



UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME

*The West and Central African Action Plan:
evaluation of its development and achievements*

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This document is an in-depth evaluation of the Action Plan for the protection and development of the marine and coastal environment of the West and Central African Region, covering the preparatory activities leading to its adoption in March 1981, and its subsequent implementation until mid 1988.

1.2 The following main elements have been used in evaluating the achievements of the Action Plan:

- (a) Changes in national environmental policies and practices (including in national legislation) made either as a direct consequence of the Action Plan, the Convention and Protocol adopted in 1981, or in conformity with the objectives of the Action Plan and the Convention;
- (b) National financial and manpower resources which have been mobilized or used in connection with activities relevant to the Action Plan;
- (c) Participation and contribution of national institutions to the implementation of the Action Plan;
- (d) Efficiency of training (individual and group training) provided through the Action Plan;
- (e) Efficiency of technical meetings held in the framework of the Action Plan;
- (f) Role of co-operating agencies and supporting organizations - their substantive and financial contributions to the Action Plan; and
- (g) Role of UNEP and its financial support in the formulation of the Action Plan and its subsequent implementation.

1.3 The achievements were specifically analyzed from the standpoint of how and how much they contributed to the principal objective of the Action Plan adopted seven years ago, to the awareness and understanding of environmental issues of the region and to the formulation of national and regional environmental policies of the region.

1.4 The evaluation has been prepared by the secretariat of the Action Plan (UNEP) on the basis of information available in the files of UNEP and of information supplied by the institutions participating in the Action Plan (see annex II and IV).

2. MAJOR STEPS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ACTION PLAN

2.1 A UNEP exploratory mission to assess the feasibility of a regional action plan for West Africa visited the region during the period April - July 1976 as a follow-up to the request of West and Central African States at the third session of the UNEP Governing Council.

2.2 In May 1977, the fifth session of the Governing Council called upon UNEP to undertake the necessary steps for the development of an action plan and a regional agreement to prevent and abate pollution in the West African Region [UNEP/GC/Dec/88(V)].

2.3 An IMCO/UNEP workshop on the Prevention, abatement and combating of oil pollution from ships in the Gulf of Guinea and adjacent coastal areas was convened in Douala, 12-17 December 1977.

2.4 The IOC/FAO/WHO/UNEP international workshop on Marine pollution problems in the Gulf of Guinea and adjacent coastal areas was convened in Abidjan, 2-9 May 1978. The workshop reviewed the major marine pollution problems of the region.

2.5 A UNDP Resident Representatives/Interagency Meeting took place in Abidjan, 10-11 May 1978. The meeting focused on the identification of activities that could practically and effectively be carried out as part of the Action Plan.

2.6 On the basis of the activities mentioned above, UNEP formulated a preliminary draft action plan and circulated it to the Governments of the region in October 1978. Thereafter a UNEP mission visited the region during the period December 1978 - April 1979 to collect Governments' comments and respond to their queries.

2.7 Under a joint FAO/UNEP project, studies on legal and scientific aspects of marine environment protection in the Gulf of Guinea and adjacent coastal areas, and on the need for control of pollution and possible mechanisms thereof were prepared and served as a basis for the meetings of Government experts to review the draft action plan.

2.8 A United Nations/Governments of Benin and Togo workshop on causes of, and possible solutions to, coastal erosion in Benin and Togo, was convened in Lomé, 29 January - 9 February 1979.

2.9 A workshop on Coastal ecosystems on the West Coast of Africa was convened by Unesco in Dakar from 11-15 June 1979. The workshop formulated a proposal for a regional research and training programme on the coastal lagoons, estuaries and mangroves of West Africa.

2.10 The draft action plan and draft convention and protocol were reviewed by meetings of Government scientific and legal experts in Libreville, 5-9 November 1979; and Lomé, 24-27 November 1980.

2.11 During the period April-October 1980, a mission visited those States that had not yet actively participated in the expert meetings and other activities.

2.12 High level experts from the region met in Geneva from 21 to 23 January 1981 at the invitation of the Executive Director of UNEP to advise him on the institutional and financial arrangements related to the Action Plan for the West African region.

2.13 As part of the preparatory process of the Action Plan, a number of studies and surveys were undertaken in the region in early 1980 in the framework of joint UN bodies and UNEP projects. These covered:

- UNIDO/UNEP: Survey of industrial pollution of the marine environment from land-based sources;
- IMCO/UNEP: Survey of oil pollution problems in the West African region with particular emphasis on pollution from shipping activities;
- Unesco/UNEP: Survey of river discharge of pollutants to West African seas; and
- UN-DIESA/UNEP: Studies on coastal development and management in West Africa.

