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Programme Consultation,
The Hague, The Netherlands,
24-26 June 1998.

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Introduction

In 1996, the Oceans and Coastal Areas Programme Activity Centre (OCA/PAC) and the Freshwater Unit of UNEP merged to become the Water Branch. This merger was a critical move in the realization of the need for a holistic and comprehensive approach to achieve sustainable development within a watershed area. As a result of this merger, the two sub-programmes brought four critical programmes together, namely, the Environmentally Sound Management of Inland Water (EMINWA), the Global Environment Monitoring System/Water (GEMS/Water), the Integrated Coastal Areas Management (ICAM) programme within the framework of the Regional Seas, and the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities (GPA). In view of this it was necessary to consider this in line with the implementation of the Regional Seas Programme. Consequently the First Inter-regional Seas Programme Consultation was convened by UNEP at the Global Programme of Action Coordination Office, The Hague, The Netherlands, 24-26 June 1998.

The main purpose of the Consultation was:

- a) to allow all secretariats and coordinating units for regional seas programmes to present the status of the implementation of their conventions and action plans;
- b) to discuss and define common problems and areas of interest for cooperation;
- c) to discuss the evolution and future of the regional seas programmes; and
- d) to discuss possible coordinated contributions to the discussions to take place at the Seventh Session of the Commission for Sustainable Development in 1999.

The conclusions of the Consultation are to be used by UNEP as guidance in developing a comprehensive support programme for the Regional Seas.

In taking advantage of the just concluded Informal Meeting of the ACC Subcommittee on Oceans and Coastal Areas, 22-24 June 1998, The Hague, the participants were invited to attend the Regional Seas Consultation in order that the ACC members could be briefed on the status of implementation of the Regional Seas Programme, Conventions and Action Plans.

Agenda Item 1: Opening of the Consultation

Ms Terttu Melvasalo, Director of the Water Branch of UNEP, opened the Consultation on 24 June 1998 at 2.00 p.m. and welcomed the participants on behalf of the Executive Director of UNEP. The list of participants is attached as Annex I. The Chair thanked the ACC Subcommittee members for being able to attend as it provided a unique opportunity for discussion and the exchange of information with the Regional Seas Programme Coordinators.

The Chair then invited Mr. Jorge Illueca, Assistant Executive Director, Programme of UNEP, to address the meeting. Mr. Illueca raised a number of issues concerning UNEP's views and the needs for action with regard to the Coordination of UNEP administered global and regional conventions. He informed the meeting of the forthcoming meeting of UNEP Convention Secretariats to be held on the 3rd July 1998, in Geneva. The Regional Seas Coordinators of the Mediterranean Action Plan and Caribbean Environment Programme have been invited. The meeting is to address three main issues which are paramount to the successful implementation and coordination of Conventions as a whole, these being:

- a) the issue of Trade and Environment, as it is a common issue (a common denominator) spanning most conventions notably the Basel, CITES and Montreal Protocol, and will also be an important issue within the Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) and Prior Informed Consent (PIC) Conventions which are in the process of being negotiated, as well as within the Regional Seas Conventions;
- b) institutional Coherence - the need to arrive at commonly shared definitions; and
- c) the need to develop synergy among programmes.

He further emphasize the need to assess the legal compatibility, institutional coherence and economic impact of these numerous Conventions, so as to ascertain their effectiveness. Other issues of noticeable importance was the need to identify common terminology and basic environmental principles that link the UNEP administered conventions, as well as the need for the development of a conflict resolution mechanism for all.

In this regard, UNEP will create a division to ensure proper coordination of the UNEP administered conventions.

The Chair provided the floor with an opportunity to address the meeting. Issues raised related to the role and mechanism in which the Regional Seas Programme could implement global conventions, the role of Non-governmental organizations and the impact of trade liberalization on the environment. The latter requiring the need for the preparation of Strategic Environmental Assessments (SEAs) as a tool for sustainable development. In this regard it was suggested that a methodology be developed for the preparation of SEA's. Furthermore, Mr. Illueca confirmed that the Regional Sea Programme should take the lead in regard to specific issues within specific Conventions and as such, should be considered a major partner in implementing global conventions.

Agenda Item 2: Organization of the consultation and adoption of the agenda

Ms Terttu Melvasalo, Director, Water Branch chaired the Consultation. The Chair proposed arrangements suitable for the organization of the work of the Consultation. The working hours for the Consultation were agreed as follows: 09:00-12:30, 14:00-17:00. The Consultation adopted its Provisional Agenda (Annex II), beginning with Agenda item 4. The list of documents available to the Consultation is attached as Annex III.

