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UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME

*Action Plan  
for the conservation of the marine  
environment and coastal areas  
of the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden*

*UNEP Regional Seas Reports and Studies No. 81*

## PREFACE

The United Nations Conference on the Human Environment (Stockholm, 5-16 June 1972) adopted the Action Plan for the Human Environment including the General Principles for Assessment and Control of Marine Pollution. In the light of the results of the Stockholm Conference, the United Nations General Assembly decided to establish the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to "serve as a focal point for environmental action and co-ordination within the United Nations system" (General Assembly resolution 2997(XXVII) of 15 December 1972). The organizations of the United Nations system were invited "to adopt the measures that may be required to undertake concerted and co-ordinated programmes with regard to international environmental problems", and the "intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations that have an interest in the field of the environment" were also invited "to lend their full support and collaboration to the United Nations with a view to achieving the largest possible degree of co-operation and co-ordination". Subsequently, the Governing Council of UNEP chose "Oceans" as one of the priority areas in which it would focus efforts to fulfil its catalytic and co-ordinating role.

The Regional Seas Programme was initiated by UNEP in 1974. At present it includes ten regions<sup>1/</sup> and has over 120 coastal States participating in it. It is conceived as an action-oriented programme having concern not only for the consequences but also for the causes of environmental degradation and encompassing a comprehensive approach to controlling environmental problems through the management of marine and coastal areas. Each regional action plan is formulated according to the needs of the region as perceived by the Governments concerned. It is designed to link assessment of the quality of the marine environment and the causes of its deterioration with activities for the management and development of the marine and coastal environment. The action plans promote the parallel development of regional legal agreements and of action-oriented programme activities<sup>2/</sup>.

The Regional Seas Programme has always been recognized as a global programme implemented through regional components. Interregional co-operation among the various sea areas on common problems is an important element in assuring the compatibility of the different regional components.

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 on 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.

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<sup>1/</sup> Mediterranean Region, Kuwait Action Plan Region, West and Central African Region, Wider Caribbean Region, East Asian Seas Region, South-East Pacific Region, South-West Pacific Region, Red Sea and Gulf of Aden Region, Eastern African Region and South Asian Region.

<sup>2/</sup> UNEP: Achievements and planned development of UNEP's Regional Seas Programme and comparable programmes sponsored by other bodies. UNEP Regional Seas Reports and Studies No. 1. UNEP, 1982.

The Regional Conference of Plenipotentiaries on the Conservation of the Marine Environment and Coastal Areas in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden was convened in the City of Jeddah, 13-14 February 1982, at the invitation of the Government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia by the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (ALECSO). The Conference adopted the Action Plan for the Conservation of the Marine Environment and Coastal Areas in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden together with the following two legal agreements:

- Regional Convention for the Conservation of the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden Environment;  
and
- Protocol concerning Regional Co-operation in Combating Pollution by Oil and other Harmful Substances in Cases of Emergency.

This document contains an English translation of the Action Plan for the Conservation of the Marine Environment and Coastal Areas in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden and the three Conference Resolutions dealing with the financial arrangements, ratification of the convention and protocol, and the institutional arrangements related to the implementation of the said Action Plan. The English translation of the texts of the two legal agreements referred to above, i.e. the Regional Convention and the Protocol concerning Regional Co-operation in Combating Pollution by Oil and other Harmful Substances in Cases of Emergency, appear in a separate publication<sup>3/</sup>.

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<sup>3/</sup> Regional Convention for the Conservation of the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden Environment; Protocol concerning Regional Co-operation in Combating Pollution by Oil and other Harmful Substances in Cases of Emergency, UNEP, 1983.

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**ACTION PLAN FOR THE CONSERVATION OF THE MARINE ENVIRONMENT AND  
COASTAL AREAS OF THE RED SEA AND GULF OF ADEN**

**Introduction**

1. The conservation of the marine environment and coastal areas of the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden for the benefit of the present and future generations will be the main objective of the action plan which sets forth a framework for an environmentally sound and comprehensive approach to coastal area development.