2.14 The Conference of Plenipotentiaries on Co-operation in the protection and development of the marine and coastal environment of the West and Central African region was convened by UNEP in Abidjan from 16-23 March 1981. The Conference adopted the Action Plan, the Convention and Protocol as well as resolutions on institutional and financial arrangements for the implementation of the Action Plan.

2.15 The subsequent meetings of the Steering Committee for the marine environment of West and Central Africa (Abidjan, 20-23 July 1981; Geneva, 22-23 April 1982; Lagos, 30 April - 2 May 1984; Abidjan, 15-17 April 1985; Nairobi, 16-18 May 1988), the Extraordinary Intergovernmental Review

Meeting (Lagos, 2-4 May 1984), and the First meeting of the Contracting Parties to the WACAF Convention (Abidjan, 18-20 April 1985) provided UNEP with the required guidance on programme priorities and workplans as well as on institutional and financial arrangements for their implementation and follow-up.

2.16 Since the adoption of the Action Plan, three major projects identified by Governments as first priorities were initiated by UNEP:

- WACAF/1: Institution and co-ordination of national contingency plans in the West and Central African region (in co-operation with IMO and UNIDO);
- WACAF/2: Monitoring of pollution in the marine environment of the West and Central African region (in co-operation with FAO, IOC, WHO and IAEA); and
- WACAF/3: Control of coastal erosion in West and Central Africa (in co-operation with Unesco and UN-DIESA).

2.17 The preparation of the in-depth evaluation of the action plan, which is the subject of this document, was discussed and agreed at the Fifth meeting of the Steering Committee (Nairobi, 16-18 May 1988).

3. ACHIEVEMENTS

3.1 The adoption, four years after the decision of the Governing Council, of the Action Plan, the Convention, the related Protocol to the Convention and the institutional and financial arrangements are undoubtedly major achievements.

3.2 The Convention for Co-operation in the Protection and Development of the Marine and Coastal Environment of the West and Central African Region and its related Protocol on Combating Pollution in Cases of Emergency entered into force on 5 August 1984, and constitute the legal basis for regional co-operation in the framework of the Action Plan.

3.3 National focal points for the Action Plan were identified by each participating government (see annex II). They played a major role in the co-ordination, at the national level, of the implementation of programme priorities agreed by meetings of the Steering Committee, the Intergovernmental and the Contracting Parties Meetings.

3.4 The Steering Committee, since its establishment in 1981, provided UNEP and the Intergovernmental and Contracting Parties Meetings with the necessary policy guidance for determining programme priorities.

3.5 The Governments of the region agreed to establish a Regional Co-ordinating Unit for the Action Plan and accepted the offer of the Government of Côte d'Ivoire to host such a unit in Abidjan (UNEP/IG.59/6).

3.6 A Trust Fund was established with the intention to cover the common costs of implementing the Action Plan and to replace gradually the support provided by the Environment Fund.

3.7 Five regional projects dealing with contingency planning for marine pollution emergencies (WACAF/1), monitoring of pollution in the marine environment (WACAF/2); coastal erosion control (WACAF/3, WACAF/6) and development of national environmental legislation and its harmonization with the Abidjan Convention (WACAF/5) were initiated at the request of the Governments of the Region. They were implemented in co-operation with UN bodies and involved national institutions and experts from the region (see annex IV).

3.8 As the result of ongoing and completed activities (see paragraphs 2.12, 2.15 and 3.7):

(a) Information and data were gathered on:

- the status of oil production, transportation, pollution and pollution control along the coasts of West and Central Africa;
- the type and quantity of industrial pollution from major land-based sources entering the marine environment through direct coastal discharges or indirectly through rivers, as well as the status of industrial wastes management practices;
- The ocean energy potential of the West and Central African region;
- onshore impact of offshore oil and natural gas development in the West and Central African region.

(b) A review of the legal aspects of marine environmental protection in the Gulf of Guinea and adjacent areas has been made.

(c) A survey on the environmental management problems in resource utilization and a survey of resources in the West and Central African region has been prepared.

(d) A directory of marine research centres in Africa has been published.

(e) National contingency plans for maritime emergencies were drafted for ten countries. Two of these contingency plans were formally adopted by Congo and Côte d'Ivoire.

(f) Guidelines for the preparation of national contingency plans for industrial accidents and for industrial hazard analyses have been prepared. Information on the current state of preparedness and intervention capability in case of major industrial accidents was collected during field missions to Liberia and Senegal. A regional industrial risk assessment has been carried out for the major industrial sectors in five geographical zones which make up the region.

(g) Twenty-three research or university institutes and laboratories from ten countries were organized in a network of institutions for monitoring the quality of the marine environment. The first assessments of the state of marine and coastal waters in the West and Central African region are available.

(h) Coastal erosion, a problem faced by most West and Central African States, has been dealt with through a project which provided the region with basic scientific information about the causes and processes leading to coastal erosion, as well as about the technical measures which may mitigate the problem.

