



**United Nations
Environment
Programme**

EP



UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG. 359/4 Rev.1
5 May 2011

ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: FRENCH



MEDITERRANEAN ACTION PLAN

Tenth Meeting of Focal Points for SPAs

Marseilles, France, 17-20 May 2011

Progress Report on RAC/SPA Activities

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REPORT ON THE ACTIVITIES CARRIED ON BY RAC/SPA SINCE THE NINTH MEETING OF FOCAL POINTS FOR SPAS (MAY 2009-MARCH 2011)

I. INTRODUCTION

The present report was drawn up by the Regional Activity Centre for Specially Protected Areas (RAC/SPA) to inform its Focal Points (FPs) for Specially Protected Areas (SPAs) at their Tenth Meeting (Marseilles, France, 17-20 May 2011) about the activities that RAC/SPA has been carrying on since the Ninth Meeting.

The report covers the period from 1 May 2009 to 31 March 2011 and comes under the five-year programme adopted by the Contracting Parties at their Sixteenth Ordinary Meeting (Marrakech, November 2009). For the 2010-2011 biennium, RAC/SPA's work programme focused mainly on implementing a representative network of marine and coastal protected areas, and on ecosystem protection, the conservation of endangered species and the sustainable use of the elements of biodiversity in compliance with the established programme-budget. The activities carried out in compliance with this work programme take into account the mandate given to RAC/SPA to help the Contracting Parties discharge their obligations that derive from the 1995 Barcelona Convention, the Protocol on Specially Protected Areas and Biological Diversity in the Mediterranean (SPA & BD Protocol), and implement the Strategic Action Programme for the conservation of biological diversity in the Mediterranean region (SAP BIO), the Regional working programme for the coastal and marine protected areas in the Mediterranean including the high seas, and the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (MSSD).

II. Objective 1	BARCELONA CONVENTION, PROTOCOLS AND STRATEGIES DULY APPLIED (THEME I : Governance)
II.1. Expected results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Enhancing consistency, efficacy and responsibility at institutional level - Correcting deficiencies of application: the CPs are helped to attain the aims of the Barcelona Convention, Protocols and strategies adopted - Knowledge and information effectively managed and communicated
II.2. Elements of the MAP and/or other concerned partners	<p>RAC/SPA MEDU, MEDPOL IUCN</p>
II.3. Indicators/Achievements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Possible SPAMI sites identified out at sea with the participation of the Contracting Parties where need be - Draft established concerning an integrated regional strategy on management of ships' ballast water and invasive species - Number of sites monitored or SPAs taken into account, number of habitats or vulnerable species monitored% of SPAMIs assessed - Number of invasive non-native species inventoried/Number of countries/institutions backing this information-gathering mechanism - An updated bibliographical database created on the RAC/SPA website. - Number of geo-referenced data in MedSIG - Better circulation of scientific knowledge on plant species listed in Annex II to the SPA/BD Protocol - Since it's been published online on February the 19th 2011 with compliance to the new graphical chart, the RAC/SPA's website has been visited 3240 time
II.4. Final results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Validation by the Focal Points for SPAs at their Extraordinary Meeting (1st June 2010) of 12 priority conservation areas lying in the open seas, including deep sea, that are likely to include sites that could be candidates for the SPAMI List - Validation within the framework of GloBallast project of the draft Mediterranean strategy for managing ballast water and invasive species, with the identifying of eight strategic priorities, and the establishing of an action plan and an implementation schedule - Suggestion of guidelines for standardizing mapping methods and monitoring marine magnoliophytes (UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG.359/9) - Starting the monitoring of meadows in Algeria (El Kala), Tunisia and Turkey (MedPosidonia Programme) - Ordinary revision of all the SPAMIs listed in 2003

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Inventorying of non-native marine species on 31 sites on the coasts of Albania and Montenegro - Creating eight layers of geographical information on features of pelagic and deep sea ecosystems for the entire Mediterranean basin. These layers should be integrated in MedSIG - A Flash news published on April the 14th 2011. - Organising two meadow monitoring training sessions (July and October 2009) - Having seven scientists participate at the 2nd workshop on Mediterranean marine phanerogams (September 2009) - Organising two regional/sub-regional symposia on applying action plans concerning species: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 1st biennial conference on the conservation of cetaceans in the countries of the south (October 2009) - 4th symposium on marine plants in the Mediterranean (December 2010)
<p>II.5. Total budget spent or committed/compared to budget approved (as a %)</p>	<p>% (in terms of commitments, only on the basis of the MTF budget for 2010-2011) 71%</p>

II.6. Main achievements

1. Implementation of the Strategic Action Programme for the conservation of Biological Diversity (SAP BIO) in the Mediterranean Region

With regard to the implementation of SAP BIO (UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG.359/Inf.4.), RACSPA integrated its activities since 2004 as Secretariat of the SPA/BD Protocol within seven Priority action axes:

- inventorying, mapping and monitoring of Mediterranean marine and coastal biodiversity;
- conservation of sensitive habitats, species and sites;
- assessing and mitigating the impact of threats on biodiversity;
- developing research to complete knowledge and fill in gaps on biodiversity;
- capacity-building, coordination and technical support;
- information and participation;
- awareness raising.

Since then, Parties have been assisted to evaluate their biodiversity, to implement national action plans, to be integrated in regional projects for the creation and management of protected areas, etc.

Considering that the 2010 biodiversity target has not been achieved, the 10th COP of the CBD (Nagoya, Japan, 18-29 October 2010) promoted the implementation at world scale of a new strategic plan for biodiversity 2011-2020. Taking into account that new plan, RAC/SPA hosted a meeting with several regional organizations to discuss the future orientations and update needs of SAP BIO, (Tunis, 4-5 April 2011). As a result, the agreed orientations were synthesized in the document UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG.359/8 and herein proposed for discussion by the SPA Focal Points meeting in view of undertaking an update of SAP BIO to the horizon 2011-20.

2. Improved governance on the high seas

The joint management action by the European Community and the United Nations Environment Programme/Mediterranean Action Plan (EC-UNEP/MAP) aiming to promote the establishment of a representative ecological network of Protected Areas in the Mediterranean, started during the preceding biennium, continued. The first phase aimed at identifying priority conservation areas located in the open seas, including the deep sea, that are likely to include sites that could be candidates for inclusion in the List of Specially Protected Areas of Mediterranean Importance (SPAMI List; UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG.348/5). The results of this first phase were presented at an Extraordinary Meeting of Focal Points for SPAs, held in Istanbul (Turkey) on 1 June 2010 (UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG.348/5). The second phase started in 2010 and should continue, after a request made by MAP, up to December 2011. It aims at facilitating the process of proposals for possible SPAMIs included in those areas identified as priority conservation areas during the preceding phase.