2. Recognizing the variety of problems and the numerous ongoing activities, the Action Plan has been based upon:

- (a) The Red Sea and Gulf of Aden Environment Programme initiated by the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organisation (ALECSO) following the preparatory meeting organised by UNESCO at the request of ALECSO and held at Bremerhaven, Federal Republic of Germany, 22-23 October 1974 which included, together with UNESCO, experts from specialized institutes in the Federal Republic of Germany, USA, UK, France, Saudi Arabia and Egypt.
  - (b) Working papers and resolutions and recommendations of the Jeddah First Expert Meeting, 25 November - 1 December 1974, organized by ALECSO:
  - (c) The Action Plan of 1975 resulting from the Jeddah First expert meeting, and the contributions and assistance from ALECSO, UNEP, IUCN, UNESCO (Marine Science Division) and IMCO;
  - (d) Working papers, reports, resolutions and recommendations of the Jeddah II conference organized by ALECSO in Jeddah, 12-18 January 1978;
  - (e) The Jeddah 1976 Declaration;
  - (f) Final act of the Kuwait Regional Conference of Plenipotentiaries on the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Areas, Kuwait, 15-23 April 1978;
  - (g) Working papers and recommendations of the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden Co-ordination Board and Directing Board (formed by ALECSO) at their successive meetings in Cairo (5-11 November 1975), Amman (30 August - 5 September 1976), Sanaa (12-17 February 1977), Mogadiscio (24-29 September 1977) and Khartoum (23-28 December 1978);
  - (h) The Red Sea and Gulf of Aden Expert Meeting organised by ALECSO, Tunis (10-13 February 1980) to review the programme policy; and
  - (i) The Draft Regional Convention for the Conservation of the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden Environment and the Draft Protocol concerning Regional Co-operation in combating Pollution by Oil and other harmful substances in cases of emergency, as prepared by the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden Legal and Environmental Expert Meeting held in Jeddah (10-14 January 1981).
3. The Action Plan aims to achieve the following:
- (a) Assessment of the state of the environment including socio-economic development activities related to environmental quality and of the needs of the region in order to assist governments to cope properly with environmental problems particularly those concerning the marine environment;

- (b) Development of guidelines for the management of those activities which have an impact on environmental quality or on the protection and use of renewable marine resources on a sustainable basis;
- (c) Development of legal instruments providing the legal basis for co-operative efforts to protect and develop the region on a sustainable basis;
- (d) Supporting measures including national and regional institutional mechanisms and structures needed for the successful implementation of the action plan.

4. The region for this document includes the Red Sea, the Gulf of Aqaba, the Gulf of Suez, the Suez Canal to its connection with the Mediterranean and the Gulf of Aden as bounded by the following Rhumb-lines:

- (a) - From Ras Dharbat Ali            Lat. 16°39' N,            Long. 53°03'.5 E; thence
- To a position in:            Lat. 16°00' N,            Long. 53°25' E;    thence
- To a position in:            Lat. 12°40' N,            Long. 55°00' E
- lying E.N.E of Socotra Island;            thence
- To Ras Hafun in:            Lat. 10°26' N,            Long. 51°25' E.

- (b) Other areas, adjacent to those described in item (a) above and lying within the national jurisdiction of a contracting party may, upon request made to the organisation be established pursuant to article XVI of the Regional Convention for the Conservation of the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden Environment, be subjected to the application of the convention or activities resulting therefrom.
- (c) The region does not include internal waters of the contracting parties unless otherwise stated in the Regional Convention for the Conservation of the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden Environment or any of its Protocols.
- (d) The coastal area to be covered by the Action Plan will be identified by the relevant governments of the region on an ad hoc basis depending on the type of activities to be carried out within the framework of the action plan. Nevertheless, coastal areas belonging to the contracting parties which are not covered by the Action Plan should not be a source of pollution.

5. All components of the Action Plan are interdependent and provide a framework for comprehensive action to contribute to both the protection and the continued development of the eco-region. No component will be an end in itself. Each activity is intended to assist the governments of the region to improve the quality of the information on which environmental management policies are based.