(i) A manual on training, research and control of coastal erosion as applied to West and Central African region has been prepared under the responsibility of Unesco.

(j) Reports on the state of national legislation relevant to the protection of the marine environment have been prepared for Gabon and Ghana, with the assistance of FAO and IMO.

3.9 Technical assistance was provided to several Governments and national institutions in the region and a large number of their technical personnel were trained in subjects relevant to the Action Plan (see section 4). This contributed considerably to the strengthening of national capabilities to respond to marine environmental problems of the region.

3.10 The support of FAO, IMO, IOC, Unesco, IAEA, WHO, UNIDO and UN-DIESA, particularly in the preparatory phase leading to the adoption of the Action Plan, was generous, efficient and contributed significantly to the development and implementation of the Action Plan.

4. TRAINING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

4.1 In the implementation of any regional programme, particularly one which involves developing countries, a major difficulty is the uneven level of technical capabilities of participating States and the frequent lack of infrastructure adequate for their effective participation in the programme. For this reason the need for training and technical assistance has been strongly emphasized in each of the main elements of the Action Plan.

4.2 Provision of training (in the form of both individual or group training) and technical support has been a major component of the various implemented or ongoing activities (see annex V). Furthermore, UNEP has sponsored participation of a number of individual experts from the West and Central African region in training programmes not organized in the framework of but relevant to the Action Plan.

4.3 Technical assistance has also been provided to the States of the region and their institutions in the form of experts and in the supply of equipment and material needed for carrying out the various projects and tasks (see annex VI).

5. INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

5.1 When adopting the Action Plan and the Convention with its Protocol (see paragraph 2.13), the Governments designated UNEP as the secretariat of the Convention and the Action Plan and UNEP has served in this capacity since then. In consultation with the Governments of the region, and in close co-operation with the relevant United Nations bodies, UNEP, within available financial resources, has made such arrangements as required to achieve the objectives of the Convention, the Protocol and the Action Plan. The secretariat functions are discharged by the Oceans and Coastal Areas Programme Activity Centre of UNEP in Nairobi (until 1985 in Geneva).

5.2 The Governments participating in the Action Plan also decided to establish, upon entry into force of the Convention, a Regional Co-ordinating Unit, placed under the authority of UNEP, which would technically co-ordinate the various activities of the Action Plan. The first meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Convention accepted the offer of Côte d'Ivoire to host the Regional Co-ordinating Unit in Abidjan. Negotiations between UNEP and Côte d'Ivoire are in progress about an agreement formalizing the establishment of the Unit.

5.3 A Steering Committee composed of 7 States (later expanded to ten) was set up by the Governments when adopting the Action Plan to provide UNEP with policy guidance on substantive and financial matters related to the implementation of the Convention, the Protocol and the Action Plan in between meetings of the Contracting Parties.

5.4 The first meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Convention adopted the Rules of Procedure for the meetings convened under the Action Plan and the Terms of Reference of the Steering Committee.

5.5 The periodic meetings of the Steering Committee (see paragraph 2.14) proved to be an effective mechanism for determining programme priorities in the programmes, for reaching an agreement on the contributions to the Trust Fund and for determining financial allocations to various activities.

5.6 Each State participating in the Action Plan has designated an official national focal point for the Action Plan:

- to act as the official channel of communication between the respective Government and the secretariat of the Action Plan (UNEP);
- to co-ordinate the participation of national institutions and agencies in the agreed programmes.

5.7 The first meeting of the Contracting Parties recommended the establishment of national committees for the Action Plan to provide support to the national focal point in co-ordinating activities relevant to the Action Plan on the national level.

6. FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS

6.1 Financial support for the activities of the Action Plan were envisaged from:

- (a) Contributions from participating governments to the Trust Fund according to a scale determined from time to time by the governments concerned;
- (b) International organizations;
- (c) Non-governmental organizations.

6.2 It was envisaged that, initially, support should be provided by the United Nations system on the assumption that this financial contribution will progressively decrease as the governments themselves assume financial responsibility for the programme. The ultimate aim should be to make the proposed regional programme self-supporting.

6.3 The preparatory phase leading to the adoption of the Action Plan in March 1981 was financially supported by the Environment Fund of UNEP (US\$ 1,132,439) and by contributions of specialized agencies of the United Nations system (US\$ 223,436) [see table 1 (a)].

6.4 The Conference of Plenipotentiaries of West and Central African States (Abidjan, 16-23 March 1981) decided to establish a Regional Trust Fund to cover part of the common costs of implementing the Action Plan, that would be financed by proportional contributions from States identified in Article 1 of the Convention. The Conference also requested the Executive Director of UNEP to assume responsibility for administering the Regional Trust Fund and called upon the Executive Director to search for additional financial resources which may be available for the

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