This process requires consultation between the neighbouring Parties concerned in order to prepare the presentation report that includes information on the area's geographical location, its physical and ecological features, its legal status, its management plan and means for implementation, and a summary justifying its Mediterranean importance.

RAC/SPA continued its activities on governance in partnership with IUCN Centre for Mediterranean Cooperation (IUCN-Med). This was put into effect when RAC/SPA participated at the meeting of the Coordinating Committee on Governance of the Mediterranean (30 October 2009, Gland, Switzerland) and two workshops were held on the topic:

- The first, held from 21-23 January 2010 in Istanbul, Turkey, was organised with the General Fishing Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) with the support of the French Minister for Ecology, Energy, Sustainable Development and the Sea (MEEDDM) and the French Agency for Marine Protected Areas (AAMP) and with the collaboration of the Turkish Marine Research Foundation (TUDAV) and the IUCN's Commission on Environmental Law
- The second, held from 30 September to 2 October 2010 in Procida, Italy, was organised with GFCM with the support of MEEDDM, and AAMP, and with the collaboration of the Oriental University of Naples and the IUCN's Commission on Environmental Law.

3. Second GloBallast Regional Task Force Meeting and the Regional Harmonisation Workshop on Management Approaches

RAC/SPA collaborated with REMPEC to organise the 2nd GloBallast Regional Task Force Meeting in Istanbul, Turkey, from 1 to 3 June 2010. The Meeting was devoted to finalizing and approving the regional strategy on managing ballast water and the related Action Plan. REMPEC and RAC/SPA presented a joint note on the progress made in the GloBallast Partnerships project in the Mediterranean region and the Action Plan concerning species introductions and invasive species in the Mediterranean Sea. During the Meeting, the participants agreed on the text of a Mediterranean Strategy on Ships' Ballast Water Management and Invasive Species that will be submitted to the REMPEC correspondents for their approval planned for May 2011.

4. Assisting countries to set up monitoring networks for key habitats

To help countries set up monitoring networks for key habitats, RAC/SPA started thoughts on suggesting a standardised approach to monitoring Mediterranean marine phanerogams as priority habitats. To this end a round table, 'Standardising methods for mapping and monitoring Mediterranean marine phanerogams', was organised during the 2nd workshop on Mediterranean marine phanerogams held in Hvar, Croatia, from 6 to 10 September 2009, with RAC/SPA participating. On the basis of the discussions and data from the scientific literature, guidelines were proposed and then discussed at the 4th Symposium on Mediterranean Marine Vegetation organised by RAC/SPA from 2 to 4 December 2010 in Yasmine-Hammamet (Tunisia; UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG.359/9).

In close collaboration with the Algerian Ministry for Land Use Development and the Environment, a field assignment was carried out from 6 to 12 July 2009 in the El Kala region of Algeria to set up a system of monitoring marine seagrass meadows. This monitoring was done

according to the protocol used as part of the MedPosidonia programme, suggested as a standardised approach in document UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG.359/8.

Lastly, to build national skills in monitoring marine phanerogam meadows, RAC/SPA:

- started training two young experts (1 Algerian and 1 Libyan) in monitoring techniques (6-12 July 2009, El Kala, Algeria)
- worked with the Croatian Institute of Oceanography and Fisheries to enable seven scientists (Algeria, Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia) to participate in the 2nd workshop on Mediterranean marine phanerogams (6-10 September 2009, Hvar, Croatia)
- backed and facilitated the training of some of the staff in the Algerian Ministry for Land Use Planning, the Environment and Tourism in studying and monitoring meadows, in the laboratories of the Tunisian National Institute of Marine Sciences and Technologies (20-30 October 2009, Salammbou, Tunisia).

5. Regular assessing of SPAMIs

The procedure for the periodic ordinary review of the SPAMIs concerns, for the current biennium, the SPAMIs included in the List in 2003. This concerns the Cabrera Archipelago National Maritime and Terrestrial Park and the Maro-Cerro Gordo cliffs. The results of this ordinary periodic review appear in detail in document UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG.359/5.

6. Enhancing regional and sub-regional mechanisms for data collection and circulating information on non-indigenous marine species

To improve the collection and circulation of information on non-indigenous marine species, RAC/SPA undertook to assess the feasibility of a regional mechanism for collecting, compiling and circulating information on non-indigenous marine species. This feasibility study goes hand in hand with an operational programme and includes a Mediterranean database and a regional warning system (UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG.359/Inf.9). A meeting of experts is planned for the first semester of 2011 to clarify the structure of this regional information system and discuss operational modalities for setting it up.

At the same time, an educational document on introduced species and invasive species in the Mediterranean region was crafted in collaboration with Nice University, France. This is intended for the wider public, NGOs and decision-makers. It should be published for the end of the first semester of 2011.

Lastly, RAC/SPA funded a rapid assessment survey of marine alien species in the Albanian and Montenegrin coast jointly with the Hellenic Centre for Marine Research (HCMR), the Association for the Protection of Aquatic Wildlife of Albania (APAWA) and the Institute of Marine Biology of Kotor (IBMK, Montenegro). 31 sites were prospected. The study brought the number of known non-indigenous species up from 12 to 20 for Albania and from 6 to 10 for Montenegro.

Furthermore, a brochure on exotic species that may well be introduced into the Albanian and Montenegrin Adriatic coasts was prepared in English and translated into Albanian and Serbian and was distributed to fishermen, divers, and NGOs in Albania and Montenegro.

7. Updating MedGIS and regional bibliographical bases

As part of the EC-UNEP/MAP joint management action to promote the establishment of a representative ecological network of protected areas in the Mediterranean open seas, including the deep sea, layers of geographical information on the geomorphology (seamounts, canyons, banks), oceanographic features (bathymetry, temperature, primary production) and biogeographic features of priority species for conservation (birds, other species) and layers of synthesis of priority areas for the conservation of pelagic and deep-sea ecosystems, were established.

8. Organising regional symposia for applying action plans concerning the species

RAC/SPA has:

- jointly with ACCOBAMS, helped organise the first biennial conference on the conservation of cetaceans in the countries of the southern Mediterranean, from 12-14 October 2009 in Tabarka, Tunisia
- organised the 4th Mediterranean Symposium on Marine Vegetation from 2-4 December 2010 in Yasmine-Hammamet, Tunisia. With over 120 scientists from 17 countries participating, the symposium allowed recommendations to be suggested (Annex 1) and conclusions formulated to enable the work programme and schedule of the Action Plan on the conservation of marine vegetation (UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG.359/12) to be updated. The proceedings of the event, integrating over 70 scientific articles, were distributed to all the participants at the event.