6. The conservation of the marine environment and coastal areas is considered as the axis of the Action Plan; and it is intended that measures for marine and coastal environmental protection and development should lead to the promotion of human health and well-being as the ultimate goal of the Action Plan.

7. The Action Plan is intended to meet the environmental needs, to enhance the environmental capabilities of the region and is aimed primarily toward implementation through co-ordinated national and regional activities. To achieve this goal, an intensive training programme should be formulated in the early phases of the implementation of the Action Plan.

8. A general description of the various components of the Action Plan is given in the following paragraphs.

#### A. ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

9. Environmental assessment is one of the basic activities which will underlie and facilitate the implementation of the other components of the Action Plan.

10. The identification of the present quality of the marine environment and the factors currently influencing its quality and having an impact on human health will be given priority together with an assessment of expected developments.

11. Although some basic data on the marine environment has been collected by some institutions in the region, much remains to be done in the region as a whole. Therefore, a co-ordinated basic and applied regional marine sciences programme including a marine meteorological programme will be formulated as a basis for the protection of the marine environment of the region. In formulating the operational details of these programmes, planned and ongoing national and regional programmes will be taken into account.

12. The following programmes are recognised as components of the co-ordinated regional environmental assessment programme:

(a) Survey of national capabilities of the region in the field of marine sciences, including marine meteorology, covering:

- (i) Scientific and administrative institutions;
- (ii) Information centres and data sources;
- (iii) Research facilities and equipment;
- (iv) Manpower;
- (v) Existing environmental laws and regulations;
- (vi) Ongoing and planned activities;
- (vii) Publications.

(b) Assessment of geological and geophysical processes such as sedimentation contributing to or modifying, the fate of pollutants in the region, and their impact on human health, marine ecosystems and human activities, as well as effects of coastal and deep sea engineering and mining.

(c) Assessment of the origin and magnitude of oil pollution in the region comprising base-line studies on the sources of oil pollution and the transport and distribution of oil and petroleum hydrocarbon pollution.

(d) Assessment of the magnitude of pollutants affecting human health and marine ecosystems of the region consisting of:

- (i) Survey of land-based sources of industrial and municipal wastes discharged directly or indirectly into the sea or reaching through the atmosphere;
- (ii) Studies on the impact of industrial and municipal wastes on human health including micro-organisms;
- (iii) Research on effects of pollutants and other human activities, such as dredging and land reclamation on important marine species, communities and ecosystems;

- (iv) Base-line studies and monitoring of the levels of selected pollutants, in particular heavy metals, in marine organisms.
- (e) Assessment of factors relevant to the ecology of the region and to the exploitation of its living resources including:
  - (i) Survey of environmental parameters of the coasts of the region and dissemination of data collected, including vegetation cover, fauna distribution, weather conditions and community habitations;
  - (ii) Biology of coral reefs and marine species especially those of commercial importance such as fishes including crustaceans, molluscs and their stock assessment and the biology of other marine organisms threatened by extinction;
  - (iii) Plankton productivity and distribution.

13. The programmes listed in paragraph 12 are interdisciplinary and interrelated in nature. Therefore, while preparing the operational details of each programme, due attention should be paid to their close co-ordination in order to avoid duplication.

14. The priorities to be assigned to the activities listed in paragraph 12 will be determined by the governments of the region taking into account the present level of development in the region and the pressing need to provide reliable and comparable data on which sound management decisions can rest.

15. The agreed programmes will be executed, primarily, through existing national institutions within the framework of regional co-operation keeping in mind that for some projects a training programme should be formulated. The assistance of experts from outside the region might be required in the initial phases of some projects but giving priority to local experts.

16. Operational details of each programme will be developed primarily by experts nominated by the governments of the region. The execution of approved programmes shall begin only after due adoption by governments of documents containing their operational details and nomination of national institutions participating in their implementation.

## B. ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

17. Continuous socio-economic development can be achieved on a sustainable basis if environmental considerations are taken into account. To assist the governments of the region in the development

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