

**ATHENS DECLARATION by the EURO-MEDITERRANEAN MINISTERS
for the ENVIRONMENT**

The participants of the 2nd Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on the Environment, held in Athens on 10 July 2002:

- Reaffirming the overall objectives of the Barcelona Declaration establishing a common area of peace, stability and security, creating an area of shared prosperity and developing human resources, promoting understanding between cultures and exchanges between civil societies;
- Recalling the Barcelona Declaration as well as the Helsinki Declaration and the objectives of the Short and Medium-term Priority Environmental Action Programme (SMAP) adopted at the 1st Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on the Environment held in November 1997;
- Recalling the Chairman's Conclusions on the 3rd Euro-Mediterranean Conference of Foreign Ministers in Stuttgart (15-16/4/1999), where six priority sectors for co-operation were confirmed, and where it was stressed that "in all sectors of co-operation special attention should be given to the environmental aspects";
- Recalling the Presidency Conclusions on the Brussels Euro-Mediterranean Conference of Foreign Ministers (5-6/10/2001), which welcomed the Athens Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on the Environment as an "opportunity to give a fresh impetus to SMAP";
- Recalling the Turin Declaration adopted by the Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on Integrated Local Water Management held in October 1999;
- Having regard to the 5th Conference of Euro-Mediterranean Foreign Ministers held in Valencia 22-23 April 2002 where Ministers "reaffirmed that sustainable development should be included among the guiding principles of the Barcelona Process";
- Noting that the Valencia Action Plan adopted by the Foreign Ministers foresees sustainable development with a high degree of environmental protection; refers to the launching of a sustainability impact assessment to ensure that the establishment of the Free Trade Area and Environmental protection are mutually supportive; welcomes the intention of the Athens Environmental Ministerial Conference to adopt a strategic framework for the environmental integration process in the perspective of sustainable development; asks for capacity building in "synergy with other programmes such as the Mediterranean Action Plan and the Mediterranean Commission for Sustainable Development" and urges the Ministers of Environment to promote in Athens a joint approach to the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development;
- Welcoming the commitment made by the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention at the 12th Conference of the Parties in Monaco (14-17/11/2001) to work

towards strengthening the links between the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and the Mediterranean Action Plan (*MAP*) and the invitation made to those Contracting Parties concerned to take full account of the decisions and recommendations of the Contracting Parties when elaborating and making requests for support from European Community programmes;

- Welcoming the overall contribution of environmental NGOs related to the Euro-Mediterranean process, as formulated during their various conferences and civil fora,
- Noting with concern that the environmental trends set out in the Report on the State and Pressures of the Marine and Coastal Mediterranean Environment, jointly prepared by the European Environment Agency (*EEA*) and Mediterranean Action Programme, are, despite improvements in some sectors, not yet compatible with sustainable development;
- Determined to work for a successful outcome to the World Summit on Sustainable Development (*WSSD*) and for the implementation of the results;

HAVE ADOPTED THE FOLLOWING:

A Sustainable Development Objective for the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership

1. The Conference reiterates the importance of sustainable development as the predominant global and guiding objective of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP). Economic and social development and environmental protection have to be fully integrated if we are to meet the needs of today without sacrificing the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Being a Partnership for sustainable development, the EMP reflects the understandings reached at the EU Göteborg Summit as well as the 12th Conference of the Barcelona Convention and incorporated into regional and global preparations for the World Summit on Sustainable Development.
2. The Conference strongly reaffirms its commitment to the Rio Principles, the full implementation of Agenda 21 and the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 which are all of key relevance to the Euro-Mediterranean region.

Review of the 5-year Implementation of the Short and Medium-term Priority Environmental Action Programme (SMAP)

3. The Conference endorses with appreciation the Report on the First 5 Years of SMAP Implementation prepared by the European Commission in close co-operation with the SMAP Correspondents. It considers the Report as a valuable basis for the review foreseen in the SMAP follow-up mechanism.
4. Having reviewed implementation of the SMAP, the Conference participants stress the need to:
 - retain the existing objectives of SMAP, which provide a common basis for the orientation of policy and funding, as well as the existing SMAP priority fields of action, which still remain fully valid;

