

## THE MEDITERRANEAN ECO REGION: From Rio to Johannesburg

The purpose of the Johannesburg World Summit for Sustainable Development (WSSD) is to review the progress since the historic meeting of Rio de Janeiro (1992). It is not to re-write Agenda 21 and many countries have clearly stated that there is no question of re-opening the Rio negotiations at Johannesburg.

The period from Rio to Rio+5 was the time to understand the principles of Agenda 21, particularly at regional and national level, whereas now is the appropriate time to follow the first tangible steps and record some preliminary results of its early implementation at regional, national and mostly local level.

Regional initiatives and statements/declarations for Johannesburg are indicative of the level of understanding and integration of the Rio principles into regional and national policies. They formulate, adapt and consolidate the commitments to a level, which is more easily monitored by competent intergovernmental bodies and the society at large.

At Mediterranean level the main bodies that bring together all of the initiatives and countries of the basin and the European Union is the Barcelona Convention - of which UNEP/MAP is the Secretariat - as well as the Mediterranean Commission for Sustainable Development (MCSD) formed in 1996 and operating within its framework as an Advisory Body where civil society participates on equal footing.

Since the Mediterranean Region is not a UN region, but an eco-region, if one is to follow the latest developments in the process leading to the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development, one should consider on the one hand the process within the only existing regional intergovernmental organization, UNEP/MAP, and on the other to look into the process of the three UN regions bordering the Mediterranean Sea: Europe, North Africa and West Asia.

The Mediterranean region is a North-South interface with dynamic activities taking place within it. One of the most promising is the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP) between the EU countries on one hand and the majority of the non-EU Mediterranean countries on the other.

In view of the clear demand from society and the political leadership for a fast and effective process towards the sustainable development of the region, the UNEP/MAP, the EMP, organizations of civil society and the other partners should co-ordinate better and work closer together. Johannesburg should be a landmark for further Mediterranean integration and progress.

Athens, July 2002

Major steps taken in order to achieve Sustainable Development in the Mediterranean region:

1975:

Countries bordering the Mediterranean Sea and the European Union cooperate to improve their common Mediterranean environment under the Mediterranean Action Plan (MAP) by signing the “Barcelona Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean”. The Barcelona Convention was adopted on 16 February 1976 in Barcelona and entered into force on 12 February 1978.

1991:

The “International NGO Conference on Environment and Sustainable Development in a Safe Mediterranean” was held in Athens (21-24 November 1991) in order to formulate a common Mediterranean position for the UNCED process since most Mediterranean NGOs felt that they did not have any other opportunity to come together and express their collective views for the Rio Summit. They asked for a “Mediterranean Community of Water and Natural Resources”.

1992:

The Earth Summit (United Nations Conference on Environment and Development) took place in Rio de Janeiro (3-14 June 1992) and the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development (Agenda 21) marked the beginning of a new era for sustainable development (at least on paper).

1994:

MAP’s response to the Earth Summit in Rio was the presentation of Agenda Med 21, which adapted Agenda 21 to the Mediterranean context. It reflected both the increasing concern for the pressures exerted on the Mediterranean environment and the allegiance of Mediterranean States to the ideal of sustainable development.

1995:

The Barcelona Convention was revised and modified by amendments adopted on 10 June 1995. The MAP’s remit was widened to include sustainable development and to be more action-oriented. However, the amended Convention recorded as “Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean” has not yet entered into force. Provisions for a Mediterranean Commission for Sustainable Development were included.

1995:

The 1st Euro-Mediterranean Foreign Ministers Conference, which was held in Barcelona (27-28 November 1995), adopted a declaration establishing a new Partnership between the European Union and 12 Southern and Eastern Mediterranean Partners with the overall objective of guaranteeing peace, stability and prosperity in the region and to create a Mediterranean Free Trade Zone (MFTZ) till 2010.

1996:

The Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development (MCSD) was set up as a follow-up of the revision of the Barcelona Convention, as an Advisory Body and a think tank for policies promoting sustainable development in the Mediterranean

Basin. The Commission has 15 representatives of all the Mediterranean governments and the European Commission together with representatives from civil society all of which are placed on equal footing forming an innovative and unique broader-based regional structure. The MCSD is globally regarded as a model for the acceleration of sustainable development strategies.

1997:

The 1st Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on the Environment, held in Helsinki (28 November 1997), adopted the Short and Medium-Term Priority Environmental Action Programme (SMAP), a framework for policy in the field of environment in the Mediterranean region, linked with a funding scheme for activities in priorities areas.

2001:

The MCSD Strategic Review is the first self evaluation of MAP and MCSD assessing the political and institutional progress made towards sustainable development.

September-October 2001:

The “UNECE Ministerial Statement for the World Summit on Sustainable Development”, which was adopted during the Regional Ministerial Meeting (Geneva, 24-25 September), included crucial issues pertaining to Mediterranean concerns (Environmental Education, Water, etc.) but left out a number of others (e.g. the precautionary principle, the 0.7% of GDP commitment, etc.). The Arab Ministers Responsible for Development, Planning and Environment adopted the “Arab Declaration to the World Summit on Sustainable Development” in Cairo on 24 October 2001.