9. Developing RAC/SPA's website as a biodiversity clearing house

RAC/SPA's website was completely revised. This new structure was chosen to facilitate the updating of data and integration of databases, particularly those related to bibliographic references. RAC/SPA's site with a new graphic chart was put online in February 2011

A first news-letter for the 2011 year was prepared and sent on April the 15th 2011 to the centre's partners and to all the persons directly subscribed on the website.

10. Contribution to the Project of an online trilingual (Arabic-English-French) glossary for sustainable development in the Mediterranean

RAC/SPA is collaborating with the World Bank (project lead partner) and other partners: the Mediterranean Institute of Ecology and Paleoecology (IMEP, France), *the Conservatoire du Littoral* (CDL, France), the National Commission for Biotechnology (NCBT, Syria) and the University of Damascus, for the development of an online trilingual glossary in Arabic/English/French (ecoOnto-Med), which first phase is addressing the terms and concepts related to biodiversity.

II.7. Difficulties encountered and lessons learned

Some activities, anticipated for the biennium, like organizing the Second Symposium on sea birds, or setting up the CHM and updating MedGIS, have had to be put on ice as a result of the budgetary restrictions requested by MAP's Coordinating Unit.

As regards RAC/SPA's website, during the site's development some technical problems arose, making this site unavailable at certain periods.

II.8. Draft recommendations

- That the concerned neighbouring Parties pursue or begin the consultations with a view to propose the listing of SPAMIs in the open seas including the deep sea
- That the Parties take into consideration the draft guidelines for mapping and monitoring magnoliophyte meadows
- That the concerned Parties carry out the ordinary periodic review of SPAMIs included in the List in 2005
- That the Parties adopt the operational programme of collecting, compiling and circulating information on non-native marine species
- That RAC/SPA set up a regional warning system on non-native marine species

II.9. Draft decisions

- Updating of the Strategic Action Programme for the conservation of Biological Diversity (SAP BIO) in the Mediterranean Region
- Suggest an updated work programme and schedule for the Action Plan for the conservation of Mediterranean marine plants, to take account of the addition of new species of flora to Annex II to the SPA/BD Protocol

III. Objective 2	SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF THE COASTAL AREAS ENHANCED (Theme II : Integrated coastal zone management)
Expected results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Management of coastal areas enables a true balance to be reached between development and protection (sustainable development of the coast)
III.2. Elements of the MAP and/or other concerned partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - RAC/SPA - RAC/PAP, Plan Bleu, MEDU, RAC/PP, INFO/RAC - Andalusia region - Spanish Ministry of the Environment
III.3. Indicators/ achievements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Number of documents crafted as part of CAMP Almeria - Report on the consultation process - Programme of ecological monitoring set up
III.3. Final results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Launching of CAMP Almeria
III.5. Total budget spent or committed/compared to budget approved (as a %)	<p>% of the terms of commitment, solely on the basis of the MTF 2010-2011 budget</p> <p>100 %</p>
<p>III.6. Main achievements</p> <p>1. Carrying out of biodiversity-related activities as part of CAMP Morocco</p> <p>RAC/SPA participated in the implementing of CAMP Morocco during the previous biennium via field assignments carried out in February and April 2009. A management plan and conservation measures for the Jebha area (a site of biological and ecological interest) were then proposed to the Moroccan Ministry of the Environment</p> <p>2. Carrying out of biodiversity-related activities as part of CAMP Almeria</p> <p>RAC/SPA participated in the meeting to launch CAMP Almeria from 5-7 July 2010. A report was made on this launching meeting. The actions that will be carried out in collaboration with RAC/SPA were defined and appear in this report. A meeting held on 24 November 2010 in Malaga, Spain, enabled the team of experts who will act in this programme to be identified.</p> <p>This team must focus on setting up a Geographical Information System for the CAMP area that concentrates on biodiversity-related aspects and their interactions with socio-economic aspects.</p>	

III.7. Difficulties encountered and lessons learned

The consultation needed for the launching of the project took a lot more time than originally envisaged. Because of this delay, it does not seem very realistic to think that all the activities can be completed by the end of the biennium. It would be better in the future to take into account the importance and duration of this preparatory period, vital for correctly achieving the CAMPs.

III.8. Draft recommendations

No recommendations for this objective

IV. Objective 3	REDUCED LOSS OF MARINE AND COASTAL BIODIVERSITY (Theme III: Biodiversity)
IV.1. Expected results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ecosystem services provided by the marine and coastal environment identified and assessed - Conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity (strategic vision, new objectives in the post-2010 context, including fishing, ballast water, non-native species), and threatened and endangered species - Network of Marine and Coastal Protected Areas (MPAs), including areas lying outside national jurisdictions, widened, enhanced and effectively managed
IV.2. Elements of the MAP and/or other concerned partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - RAC/SPA - RAC/BP, RAC/PAP, MEDU, Plan Bleu, REMPEC - ACCOBAMS - FAO, GFCM - RAMOGE - IUCN - National partners - Partners in the Action Plan on turtles - Partners in the Action Plan on plants - BirdLife, NGOs, Partners in the Action Plan on birds - WWF MedPO
IV.3. Indicators/achievements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Study to assess the economic value of environmental services completed and available - 4 pilot studies to assess the economic value of conservation, completed - Surface area of areas mapped and/or coast inventoried - Number of standard data forms crafted - Number of sites studied to fill in gaps on the distribution of priority habitats - Key habitat mapping programme crafted and submitted - Number of people trained in taxonomy during the MedMPAnet assignments - Draft programmes submitted for the conservation of the monk seal - Number of cameras installed to follow-up monk seals - Number of monitoring reports made - Number and proportion of known rest and reproduction caves proposed for protection - Number of actions undertaken to help cetaceans - Number of NAPs for cetaceans assessed - Lists of priority actions made to protect cetaceans - Number of activities carried out to protect marine turtles - Number of national/sub-regional/regional (GFCM, Bonn, RAC/SPA, IUCN) reports made on ongoing projects and work on the conservation of cartilaginous fishes - Number of activities undertaken for the conservation of birds appearing in Annex II - Guidelines crafted to reduce interactions between fish farming fishing and vulnerable habitats or threatened