- consider ways to strengthen the existing links of SMAP with environmental integration in agriculture and tourism;
 - work collectively and individually for more effective implementation of the policy objectives of the Programme by promoting environmental integration in all sectors throughout the Partnership and concrete action in the field;
 - encourage their national administrations to take account of the SMAP objectives notably via the SMAP Correspondents in their process of internal consultation in the preparation and implementation of MEDA indicative programmes and in the work of the institutions of the Association Agreements in order to achieve greater environmental action at national level;
 - further accelerate implementation of the SMAP, while welcoming the progress already made in this regard. In this context, Ministers request the Commission to make best efforts to launch the next call for proposals on the Euro-Mediterranean regional Programme for the Environment as soon as possible;
 - further improve the quality of the project proposals by co-ordinated efforts from all sides. In this context Ministers note the importance of using project cycle management techniques in developing the programmes and call for continued attention to be paid to the precision of the guidelines for project applications;
 - give further emphasis to focused capacity building;
 - provide additional resources for achieving the SMAP objectives through the use of all the possibilities available from domestic and private resources as well as MEDA and other aid sources;
 - strengthen the SMAP Correspondents Network inter alia by all providing financial and administrative support as soon as possible to the Correspondents of the 12 Partners in order to enable them to fulfil their tasks;
 - strengthen coherence and secure synergies between SMAP policy, the Euro-Mediterranean Environment Programme, legal instruments and multilateral programmes in the region, such as MAP and the Mediterranean Environment Technical Assistance Programme (METAP);
 - encourage bilateral activities and projects between the Euro-Mediterranean countries, which support the SMAP objectives;
 - encourage, strengthen and facilitate the involvement of a wide range of categories of civil society organisations in SMAP activities at national and regional level,
 - increase the visibility of and raise awareness of SMAP;
 - work collectively to make key SMAP policy information available in Arabic.
5. The Conference agrees that a further policy review of SMAP should be initiated by the Commission in four to five years' time.

Environmental Integration within the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership

6. The Conference acknowledges that environmental considerations need to be better integrated into Euro-Mediterranean Partnership policies, programmes and projects at regional and national levels to promote sustainable development.
7. To this end, and in line with the Action Plan adopted at the 5th Conference of Euro-Mediterranean Foreign Ministers in Valencia, the Conference adopts the following framework for a Euro-Mediterranean Strategy for Environmental Integration.
 - 7.1. Effective environmental integration is essential for sustainable development and requires strong commitment at both national and regional levels and involvement from all departments and levels of government, from Parliaments and from civil society including the private sector.
 - 7.2. All those involved in the economic and social sectors covered by the co-operation programmes of the Partnership, and notably in the Euro-Mediterranean Free Trade Area and in the priority sectors for regional economic co-operation (water, industry, energy, transport, and information society) are invited to establish and publicise their own strategies to implement environmental integration in order to achieve sustainable development in the context of their own work. They are further invited to provide initial reports thereon at the 7th Conference of Euro-Mediterranean Foreign Ministers.
 - 7.3. The form and content of these strategies will be specific to each sector but it is suggested that they should contain the following common elements and be based on a four to five year timespan:
 - An analysis of the impact of the sector and of Euro-Mediterranean Partnership co-operation on the environment paying particular regard to pressures, impacts and trends, as well as the consequences of environmental degradation on these sectors,
 - Objectives and qualitative or quantitative targets on environmental integration, taking into account existing national targets,
 - Actions to be taken through the Partnership on environmental integration and clear identification of those responsible for taking the action,
 - Timetables for actions and indicators of performance on environmental integration, and
 - Monitoring and review arrangements.
 - 7.4. The Commission will provide examples of strategies adopted within the Community and others are invited to share their own experience.
 - 7.5. The SMAP Correspondents will review progress on the implementation of the integration strategies during their annual meetings and will disseminate relevant material to assist the different sectors.
 - 7.6. The Commission will bring progress on the sectoral integration strategies to the attention of the institutions of the individual Association Agreements.

8. The Conference invites Euro-Mediterranean Foreign Ministers to endorse the adopted framework and periodically review progress by the different sectors.
9. The Conference welcomes the work already done and encourages ongoing and future work in the region to evaluate the costs of environmental degradation undertaken in Mediterranean Countries with the support of the World Bank within METAP. The conclusions of these studies could provide valuable support for environmental integration.
10. The Conference stresses the need for mutual supportiveness between trade and environmental protection. It welcomes the endorsement of the Sustainability Impact Assessment of the Euro-Mediterranean Free Trade Area in the Action Plan adopted by the Valencia Ministerial Conference, and the agreement to launch the SIA by the end of 2002. Broad consultation of all stakeholders during the study and on the results will be essential. The Conference considers that the continuing work of the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development on trade and environment can provide valuable inputs for those consultations.
11. Ministers pledge themselves to consider carefully the conclusions of the Sustainability Impact Assessment in order to promote the sustainability of the Euro-Mediterranean Free Trade Area through appropriate policies and operational measures.

