



UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME

*Arab co-operation for the  
protection and development of the  
marine environment and coastal areas  
resources of the Mediterranean*

*UNEP Regional Seas Reports and Studies No. 52*

## PREFACE

The United Nations Conference on the Human Environment (Stockholm 1972) adopted, *inter alia*, the principle that "the marine environment and all the living organisms which it supports are of vital importance to humanity" and recognized that "proper management is required and measures to prevent and control marine pollution must be regarded as an essential element in this management". Furthermore, the Conference recommended that Governments take early action to adopt "effective national measures for the control of all significant sources of marine pollution, including land-based sources, and concert and co-ordinate their actions regionally and where appropriate on a wider international basis" (recommendation 92).

The subsequent meetings of the UNEP Governing Council repeatedly endorsed the regional approach to the control of marine pollution and requested the development of regional action plans for the parts of the ocean where such plans do not yet exist. Consequently, in 1974 the Regional Seas Programme of UNEP was initiated.

The Regional Seas Programme at present includes eleven regions and has over 120 coastal States participating in it. It was conceived as an action-oriented programme encompassing a comprehensive, transsectoral approach to marine and coastal areas and to environmental problems concerning not only the consequences but also the causes of environmental degradation. Each regional programme is shaped according to the needs of the region concerned. All of the regional seas programmes contain elements related to environmental assessment and environmental management. The overall strategy to be followed was defined by UNEP's Governing Council as:

- promotion of international and regional conventions, guidelines and actions for the control of marine pollution and for the protection and management of aquatic resources,
- assessment of the state of marine pollution, of the sources and trends of this pollution, and of the impact of the pollution on human health, marine ecosystems and amenities,
- co-ordination of the efforts with regard to the environmental aspects of the protection, development and management of marine and coastal resources,
- support for education and training efforts to make possible the full participation of developing countries in the protection, development and management of marine and coastal resources.

Since each regional programme is aimed at benefiting the States of that region, Governments are involved from the very beginning in the formulation of the action plan. After acceptance, the implementation of the programme is carried out, under the overall authority of the governments concerned, by national institutions nominated by their governments.

Although the Regional Seas Programme is implemented predominantly by government-nominated institutions, specialized United Nations bodies, as well as the relevant international and regional organizations, contribute to its formulation and may provide assistance to these national institutions. UNEP acts as an overall co-ordinator for the development and implementation of regional action plans although, in some cases, this role is limited to the initial phase of the activities. Financial support to the regional programmes is initially provided by UNEP and other international and regional organizations. However, it is expected that, as a programme develops, the Governments of the regions will assume increasing

financial responsibility for its implementation, through specific regional trust funds or other suitable mechanisms.

Since the Regional Seas Programme was initiated in 1974, action plans for the Mediterranean, Kuwait Action Plan Region, Wider Caribbean, West and Central Africa, East Asian Seas, South-East Pacific, Red Sea and Gulf of Aden and South Pacific have been adopted, while action plans in additional regions such as East Africa, South Asian Seas and the South West Atlantic are being developed. <sup>1/</sup>

Activities in the Arab World are carried out in relation to the Mediterranean, the Kuwait Action Plan Region, the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden, West and Central Africa and East Africa. At present, 22 Arab countries participate in one or the other of these regional action plans. The present background information report is limited to the presentation of the Mediterranean Action Plan, with specific reference to the participation of Arab Mediterranean Coastal States in this regional programme.

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<sup>1/</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

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## INTRODUCTION

The First Meeting of Arab Mediterranean Coastal States and Meeting of the Arab Council for the Marine Environment convened by the Arab League Educational Cultural and Scientific Organization (ALECSO) in Damascus, Syria, December 1982, called for increased co-operation among Arab Mediterranean Coastal States in the protection of the marine environment and coastal areas resources through, among others, the development of a sub-regional agreement between these countries. Before examining the prospects for increased Arab co-operation the present report reviews the participation of Arab States in the Mediterranean Action Plan as part of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Regional Seas Programme. The paper concludes by suggesting specific elements which may serve as a basis for increased co-operation among Arab Mediterranean Coastal States.