	<p>species</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Guidelines crafted on monitoring the coralligenous- Number of people trained in the study and monitoring of coralligenous assemblages- Number of people trained in the conservation of marine turtles- Approach developed on the basis of risks for the control, and inspection of the management, of ballast water- Number of trainees trained in various aspects of the ballast water problem- Guidelines crafted to improve the SPA network and SPA interconnectedness- Number of actions undertaken to help SPAs- List of priority actions identified for creating MPAs- List of potential partners and actors for creating MPAs- Number and/or percentage of sites of conservation interest- Documents and reports to complete the files on SPAMIs in 3 potential sites- Number of protected areas on the high sea in the 2nd year- Number of information and awareness documents and reports crafted on creating SPAMIs- Number of SPAMIs proposed for inclusion on the list- Number of training activities organised in the SPA context- Number of people trained regarding SPAs
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<p>IV.4. Final results</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In collaboration with Plan Bleu, participation in crafting the document 'Economic value of the sustainable benefits deriving from Mediterranean marine ecosystems' - Helping carry out a mapping drive in Greece - Assessing sites in Libya for creating new MPAs and crafting SDFs as part of the MedMPAnet programme - Training Libyan scientists in taxonomy as part of the MedMPAnet programme assignments - Implementing the programme of monitoring monk seal populations in the Mediterranean using automatic cameras in Libya and Turkey (along the south-eastern coast) and soon in Greece (island of Samos) - Preparing the NAP for the conservation of cetaceans in Syria and Egypt - Participating in monitoring marine turtle populations in four countries (Albania, Libya, Tunisia and Turkey) - Inventorying species of waterfowl wintering in the wetlands of the Mediterranean coast: identifying six species out of the ten bird species newly added to Annex II to the SPA/BD Protocol - Monitoring nesting populations of migratory terns on Gara Island in Libya - Suggesting guidelines and a code of conduct for managing the sport fishing of sharks and rays - Crafting a protocol for collecting and assessing the interaction between fishing and marine turtles - Suggesting guidelines for setting up standardised methods for the inventorying and follow-up of coralligenous/marl communities and their main species - Training X people in the conservation of marine turtles - Publishing four documents and reports to round off files on SPAMIs - Crafting a draft legal and institutional approach and an information and awareness document on creating SPAMIs - Carrying out two national SPA training activities in Syria - Training people to plan the management of MPAs
<p>IV.5. Total budget spent or committed/compared to budget approved (as a %)</p>	<p>% (in terms of commitments, solely on the basis of the MTF 2010-2011 budget) 70 %</p>
<p>IV.6. Main achievements</p> <p style="text-align: center;">1. Assessing the economic value of environmental services provided by the Mediterranean</p> <p>RAC/SPA participated at the meeting of the steering committee of the 'Economic approach to marine ecosystems in the Mediterranean' project (8 September 2009, Marseilles, France) and in crafting the Plan Bleu document entitled "Economic value of the sustainable benefits deriving from Mediterranean marine ecosystems'.</p>	

2. Pilot studies to assess the economic value of conservation activities

For the first phase of the evaluation process, a database on MPAs has been elaborated and will be accessible through the MedGIS tool. In close contact with REMPEC, a selection of a pilot case and specialists on the impact of incidental pollution on biodiversity are being identified to initiate the second phase.

3. Assisting countries to map and characterize important benthic habitats and fill in gaps about their distribution

To continue its help to countries in mapping major benthic habitats, RAC/SPA approached the Mediterranean scientific community about suggesting a standardised approach to mapping and monitoring Mediterranean marine seagrass meadows. Guidelines were crafted and presented in the work document UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG.359/9.

With RAC/SPA's backing, the University of Piraeus undertook the mapping of key habitats in the Cyclades, Greece.

The summer 2010 campaign of mapping the coralligenous assemblages in Cap Corse, done at the AAMP's initiative, enabled Tunisian scientists to be made aware of the available techniques and their implementation, and an activity of mapping coralligenous habitats in the eastern Mediterranean is planned by the end of 2011.

4. Setting up taxonomic workshops during assignments to characterize national sites as part of the MedMPAnet Programme

As part of the field assignments carried out in the context of the MedMPAnet programme, training workshops on taxonomy were organised for national experts who participated in these assignments. That was particularly the case for the El Kouf (Libya) campaign in October 2010.

5. Setting up joint regional/sub-regional programmes to protect the monk seal with the pertinent conventions

RAC/SPA started an approach to establish sub-regional programmes for the conservation of the monk seal in the Mediterranean (UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG.359/Inf.6).

In agreement with the Bonn Convention representative, RAC/SPA appointed a consultant to prepare the sub-regional programme of conservation in the western basin.

For the eastern basin, approaches with Cyprus and Turkey enabled help to be started to prepare and/or update the national action plans that had to be available by the end of the first semester of 2011.

On the basis of these documents, a meeting with the pertinent conventions should be organised by the end of the biennium.

6. Characterizing and monitoring monk seal habitats and populations with the concerned national institutions

As a result of the studies done in 2004-6, that had proved the present distribution of monk seals in Cyrenaica and shown that the area of study offered suitable habitats for the species, a second assignment was carried out from 29 July to 16 August 2009 by RAC/SPA, the EGA and the ISPRA, and four caves were equipped with monitoring cameras. Similarly, cameras were put at the disposition of Turkish scientists and placed along the Turkish coast in the region of Antalya, Mersin and Hatay. Similar support is envisaged for other concerned countries (Morocco, Tunisia).

RAC/SPA will also help the Archipelagos Marine Conservation Institute (Greece) to follow up monk seal populations and their habitats in the island of Samos. This activity will enable a regional training course to be organised on the use of automatic monitoring cameras.

7. Assisting countries to implement actions to protect cetaceans and to follow up strandings

At Egypt's request, RAC/SPA provided technical and financial support for the Environment Agency to prepare a national action plan on cetacean conservation.

RAC/SPA funded the participation of Mediterranean experts at the 24th annual conference of the European Society for Research on Cetaceans (22-24 March 2010, Stralsund, Germany) and the 25th annual conference (21-23 March 2011, Cadiz, Spain).

RAC/SPA helped organise the 8th European seminar on marine mammals in Valencia, Spain, from 15-17 September 2010, and enabled two young researchers (Croatia, Egypt) to take part.

During the preceding biennium, RAC/SPA decided to back the programme of research on and long-term conservation of dolphin populations in the Gulf of Corinth, Greece, carried on by the Tethys Research Institute, which continues over the current biennium.

A study drive on the distribution of cetaceans in northern Tunisia was done by Bizerta University with RAC/SPA's support. There were 26 sightings of *Tursiops truncatus* during the 711 km of sailing.