Synergies with Other Organisations, Programmes and Donors

12. The Conference encourages Correspondents to use the possibilities offered by SMAP to facilitate the implementation of the commitments made by the Mediterranean countries in the context of related Conventions and Environmental Programmes. To this end, further co-operation of SMAP Correspondents with the national Focal Points of these Conventions/Environmental Programmes is of great importance.
13. The Conference acknowledges that ownership of their development strategies by the Mediterranean Partners is the key to successful and sustainable development and that donor support is best co-ordinated on the ground through dialogue led by the partner country. Environmental integration in all sectors and the co-ordination of environmental support, particularly for capacity building and institutional strengthening needs to be an important part of country level dialogue. If kept up to date, the country profiles produced as part of the SMAP review can be a useful mainstreaming tool.
14. The Conference attaches particular importance to strengthening ties between the Partnership and the Mediterranean Action Plan including the Mediterranean Commission for Sustainable Development. To this end it:
 - Welcomes the intention of the Commission and the MAP Co-ordinating Unit to hold regular dialogues on policy development, on the progress and results of programmes and projects and on possible areas of co-operation in order to promote co-ordination, coherence and complementarity in their assistance to the region,

- Takes note of the MAP ‘Report on its experience in promoting integration of environmental concerns into sustainable development’ as well as its ‘Orientation paper identifying goals and capacities and improving cooperation and synergies’. As a consequence of these reports, the Commission and the MAP Coordinating Unit are invited to pursue further work on synergies,
 - Calls on the Euro-Mediterranean Committee to invite the MAP Co-ordinating Unit to make occasional presentations to the Committee, in particular following Conferences of the Parties, on the implications of MAP’s work and of the decisions and recommendations of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention for the progress of the Partnership,
 - Invites the Commission to update the Contracting Parties of the Barcelona Convention regularly on progress in the EMP,
 - Urges the further involvement of the MAP Regional Activity Centres in relevant capacity building efforts under the Partnership,
 - Invites MAP to contribute fully to the Euro-Mediterranean Strategy for Environmental Integration,
 - Invites the Commission and the MAP Co-ordinating Unit to explore ways and means of using the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership to encourage those of the 12 Partners who so wish, to implement the instruments and recommendations of the Barcelona Convention.
15. The Conference acknowledges that METAP work has served SMAP objectives and that METAP Partners have always sought complementarity and synergies. The Conference invites METAP and other possible donors to build on their comparative advantages and assist the Mediterranean Partners in implementing the SMAP and MAP objectives and in developing and using tools for environmental integration.
 16. The Conference notes with interest that some global Conventions have specific Programmes for the Mediterranean, such as MEDWET - the Programme on Mediterranean Wetlands of the Ramsar Convention - while others, such as the UN Convention to Combat Desertification have several regional Annexes involving Mediterranean states. The Conference calls for closer co-operation at the regional level between Secretariats of such Conventions and Programmes and the European Commission. Convention Secretariats could also be invited to make presentations to the SMAP Correspondents Meetings on an ad hoc basis. Close operational co-operation is also needed at national level.
 17. The Conference notes that many of the Mediterranean countries are severely affected by dryland degradation and large areas suffer serious soil erosion. This often leads to unsustainable natural resource use, particularly affecting the poorest in society. In this context the Conference welcomes the wide-ranging consultations undertaken in many Partner countries to prepare National Action Programmes under the UN Convention to Combat Desertification. These Programmes can be a useful vehicle for improving synergies amongst efforts to combat desertification.

18. The Conference notes that many parallels can be drawn between regions with semi-enclosed seas with sensitive ecological systems such as the Baltic Sea, the Mediterranean and the Black Sea. Therefore, the Conference reiterates the importance of the Helsinki Declaration proposal to exchange experiences on regional environmental cooperation and continue dissemination of know-how and expertise, with the aim of deepening and expanding mutual understanding.
19. The Conference joins the international community in welcoming the New Partnership for the Development of Africa (NEPAD) and expresses a particular interest with regard to its environmental implementation.

