judge the existing and potential problems in the region, UNEP thought it timely to convene a workshop of experts from the region. The purposes of the workshop were:

- (a) to give experts from the region the opportunity to comment upon the sectoral and overview reports and, if appropriate, to present material on issues of regional concern that might not have been adequately addressed in the reports;
- (b) to formulate the first draft of an action plan which would identify priority problems of regional concern; and
- (c) to advise the Executive Director of UNEP on the further development of the action plan.

The workshop was convened in the Seychelles in September 1982. Full support was given to the regional reports and a draft action plan was prepared. The experts also agreed upon a priority programme of activities to be developed within the framework of the action plan (UNEP, 1982 c).

From the workshop it became clear that the priority concerns of the region included:

- (a) conservation of marine and coastal ecosystems and wild fauna and flora;
- (b) support and training for monitoring and research related to the sources, levels and effects of pollutants;
- (c) contingency planning in cases of marine pollution emergencies;
- (d) fisheries related projects;
- (e) environmental impact assessment;
- (f) environmental education; and
- (g) coastal erosion.

The workshop recommended that negotiations be initiated on a regional

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