Lastly, RAC/SPA helped Valencia University to ensure that the database on cetacean strandings in the Mediterranean (MEDACES) continued to function.

8. Assessing national plans, identifying lacunae and measures to promote cetacean conservation

At Syria's request, RAC/SPA supported the Ministry of State for Environmental Affairs in organising a national workshop (Latakia, 29-30 September 2010) which enabled a National Action Plan for the conservation of cetaceans to be presented and discussed.

9. Assisting countries to implement the action plan on marine turtles with the qualified organisations

After countries had requested this, RAC/SPA helped set up the following conservation actions:

- Acquisition of the necessary turtle tagging equipment for the various protected areas on the Tunisian and Turkish coasts
- Technical assistance for monitoring nesting, as indicated in the Kuriat Islands management plan (Tunisia)
- Contribution to the long-term conservation project for turtles in the Patok area (Albania)
- Monitoring five major nesting sites in Libya
- In collaboration with the Naples Zoological Station, organising field assignments to implant satellite markers on females in their nests in order to follow their later movements. The tags concerned two nesting sites in Libya, one in Tunisia and one in Turkey.

The Naples Zoological Station, an Action Plan Partner, in collaboration with RAC/SPA and the Secretariats of the Berne and Bonn Conventions, started organising the 4th Conference on marine turtles, planned for November 2011 in Naples, Italy. A website was put on line (<http://medturtleconf.rac-spa.org>). The Conference will provide an opportunity to present the latest results regarding research on marine turtles, in particular those related to the tagging assignments carried out in 2009.

10. Assisting countries to implement the action plan on cartilaginous fishes in partnership with the qualified organisations and following up the assessment of shark species listed in Annex III

An agreement was prepared with the General Fisheries Commission in the Mediterranean (GFCM) to work together over the biennium on crafting documents, and organising meetings or common workshops on elasmobranchs. Thus, a cross-country GFCM workshop of experts on elasmobranchs of the Mediterranean and Black Sea was organised in Sfax, Tunisia, from 20-22 September 2010.

The Advisory Scientific Committee of GFCM afterwards revised the recommendations from that workshop and decided to put forward to the next GFCM COP the following recommendations which affect elasmobranchs (also including the ones from other GFCM meetings since their last COP):

- Identify and census critical areas (nurseries) at a national or regional level. Adopt the use of circle hooks and nylon hook links in a part of long-line fishing fleets to check by-catch reduction of pelagic species.
- Develop programs to monitor catches and fishing effort at national level to ensure close monitoring of catches and by-catch that will be communicated through the data presentation program GFCM Task 1.
- Ensuring maximum protection from fishing activities for species listed in Annex II or proper regulated exploitation for species listed in Annex III of the Barcelona Convention Protocol (SPA/BD Protocol). Consider adopting EU measures for the Mako shark in the whole Mediterranean.
- Perform assessments of certain Mediterranean and Black Sea elasmobranch species such as *Raja clavata*, *Raja miraletus*, *Raja asterias* and *Scyliorhinus canicula* with support of the EU and a potential forum in Brussels. This workshop follows the medium-term work-programme launched in 2010 to improve knowledge about elasmobranches in the Mediterranean and Black Seas and to assess their situation.

A base of elasmobranch specialists and experts is being crafted by RAC/SPA. It should be available by the end of the biennium.

As a result of the recommendations made at the last Ordinary Meeting of the Contracting Parties (Marrakech, November 2009), the approach on amending Annexes II and III to the SPA/BD Protocol continued during this biennium. This approach mainly focused on elasmobranch species and aims at listing the Annex III species in Annex II (UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG.359/7).

11. Helping countries to implement the action plan on birds listed in Annex II in partnership with the qualified organisations

As part of its assistance to Mediterranean countries, RAC/SPA has supported:

- two field missions to study the reproductive populations of migratory terns in Libya (1-11 August 2009 and 1-10 August 2010). The second mission, organised with the support of the French Conservatoire du littoral (CELRL), enabled 215 migratory tern chicks in Gara Island to be ringed
- a genetic analysis of reproductive colonies of migratory terns in the Red Sea (August 2009), with the support of the Egyptian Agency for Environmental Affairs (EAEA), to compare them with Mediterranean populations
- winter inventorying of waterfowl in Egypt (16-28 February 2010) and in Libya (25 January-3 February 2011)
- organising, in collaboration with the National Office for the Conservation of Wild Fauna (ONCFS), national training on methods of inventorying and identifying bird species (31 January-3 February 2010, Zaraniq, Egypt)
- circulating the French version of an awareness booklet on slender-bill curlews to the concerned organisations and countries, as part of the 'Slender-bill curlew' initiative coordinated by Birdlife International, the Africa-Eurasia Agreement for the Conservation of Migratory Waterfowl (AEWA) and the British Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
- an awareness day on the 'Slender-bill curlew' initiative with the AAO in Tunisia (8 December 2009, Tunis, Tunisia)

- defining and adopting a National Action Plan for the conservation of birds in Syria
- preparing an atlas of Libyan birds. This approach enabled a Libyan expert to stay in Italy for 3 months, with the assistance of the Higher Institute for Scientific Protection and Research for the Environment (ISPRA), to collect the available data and craft distribution maps for the various species. The document is now being published, in partnership with the ONCFS, the French Ministry de l'Ecologie, du Développement Durable, des Transports et du Logement and by the Conservatoire du Littoral , in English and Arabic and should be available by the end of the first semester of 2011.

12. Assessing interactions between fishing, fish farming and the conservation of threatened species and vulnerable habitats, and suggesting guidelines to reduce such interactions

RAC/SPA helped the GFCM in crafting the recommendations on reducing by-catch of threatened species established by the GFCM's Advisory Scientific Committee.

Similarly, after a recommendation was made during the GFCM's cross-country workshop on improving selectivity and reducing by-catch, held from 23-25 September 2009 in Tunis, Tunisia, RAC/SPA launched the defining of a protocol for data collection on pertinent information on by-catch of marine turtles (UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG. 359/11). Alongside this, RAC/SPA is supporting a project to assess by-catch of marine turtles by *longline* in Tunisian waters, and assessing the effect of bait and circular hooks on this catch.

To reduce the effect of fishing on vulnerable species, RAC/SPA participated in the workshop that was held to look into the available information on the biology, fishing and regulating of red coral in the Mediterranean, organised by GFCM, on 16 and 17 September 2010 in Alghero, Italy.