Climate Change

20. The Conference greatly welcomes the outcome of the 7th Conference of the Parties of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change held in Marrakech in November 2001 which made possible early ratification of the Kyoto Protocol by the EU, its Member States as well as some non-EU Mediterranean countries. The Conference calls upon those Euro-Mediterranean partners who have not yet done so to finalise their ratification procedures and hopes that the conditions for the entry into force of the Kyoto Protocol will be met before the World Summit on Sustainable Development.
21. The Conference also welcomes the Ministerial Declaration adopted in Marrakech which puts particular emphasis on the need to maximise synergies between the UNFCCC, the UN Convention to Combat Desertification and the Convention on Biological Diversity.
22. The Conference notes that the Mediterranean region is likely to be particularly adversely affected by climate change as well as the resultant sea level rise and welcomes the intention of the Commission to explore the possibilities for co-operation in the field of research. The Conference also welcomes the Commission's intention to explore further ways of taking appropriate account of climate change related issues in Euro-Mediterranean activities. Some eligible activities can usefully contribute to the reduction of greenhouse gases and to adaptation to the adverse effects of climate change.
23. The Conference considers that dialogue amongst the 27 Partners on the implementation of the UNFCCC and the Kyoto Protocol would be useful. This could address capacity building needs and priorities of Mediterranean countries and exchange views on the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) under the Kyoto Protocol which is expected to be a vehicle for the transfer of environmentally sound technologies in the Mediterranean area. Such dialogue could also take place both in ad hoc regional meetings and in the context of the Association Agreements.

Sustainable Development Strategy in the Mediterranean

24. The Conference considers that the appropriate context to deal with a regional sustainable development strategy in the Mediterranean is the Barcelona Convention/MAP context; this is the context that addresses the Mediterranean as an eco-region and it has the mandate to promote sustainable development after the

amendment of the Convention and the establishment of the MCSD in 1995. Related work within the EMP must be seen as an input to the sustainable development objective of the region.

25. The Conference welcomes the work recently launched within the Mediterranean Commission for Sustainable Development, which brings together governments, regional and local authorities and civil society representatives. This work aims at completing a Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development by 2004 for adoption by the 14th Conference of the Parties of the Barcelona Convention. The Conference welcomes the Blue Plan/MAP's intention to prepare a Report on Environment and Development in the Mediterranean as an input to this Strategy with the technical support of the EEA.
26. The Conference considers that environmental integration within the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and mutual supportiveness between environment and trade policies in implementing the Euro-Mediterranean Free Trade Area will be major contributions to the implementation of the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development.

Towards the World Summit on Sustainable Development

27. The Conference notes with satisfaction that Euro-Mediterranean Partners have played an active role in the preparations of the WSSD to be held in Johannesburg from 26 August to 4 September. It pledges continued efforts to work for a successful outcome and to ensure that the Summit takes place at the highest possible level thereby enhancing its impact.
28. The Conference stresses that the Mediterranean is a globally important eco-region and a test bed for new approaches to partnership and sustainable development. As such it has much to offer to the Summit and a special responsibility to implement the agreed results. Ministers are resolved to use the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership to promote implementation of the outcome of WSSD and to monitor progress inter alia in the work of the Association Agreements, taking into account the need to integrate the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development and move towards more sustainable consumption and production patterns.
29. The Conference underlines that sustainable development in the Mediterranean region requires concrete action on the major themes of the WSSD, including:
 - promoting sustainable integrated water resources management and water-efficiency plans to preserve scarce water resources in the region,
 - promoting access to energy services, renewable energy and energy conservation and efficiency,
 - promoting sustainable urban management in coastal areas, including through Local Agendas 21,
 - halting and reversing the decline of biodiversity in the Mediterranean region,

- addressing the causes of desertification and soil degradation in order to maintain and restore land.
30. In this context the Conference welcomes and fully supports the Mediterranean Declaration for the Johannesburg Summit adopted by the 12th Conference of the Parties of the Barcelona Convention.
 31. The Conference welcomes the initiatives taken by Mediterranean civil society to prepare for the Summit including organising an event in Johannesburg on water, which is a key priority for both the Mediterranean region and the Summit, as well as an event presenting the Mediterranean region itself as a good example of regional partnership and governance.
 32. The Conference encourages the Euro-Mediterranean governments to include civil society representatives in their delegations for WSSD.
 33. The Conference decides to transmit this Declaration to the WSSD for information and as a contribution to partnership building at the regional level.
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