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Mediterranean Action Plan
Regional Activity Centre for Specially Protected Areas (RAC/SPA)
Boulevard du leader Yasser Arafat
B.P.337 - 1080 Tunis CEDEX
E-mail : car-asp@rac-spa.org

In September 1985, the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention included the protection of the Mediterranean monk seal among their priority objectives for the second decade of the Mediterranean Action Plan (Genoa Declaration, 1985). To assist the Mediterranean countries in achieving this objective, the Regional Activity Centre for Specially Protected Areas, in collaboration with Mediterranean experts and concerned organizations, prepared an Action Plan for the management of the Mediterranean monk seal.

The main aim of the Plan was to reduce adult mortality, to establish a network of marine reserves, and to encourage research, data collection, rehabilitation, and information programmes for fishing communities and various other stakeholders. Within the framework of the implementation of this action plan several documents were prepared and a number of experts meetings were organized by RAC/SPA at different times:

Documents	Meetings
Current status of Mediterranean monk seal (<i>Monachus monachus</i>) populations" prepared in 1998.	Meeting of experts (Rabat, 7-9 October 1994)
"Present status and trend of the Mediterranean monk seal (<i>Monachus monachus</i>) populations" edited by RAC/SPA in 1994 and updated in 1995.	
The implementation assessment of the Action Plan, prepared in 1998, (UNEP(OCA)/MED WG.146/5)	
The Conservation of The Mediterranean Monk Seal: Proposal of Priority Activities to be carried out in the Mediterranean Sea, (UNEP (DEC)/MED WG.232/Inf.6). 2003	Meeting of experts (Lathakia , 29-30 September 2002)
Information Report on the Status of the Monk Seal in the Mediterranean, 2005, (UNEP(DEC)/MED WG.268/Inf.3).	NFP meeting, Marseilles, 2005
Declaration on the Monk seal risk of extinction in the Mediterranean, 2005 (Portoroz Declaration)	National Focal Points working group (Seville, 2005) 14th Meeting of Barcelona convention Contracting Parties
Report of the international conference on Monk seal conservation	International conference on Monk seal conservation, (Antalya, 2006)
Abstract book of the 23 rd Annual Conference of the European Cetacean Society.	RAC/SPA co-organised with the Turkish Marine Research Foundation (TUDAV), a workshop on harmonization of Monk seal population estimate techniques, "Who are our seals? Moving toward a standardized population estimate approach for <i>Monachus monachus</i> " (Istanbul, 2009)
Assessment of the implementation of the Action Plan for the management of Mediterranean Monk Seal, (UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG.331/Inf.9)	National Focal Points meeting, Malta 2009.

Recently, RAC/SPA efforts focused on improving knowledge on the status of the species, training national partners, public awareness and the identifying of potential critical habitats in low-density areas (Albania, Algeria, Cyprus, Libya, Morocco, Syria and Tunisia).

Moreover, RAC/SPA supported activities on Monitoring monk seal population in some areas in Turkey and Greece via the use of photo trap.

As far as the interaction with fisheries is concerned, RAC/SPA produced guidelines and recommendations for reducing by-catch and reinforcing laws and regulations for the conservation and management of threatened species including monk seals .

The by-catch mitigation measures have been supported by the Sub-Committee on Marine Environment and Ecosystems (SCMEE) of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) and the Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) for adoption proposal to the GFCM COP.

Collaboration with the GFCM on the issue is continuing by addressing a list of suitable caves for Monk seal existing in the Mediterranean countries, in order to have management actions for conservation of the surroundings of inhabited cave and to avoid conflict between coastal fisheries and the species.

With the aim to reinforce the commitment of the Mediterranean countries and their participation for the recovery of the species, the Contracting Parties approved during their last meeting (Marrakesh, 2009) the RAC/SPA proposal to prepare sub-regional programmes for the conservation of Monk seal in collaboration with the relevant conventions.

Therefore, RAC/SPA started an approach to craft these programmes for the conservation of the monk seal in the Mediterranean as follow:

- Preparation and update of National Action Plans in the countries with High monk seal-density areas : this is concerns Turkey and Cyprus, since we note that Greece has already prepared its National Strategy and Action Plan for the Conservation of the Mediterranean Monk Seal in Greece, 2009- 2015.
- Preparation of action plan for the countries presenting low monk seal density area: Morocco, Algeria, Libya, Tunisia, Syria, Spain, Italy...
- Harmonise sub-regional effort, in function of the different importance that sub-regions have for monk seal conservation.
- Draft overall regional programme based on these prepared documents and with reference to other reports elaborated by RAC/SPA.
- Discussion and finalization of this regional programme with the relevant conventions by the end of the year.
- Presentation of the regional programme to the Contracting Parties of Barcelona Convention.