Lastly, RAC/SPA prepared guidelines and a code of conduct on the sport fishing of elasmobranchs (UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG.359/13). This practice must enable knowledge about elasmobranchs to be improved by permitting, during the catch phase, the tagging of caught individuals and also the conservation of these species by encouraging their being returned to freedom in a satisfactory state of health.

13. Defining and standardizing methods for monitoring coralligenous assemblages: organising a meeting of experts

In compliance with the work programme defined in the Action Plan on the coralligenous and other Mediterranean bioconstructions, RAC/SPA initiated an approach aimed at proposing that methods of mapping and follow-up of these assemblages be standardised. To this end, a synthesis was made on the basis of a questionnaire sent out to the main Mediterranean experts and the available literature. This synthesis will be discussed at the meeting of experts planned for 7 and 8 April 2011 in Rome, Italy. The meeting's conclusions are presented in document UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG.359/5 and proposals for standardised methods for inventorying and follow-up of the coralligenous/maerl communities and their main species appear in document UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG.359/10.

14. Organising a training workshop in methods of studying and monitoring coralligenous assemblages

The workshop on methods of studying and monitoring the coralligenous assemblages, initially planned for April 2011, had to be delayed and could be envisaged by the end of the biennium.

15. Enhancing national capacities as regards the conservation of marine turtles

Three training courses on techniques of conservation of marine turtle nesting sites and tagging mechanisms were organised, in collaboration with the Cyprus Wildlife Society (CWS) and Lara Reserve (Cyprus). These courses concerned representatives from Lebanon, Libya and Slovenia, and took place from 17 to 27 July and from 27 July to 7 August 2009, and from 17 to 27 July 2010.

16. Enhancing national (legal/technical) capacities for managing the introduction of species via ballast water

At the 2nd meeting of the GloBallast Regional Study Group, in partnership with REMPEC, it was decided to coordinate and harmonize the GloBallast initiative to set up an online regional information system on ballast water and exotic species with the regional information system on non-native marine species currently being developed by RAC/SPA.

Also, a regional training course on managing species introduced via ballast water is planned during the second semester of 2011.

17. Assistance to countries to improve SPA network and connectivity between SPAs

After adopting the regional working programme for marine and coastal protected areas, and implementing the 'Conservation of marine and coastal diversity through developing a Mediterranean Marine Protected Area network' sub-programme (MedMPAnet) project that is part of the GEF's 'Strategic partnership for the wider Mediterranean marine ecosystem' MedPartnership project, RAC/SPA recruited, in April and June 2010, a team responsible for implementing the MedMPAnet project. Activities to set up new Marine Protected Areas are now ongoing in Albania, Croatia, Libya, Montenegro and Tunisia.

At the same time, RAC/SPA co-organised, with the Republic of Slovenia's Nature Conservation Institute, a 3rd international workshop, 'Towards a representative network of MPAs in the Adriatic', which took place from 28 to 29 October 2010 in Piran, Slovenia. The colloquium, to which all the countries of the Adriatic were invited, aimed at discussing scientific means and procedures and means to set up a representative network of MPAs in the Adriatic. A set of recommendations for setting up MPAs was proposed at the end of the colloquium.

As part of the activities of identifying and creating a new Marine Protected Area in Greece (Milos), a festival of documentary cinema on marine biodiversity and protected areas was organised (23-25 April 2010).

RAC/SPA produced a document on the state and future of Specially Protected Areas, presented at the 10th Conference of Contracting Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in Nagoya (Japan, October 2010).

Within the scope of Assistance to countries to improve the network of Specially Protected Areas, the RAC/SPA, In collaboration with the MedPAN, engaged a partnership approach on a Mediterranean scale aiming at:

- Developing a common database of MPAs in the Mediterranean.
- Establish, in 2012, a common diagnose of the MPAs Mediterranean system's situation (geographical coverage of the MPAs, effectiveness of the management plans, synthesis of the ecologic and socio-economic mappings being carried on the MPAs...)

Work is also being undertaken to prepare guidelines for improving SPA networks and connectivity between SPAs.

- a) Starting priority actions for creating MPAs, particularly *in situ* assessment by experts in the beneficiary countries

RAC/SPA initiated a survey for the rapid assessment of Montenegrin coastal habitats. This activity, carried out during an assignment for investigating the main important areas on the Montenegrin coast (19-28 July 2009), focused on aspects related to measuring species protection and management.

On 2 June 2010, RAC/SPA convened a meeting of the Advisory Committee of the Strategic Action Programme for Biodiversity in the Mediterranean (SAP BIO), and a meeting of SAP BIO National Correspondents, and organised, with WWF-MedPO, a meeting to launch sub-component 3.1 of the MedPartnership (MedMPAnet and MedPAN South projects) in Istanbul, Turkey. These meetings allowed the Advisory Committee to be informed about the progress being made in SAP BIO, and more particularly the MedMPAnet programme, and to organise bilateral meetings with countries that are partners in the programme to examine, discuss and adjust the activities that have to be implemented at national level, priority sites concerned, schedule and work plan, and expected results.

- b) Identifying potential partners and actors, and enhancing the active association of the national institutions in the process

RAC/SPA helped Piraeus University (Greece) to develop actions to help the creation of MPAs in the southern Aegean Sea, in order to promote their involvement in setting up a network of MPAs (MedMPAnet).

After the bilateral consultations carried on at the meeting to launch sub-component 3.1 of the MedPartnership (1 and 2 June 2010, Istanbul, Turkey), national meetings were held to identify actors and partners:

- with the Libyan environmental authorities, on 15 and 15 June 2010 in Tripoli, Libya, to discuss and refine the work plan
- with the Tunisian authorities on 6 September 2010 in Tunis, Tunisia, to discuss the lines of collaboration to be installed as part of this project

- with the Moroccan authorities, on 9 and 11 December 2010, in Rabat, Morocco, to present and approve the work plan
- with the Lebanese authorities on 24 February 2011 in Beirut, Lebanon, to identify the actions to be implemented and the choice of sites and ways of working
- with the Syrian authorities on 27 September 2010 in Damascus, Syria, to present the project, and on 27 February 2011 to meet the consultants and refine the ways of working.

c) Campaigns to characterize *in situ* marine sites likely to be designated as MPAs

In the context of a trip to Morocco (9-11 December 2010), a quick prospection of the northern coast near Nador enabled sites of study to be identified.