## THE MEDITERRANEAN ACTION PLAN

### 1. Background

The Mediterranean region was selected by UNEP as a "concentration area" where it would attempt to fulfil the catalytic role of assisting the Coastal States in a consistent manner to protect their sea. As a result, a comprehensive plan - the Mediterranean Action Plan - was developed by UNEP in collaboration with the Governments of the region and the relevant United Nations Specialized Agencies. This plan was adopted by a meeting of 16 Mediterranean Coastal States held in Barcelona in January/February 1975 and has been ongoing since that time. All Mediterranean Arab Coastal States namely Algeria, Egypt, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Syria and Tunisia are actively involved in this programme.

Basically, the Action Plan includes:

- Co-ordinated programme for research, monitoring, exchange of information, assessment of the state of pollution and protection measures (MED POL);
- Framework convention and related protocols with their technical annexes for the protection of the Mediterranean environment; and
- Intergrated planning of the development and management of the resources of the Mediterranean Basin.

All components of the Action Plan are interdependent and provide a framework for comprehensive action to promote both the protection and the continued development of the Mediterranean region. No component is an end in itself. Each activity is intended to assist the Mediterranean Governments in improving the quality of the environmental information on which formulation of their national development policies is based. Each activity is also intended to improve the ability of Governments to better identify options for alternative patterns of development and to make more rational choices for allocation of resources.

A Coordinating Unit, located permanently in Athens, Greece, since 1 July 1982, is co-ordinating the implementation of the Mediterranean Action Plan, and is staffed by UNEP as the Secretariat of the Convention. Apart from overall coordination of the whole programme, the Unit is particularly involved in the scientific component (MED POL) in which it exercises direct coordination and control, as well as

programme management and data processing. It is also responsible for reporting on the state of pollution of the Mediterranean Sea. Policy decisions, including the regular approval of programme components and budgets, are taken by the Contracting Parties to the Convention at their ordinary meetings, held biennially, and at extraordinary meetings, convened to discuss any specific matter.

Up to the end of 1978, the Action Plan was mainly financed by UNEP, with Governments of the region and collaborating UN Agencies contributing in kind. Since 1979, the Plan has been increasingly financed by Mediterranean Coastal States themselves, through the establishment of the Mediterranean Trust Fund (about US\$ 3,5 million annually). The main sources of finance of the Action Plan at present are cash contributions from Mediterranean Governments and the European Economic Community on a scale agreed between them at meetings of the Contracting Parties, other contributions, also from Mediterranean Coastal States, in cash and/or in kind, for specific aspects of the Plan, contributions in cash and in kind by UNEP, and contributions in cash and/or in kind from UNDP and the various collaborating UN Specialized Agencies.

## 2. Achievements and planned developments

### i) Environmental Assessment (MED POL)

The environmental assessment component of the Mediterranean Action Plan is designed to provide continuous information on the actual state of pollution of the Mediterranean Sea, and to provide the necessary inputs towards the preparation, adoption and updating of the regional legal instruments, as well as the formulation of national legal and administrative measures to prevent and control pollution.

The initial phase of this component, termed the Coordinated Programme for Research and Monitoring of Pollution in the Mediterranean (MED POL, Phase I), was carried out between 1975 and 1981 by more than 200 scientific groups of 84 institutions from 16 Mediterranean countries <sup>2/</sup>. Annex I to the present paper gives a list of Institutions which have been designated by Arab Mediterranean countries to participate in MED POL Phase I.

Apart from acquisition of the necessary technical information, training and equipment the main goal of the pilot phase of MED POL was also to assist national centres in developing their capabilities, with a view to their fuller participation in long-term programmes.