November 2001:

The “Mediterranean Multi-Stakeholder Consultation Meeting: Contribution to a Mediterranean Strategy for the Johannesburg WSSD”, held on 13 November 2001 in Monaco, aimed and succeeded to inform about and review the recommendations of the international sub-regional documents, and proposed how to strategise on the position of governments, civil society, etc. and thus best prepared the Mediterranean Ministerial Declaration, influenced the WSSD Prep Com Meetings 2, 3 and 4 and contributed to an effective presentation of the Mediterranean at Johannesburg.

November 2001:

The “Mediterranean Ministerial Declaration for the Johannesburg Summit”, adopted during the 12th Ordinary Meeting of the Contracting Parties of the Barcelona Convention (Monaco, 14-17 November 2002) and taking into account the outcome of the Mediterranean Multi-Stakeholder Consultation Meeting (see directly above), is an improvement of all other documents of the region: it makes clear reference to "the precautionary principle", the "0.7% of GDP commitment", the transfer of appropriate technologies, to Poverty, to Education and Education for Environment and Sustainability, to Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM), etc. It can be described as a progressive document, which elevates the Mediterranean contribution to the Johannesburg process and could serve to strengthen Mediterranean environmental policies.

December 2001:

A Mediterranean "Region-to Region Dialogue" Workshop of the European Rio+10 Coalition in view of the WSSD on Water Valuing and Poverty took place in Cairo, 19-20 December 2001.

January 2002:

The "Mediterranean NGO Declaration for Johannesburg" was adopted in Nice (11-12 January 2002) as a contribution to the process leading to the Johannesburg Summit on Sustainable Development.

March 2002:

An Arab-Mediterranean Workshop entitled "Solidarity for Sustainable Development" took place in Tunis (28-31 March 2002) in the framework of the process leading to the WSSD. A regional pan Arab report from the NGOs point of view reflecting the sustainable development conditions after the lapse of 10 years after the Rio Conference was prepared focusing on issues related to Arab priorities for development and protection of the environment as well as the proposed solutions to be presented in the Johannesburg Summit. A declaration was also signed.

April 2002:

During the 5th Conference of Euro-Mediterranean Foreign Ministers held in Valencia (22-23 April 2002), the Ministers reaffirmed that sustainable development should be included among the guiding principles of the Barcelona Process.

May-June 2002:

At PrepCom 4, held in Bali (27 May – 7 June 2002) a meeting of Mediterranean countries was organized. A special reference to the Mediterranean Agenda 21 within the paragraph for the UN ECE in the text of the "Implementation Plan" was achieved. A proposal for the establishment of a Euro-Mediterranean Water and Poverty Facility (WPF) as a Type II initiative was presented. The WPF has already been placed under the EU Water Initiative.

July 2002:

Given the fact that since its establishment in 1995 (see above) the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP) had failed to effectively incorporate environmental and sustainable development concerns into the overall EMP, Mediterranean Environmental NGOs met in Athens (7 July 2002) and called on the Euro-Mediterranean Ministers of the Environment (see below) to put sustainable development at the heart of the Partnership in order to render it an example of active and efficient North-South partnership; speed up the Sustainability Impact Assessment (SIA) of the MFTZ; provide the political backing for a closer cooperation between MAP/UNEP and EMP; secure the active participation of civil society in the Association Agreements and the elaboration of projects.

July 2002:

The 2nd Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on the Environment (Athens, 10 July 2002) adopted a strategic framework for the environmental integration process in the perspective of sustainable development and decided to promote in Athens a joint approach to the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development. Specifically, it reiterated the importance of sustainable development as the predominant global and guiding objective of the EMP; stressed that the Mediterranean

is a globally important eco-region and a test bed for new approaches to partnership and sustainable development and that as such it has much to offer to the Summit and a special responsibility to implement the agreed results; asked for strengthening coherence and synergies between SMAP, MAP and MCSD; welcomed and fully supported the “Mediterranean Declaration for the Johannesburg Summit” adopted by the 12th Conference of the Parties of the Barcelona Convention (see above); welcomed the initiatives taken by Mediterranean civil society to prepare for the Summit; decided to transmit their Declaration to the WSSD for information and as a contribution to partnership building at the regional level.

September 2002:

At the World Summit for Sustainable Development a special event is dedicated to the Mediterranean region entitled “The Mediterranean Eco-region: the first firm steps towards Sustainability”, which will take place at the Water Dome in order to present the Mediterranean region as an eventually promising example of partnership and governance towards achieving sustainable development in an eco-region.

All of the documents/declarations/statements mentioned in this publication can be found in the MIO-ECSDE website: [www.mio-ecsde.org](http://www.mio-ecsde.org)

The Mediterranean Information Office for Environment, Culture and Sustainable Development (MIO-ECSDE), is a Federation of Mediterranean Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) for the Environment and Development. MIO-ECSDE acts as a technical and political platform for the intervention of NGOs in the Mediterranean scene. In co-operation with Governments, International Organisations and other socio-economic partners, MIO-ECSDE plays an active role in the protection for the environment and the sustainable development of the Mediterranean region.

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