An assignment to characterize the marine sites of the Island of Milos, with a view to setting up a MPA, was done with Piraeus University.

d) Ecological assessment of new sites of conservation interest

A first survey was made in September 2010 by RAC/SPA and WWF-MedPO to assess the biological features and the ecological interest of the marine and coastal area of Ain Al-Ghazala, Libya, with the participation of ten national and international experts. A second assignment was carried out by RAC/SPA and the French Conservatoire du Littoral in October 2010 to assess the biological features and the ecological interest of the marine and coastal area of El Kouf, Libya, with the participation of some fifteen national and international experts. The data gathered during these assignments enabled the Libyan Environment General Authority to craft a proposal for managing the marine area of Ain Al-Ghazala. The marine extension of the El Kouf National Park is also envisaged, based on these assignments for the ecological characterization of the area.

Similarly, the project for the creation, planning, zoning and development of a new MPA in Tunisia was launched in the Kuriat Islands. Investigations were undertaken (1-4 July 2010) in collaboration with the Tunisian environmental authorities, to complete the available knowledge on the region's important marine and coastal habitats.

18. Creation of SPAMIs on high seas

The EC-UNEP/MAP joint management action to promote the establishment of a representative ecological network of protected areas in the Mediterranean open seas, including the deep sea, started during the preceding biennium was pursued. The first phase enabled operational criteria to be defined for the process of site selection, to take stock of the available knowledge on marine biodiversity in the open seas, including deep sea areas, a compilation of the pertinent international legal instruments and actors responsible for implementing these, the defining of areas that are important for seabirds and of areas of conservation interest for fisheries. It led to the validating of 12 areas located in the open sea, including deep sea areas, that could include sites likely to be candidates for inclusion on the

SPAMI List, at the Extraordinary Meeting of Focal Points for SPAs (Istanbul, Turkey, 1 June 2010, UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG.348/5). The second phase anticipates supporting the concerned neighbouring Parties which wish to commit themselves to a joint approach to establishing SPAMIs.

On the basis of the statements made by certain Focal Points at the Extraordinary Meeting, RAC/SPA organised two meetings with representatives from the countries neighbouring on the Alboran Sea area (15-16 March 2011, Malaga, Spain), and from the Gulf of Lions area (17-18 March 2011, Malaga, Spain). As for the Adriatic area, contacts were started with the representatives from the neighbouring countries, but it has not yet been possible to decide on a date for this meeting.

Details on the project's activities, since the last Extraordinary Meeting of Focal Points for SPAs, appear in Document UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG.359/Inf.5).

At its Meeting of 5 and 6 May 2010, the Bureau of the Contracting Parties requested that the Secretariat start thinking about preparing an approach for creating and managing SPAMIs beyond national jurisdictions. In this context, RAC/SPA prepared an approach proposal that was discussed by a group of independent experts and representatives from the pertinent international and regional organisations (3-4 March 2011, Athens, Greece). Document UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG.359/6 takes into account the meeting recommendations.

19. Improve the representativity of SPAMI network

RAC/SPA initiated consultation with the countries of the eastern basin to urge them to suggest putting some of their MPAs on the SPAMI List, and an information document on the network of existing SPAMIs was circulated at the Tenth Conference of Contracting Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in Nagoya (Japan, October 2010).

20. Training and national capacity building

a) Enhancing capacities to promote a representative network of SPAs

To inform and make managers of MPAs and decision-makers more aware, RAC/SPA revised and republished a number of guidelines and technical tools, drafted in the context of the Barcelona Convention. These included, in particular:

- Guidelines for setting up and managing Specially Protected Areas for marine turtles
- Guidelines for setting up and managing Specially Protected Areas for cetaceans
- Guidelines for managing and monitoring threatened populations of seabirds and coastal birds and areas of Mediterranean importance.

After crafting, as part of the MedMPA Project (2002-2005), a national plan to develop marine and coastal protected areas along the Syrian coast, the Syrian Ministry of the Environment asked RAC/SPA to help it organise a training course (Latakia, 1-4 March 2009; Damascus, 28 April-2 May 2009; Latakia, 7-12 October 2009) on 'Preparing and implementing a

management plan for marine protected areas'. This intensive training programme aimed at increasing the skills of the Syrian experts working in the field of marine and coastal protected areas.

Based on ecological field studies done in Libya and Tunisia, training was given to 14 local experts (six in Libya and eight in Tunisia). This *in situ* training covered various subjects, like: sampling the benthos through visual underwater survey and cameras; halieutic sampling through visual survey; recognition of underwater fauna and flora; exotic species; the importance of socio-cultural aspects in planning MPAs; the impact of MPAs on society and the human impact on MPAs, etc.

- b) Training managers, specialists and concerned authorities in identifying sites for demonstration, managing, planning and the ecological monitoring of MPAs

With WWF MedPO, RAC/SPA organised:

- the first regional training workshop on planning the management of MPAs (Tabarka, Tunisia, 12-24 November 2009). This training gave 40 participants from 12 Mediterranean countries a basic planning framework covering the essential elements of any process of planning MPAs the 2nd regional training workshop on planning sustainable fishing in MPAs (Kas, Turkey, 4-10 October 2010). 48 participants from 12 beneficiary countries were able to take part in this training.

IV.7. Difficulties encountered and lessons learned

Some delays were experienced in carrying out the planned activities and some actions had to be postponed, because of the political events happening in early 2011 in a large part of the southern Mediterranean.

As for the EC-UNEP/MAP joint management action to promote the establishment of a representative ecological network of protected areas in the Mediterranean, in particular in the open seas, including the deep sea, the activities could not be carried out as had been planned at the Ordinary Meeting of Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention (Marrakech, November 2009). Given the complexity of certain issues, especially the need to set up national consultation processes between the various concerned institutions on the scale of each country, these activities were adapted according to the countries that wished to start processes of cooperation and consultation with a view to the joint establishment of SPAMIs in the open seas, including deep sea areas.

IV.7. Draft Recommendations

- That the Parties take into consideration the draft suggestions of standardised methods for the inventorying and follow-up of the coralligenous/maerl communities and their main species
- That the Parties take into consideration the draft guidelines and code of conduct for managing sport fishing of sharks and rays
- That the Parties take into consideration the protocol for data collection and assessing the interaction between fisheries and marine turtles

IV.9. Draft decisions

- Sites proposed for inclusion in the List of Specially Protected Areas of Mediterranean Importance (SPAMI)
- Suggested amendments of Annexes II and III to the Protocol on Specially Protected Areas and Biological Diversity in the Mediterranean (SPA/BD Protocol). Proposal to improve the annotated format for the presentation reports for the areas proposed for inclusion in the SPAMI list with the view to facilitate the preliminary declaration of their proposal for inclusion and indicate the requested information to do that. At the adoption of the format in 2001, the Contracting Parties have agreed that it could be improved if necessary (UNEP (DEC)/MED IG.13/8).