The programme was coordinated by UNEP in co-operation with the following United Nations Specialized Agencies: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC of UNESCO), World Health Organization (WHO), World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

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<sup>2/</sup> FAO/UNESCO/IOC/WHO/IAEA/UNEP: Co-ordinated Mediterranean Pollution Monitoring and Research Programme (MED POL) - Phase I: Programme Description. UNEP Regional Seas Reports and Studies No. 23. UNEP, 1983.

The original pilot projects, of which four essentially dealt with monitoring and three with research, were the following:

- MED POL I Baseline studies and monitoring of oil and petroleum hydrocarbons in marine waters.
- MED POL II Baseline studies and monitoring of metals, particularly mercury and cadmium, in marine organisms.
- MED POL III Baseline studies and monitoring of DDT, PCBs and other chlorinated hydrocarbons in marine organisms.
- MED POL IV Research on the effects of pollutants on marine organisms and their populations.
- MED POL V Research on the effects of pollutants on marine communities and ecosystems.
- MED POL VI Problems of coastal transport of pollutants.
- MED POL VII Coastal water quality control.

Other projects were added at a later stage to broaden the scope of the programme or to provide support, though not all were fully implemented. These additional projects were:

- MED POL VIII Biogeochemical studies of selected pollutants in the open waters of the Mediterranean.
- MED POL IX Role of sedimentation in the pollution of the Mediterranean Sea
- MED POL X Pollutants from land-based sources in the Mediterranean <sup>3/</sup>.
- MED POL XI Intercalibration of analytical techniques and common maintenance services.
- MED POL XII Input of pollutants into the Mediterranean Sea via the atmosphere.
- MED POL XIII Modelling of marine systems.

The first phase of MED POL provided considerable data and information on various aspects of the pollution of the Mediterranean Sea. It also brought to light, as a result of direct practical experience, the essential requirements for a cohesive regional long-term programme, including remedial and adjustment measures at both technical and administrative levels. On the basis of the pilot phase's results, a comprehensive long-term monitoring and research programme (MED POL Phase II) designed to cover the period 1981-1990, was formulated and has recently commenced <sup>4/</sup>.

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<sup>3/</sup> UNEP/ECE/UNIDO/FAO/UNESCO/WHO/IAEA: Pollutants from land-based sources in the Mediterranean. UNEP Regional Seas Reports and Studies No. 32. UNEP, 1984.

<sup>4/</sup> UNEP: Long-term programme for pollution monitoring and research in the Mediterranean (MED POL) - Phase II. UNEP Regional Seas Reports and Studies No. 28. UNEP, 1983.

The main objectives of the programme are to provide a continuous assessment of the state of pollution of the Mediterranean basin, to identify the sources, pathways, amounts and effects of pollutants entering the Mediterranean Sea, to establish temporal trends in pollution levels, to provide the basis for modelling pollutant cycles, and to present the information for use as a management tool in pollution control, thus assisting countries in the region in the decision-making process with regard to environmentally-compatible socio-economic development strategies, as also to suggest pollution control methods, including cost-benefit analysis.

The long-term programme of MED POL includes two main elements:

a) monitoring activities

- monitoring of sources of pollution to provide information on the type and amounts of pollutants reaching the marine environment from coastal sources;
- monitoring of coastal waters and estuaries under the direct influence of pollutants from identifiable primary or secondary sources;
- monitoring of reference areas (not under the direct influence of pollution sources) to provide information on the general trends in the level of pollution in the Mediterranean;
- monitoring of the transport of pollutants to the Mediterranean Sea through the atmosphere, providing additional information on the pollution load reaching the sea;

b) research and study topics

- development of sampling and analytical techniques for monitoring the sources and levels of pollutants;
- development of reporting formats for the Protocols;
- formulation of the scientific rationale for the environmental quality criteria to be used in the development of emission standards, standards to use, or guidelines for substances listed in the annexes to the Protocol on land-based sources of pollution;
- epidemiological studies related to the proposed environmental quality

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