V. Objective 4	A MEDITERRANEAN ENVIRONMENT LESS VULNERABLE TO CLIMATE CHANGE (THEME VI : CLIMATE CHANGE)
V.1. Expected results	<p>A Mediterranean region able to overcome the challenges of climate change thanks to better understanding of vulnerability and potential ecological impacts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reduced socio-economic vulnerability - Assess and provide information to reduce the harmful environmental impacts of strategies and technologies of mitigation and adaptation
V.2. Elements of the MAP and/or other concerned partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - RAC/SPA - RAC/PAP, MEDU, Med POL, Plan Bleu
V.3. Indicators/achievements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Study to assess the impact of climate change, indicators and follow-up methods established - Number of national strategies and requests for funding made concerning climate change and biodiversity - Number of reference documents, sets of guidelines and information documents produced in the MedMPAnet context to overcome climate change
V.4. Final results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Study to assess the impact of climate change, indicators and monitoring methods established - Number of national strategies and funding requests produced concerning climate change and biodiversity - Number of reference documents, guidelines and information documents produced within the framework of MedMPAnet Project to address climate change
V.5. Total budget spent or committed/compared to budget approved (as a %)	<p>% (in terms of commitments, solely on the basis of the MTF 2010-2011 budget)</p> <p>85 %</p>
<p>V.6. Main achievements</p> <p>RAC/SPA participated with the other Regional Activity Centres in drawing up a 'State of the environment and sustainable development in the Mediterranean', which aimed, among other things, at assessing the state of the region and at mentioning the main impacts that climate change will have in the Mediterranean. This document was presented at the Marrakech Conference of Contracting Parties (November 2009).</p> <p>In the same line, an assessment of Mediterranean biodiversity, impacts, and threats through the elaboration of national reports of the Parties took place. Very few countries did not achieve their national reports. The resulting information was compiled in four subregional reports to implement step 3 of the blueprint for the implementation of ecosystem approach in the MAP System. A regional synthesis was prepared and distributed to the 10th CBD COP at Nagoya last October 2010</p>	

Similarly, RAC/SPA took part in the meeting of the Berne Convention's work group on climate change and biological diversity (2-3 July 2009, Strasbourg, France).

At the Tenth Conference of Contracting Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, held in October 2010 in Nagoya, Japan, RAC/SPA circulated the information document on the state of knowledge on the impact of climate change on marine and coastal biodiversity in the Mediterranean.

RAC/SPA plans to undertake a workshop on the elaboration of indicators of climate change effects in MPAs in collaboration with IUCN Med in autumn 2011

1. Helping Mediterranean countries assess the impacts of climate change on endangered habitats and species

As a result of the studies on the sex-ratio of turtles done in Libya (Sirta region), RAC/SPA has acquired registers of data to continue the study in Misrata (Libya) and the Kuriat Islands (Tunisia) and to identify the impact of climate change on this parameter. The data related to Tunisia is now available.

2. Helping countries craft strategies and make requests for funding on climate change and biodiversity

Basic information needed as a first step for formulating national strategies was the resulting assessment of Mediterranean biodiversity, impacts, and threats done through the crafting of the Parties' national reports.

3. Establishing guidelines as part of MedMPAnet to overcome the problems linked to climate change

This activity has been not implemented yet

V.7. Difficulties encountered and lessons learned

The absence of MTF specific funding for the above activities 3 and 4, together with the unavailability of additional funding by external donors did not allow to progress on those fields as desired at RAC/SPA level. Only part of activity 3 was undertaken thanks to external funds for the project on Ecosystem approach granted by EC to MAP

V.8. Draft recommendations

No recommendations for this objective

**4th Mediterranean Symposium on Marine Vegetation
(Yasmine-Hammamet, Tunisia, 2-4 December 2010)**

CONCLUSIONS-RECOMMENDATIONS

Sessions summary

Session 1 ‘Mediterranean Marine Vegetation: population, biology, ecology and dynamics’ allowed stock to be taken of the state of scientific knowledge in the field. Special attention was paid to transitional environments, to the relationship between introduced species and reference communities and to deep-sea ecosystems. The participants stressed that deep-sea assemblages remain insufficiently studied, and also certain remarkable assemblages whose importance remains not very well known at regional level.

Session 2 ‘Mapping and monitoring of Mediterranean marine vegetation’ allowed stock to be taken on the advances made in the field of Mediterranean vegetal communities mapping and new tools to be identified. The latter are proving to be particularly important for conservation aims, but also to grasp the advance of introduced species.

Session 3 ‘Mediterranean vegetal assemblages: Impact, disturbance and management’ allowed the issue of contamination by trace metals and their impact on Mediterranean vegetal assemblages to be tackled. The possible effects of climate change were also discussed. The participants have emphasized the disparity in research efforts among the Eastern and Western Mediterranean basins.

Two round tables were organized

In the framework of **the first round table entitled ‘Biological invasions and global warming’**, Dr. Marc Verlaque presented an assessment of climate change in the Mediterranean with relation to species introductions and the risk to biodiversity of such introduction. He underlined the existence of laws that remain unenforced.

The second round table entitled ‘Impacts of climate change on seagrass meadows’, Prof. Gérard Pergent emphasized the importance of marine magnoliophyta for mitigating climate change (carbon wells).

In accordance with the recommendation made by the Bureau of the Barcelona Convention, a conference on ‘Blue Carbon’ was made by Dr. Gabriel Grimsditch (UNEP) during which he presented the UNEP “Blue Carbon” initiative, and pointed out the importance of marine magnoliophyta in this strategy.

Recommendations

R1: Include striped meadows and atolls in the natural monuments covered by the Action Plan for the Conservation of Marine Vegetation in the Mediterranean Sea.

R2: Adopt the draft Guidelines for the standardization of Mediterranean marine magnoliophyta mapping and monitoring methods; facilitate their implementation in the different countries (training of liaison executives...); and update them regularly according to the progress of techniques and knowledge, for example when updating the Action Plan for the Conservation of Marine Vegetation in the Mediterranean Sea.

R3: Propose adding annexes to the Action Plan concerning Species Introductions and Invasive Species in the Mediterranean Sea, so as to make it more operational, including a list of particularly invasive species and of habitats that are most vulnerable to species introductions.

The participants emphasized the interest of possessing the documents related to exotic macrophyta species established by other regional scientific bodies.

R4: Promote studies on climate change and marine vegetation.

R5: Set up a network of thermal sensors around the Mediterranean in order to study temperature variations linked to climate change.