Agenda item 3. Report of the Water Branch Ocean and Coastal Areas Programme

Mr. Paul Akiwumi presented the report of the Water Branch Oceans and Coastal Areas Programme as presented in Annex IV, to the Consultation, which entailed the focus of UNEP and possible areas of cooperation. The Secretariat informed the participants that the Regional Seas Programme remained the center piece of the Ocean Programme. Furthermore, the secretariat drew attention to specific areas where UNEP could provide support, namely:

- a) facilitation of the Inter-regional cooperation;
- b) synergies among work programmes (programme/exercise);
- c) joint programmes to develop guidelines/tools etc.;
- d) capacity building programmes; and
- e) Inter-regional transfer of technology.

Ms. Maria Simonelli informed the Consultation on the environmental frameworks for offshore oil and gas industry (UNEP-IE)

Environmental Frameworks for industrial operations have evolved rapidly in recent years and now include a variety of new mechanisms to influence environmental performance.

To assist countries, information about regulatory frameworks worldwide is being gathered by UNEP-IE to demonstrate the variety of mechanisms in use. These include regulatory, co-regulatory and non-regulatory mechanisms, and specifically include legislation, regulatory standards, management instruments (e.g. EIA) negotiated agreements, codes of practice, consultative forums, economic instruments.

The information is being gathered by a submission form and participants are requested to circulate this to environment and industry departments and industry associations, and contact UNEP, with who this has been circulated to, for follow up. The information, in form of national profiles will be compiled and can be served by visiting "Offshore Oil and Gas Environment Forum" website. The Regional Seas Coordinators can take advantage of this and make use of forum facilities.

Specifically, most Regional Seas Programmes have a convention reference to combating marine pollution and some make special reference to hydrocarbons. Thus anything that can be done to assist governments in working effectively with industry can only strengthen convention outcomes. To this end Regional Coordinators were requested to distribute the Environmental Frameworks for the Offshore Oil and Gas Industry submission form for websites to their respective countries to complete. (UNEP/WBRS.1 Inf.6)

John McManus informed the consultation of a variety of global activities that have been initiated to determine the status of coral reefs and to identify priorities for actions necessary to reduce coral reef degradation. The global workshop of the International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI) in 1995 developed a Framework for Action, which was subsequently endorsed by acclamation by representatives of 80 governments and a variety of international, regional and national agencies. Regional priorities have been established in ICRI in workshops held in six regions, organized through the UNEP Regional Seas Programme. The Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network (GCRMN) has been established, with Regional Seas Programmes serving to host its regional nodes. ReefBase, a global database on coral reefs and their resources, serves as the official database of the GCRMN, and provides summaries of existing information on 8,000 of the world's coral reefs. A ReefBase Aquanaut System has been developed to train non-scientists, including marine park rangers, volunteers, NGO's and others, to effectively monitor coral reefs. A related program, Reef Check, has organized volunteers to conduct simple surveys in hundreds of reefs globally. The World Resources Institute, ICLARM and The World Conservation Monitoring Centre have jointly produced a "Reefs at Risk" report, identifying areas of reef degradation. Data from ReefBase and other sources have also led to a major report indicating that coral reefs may be deleteriously affected by global warming.

These activities have set the stage for effective, globally coordinated action to United Nations Foundation (UNF) and United Nations Fund for International Partnerships (UNEP) constitute a potential source of support for this activity. With the encouragement of the UNF, a proposal is being developed to involve UNEP, ICLARM, the ICRI, GCRMN and others in a coordinated umbrella project for coral reef conservation and management. (UNEP/WBRS.1 Inf.8). The overall objective of the International Coral Reef Action Network (ICAN) will be to reverse coral reef degradation globally.

It was concluded that the Regional Seas Programmes, notably SACEP, EAF, CEP, SPREP and EAS would be the implementing arm of the ICAN programme. To this end they would make available all information concerning their programme to ICLARM before the 4th July 1998.

The consultation was informed of a GEF-proposal being prepared by UNDP and with UNEP and the World Bank as co-implementing agencies, entitled International Waters Distance Learning and Training Project, Phase I, the general objective is "to improve GEF's system-wide capacity, through knowledge sharing, to address its priority concerns of land-based sources of pollution".

- i) share best practices, and collaborate across the Internet using a wide array of new tools and learning methods,
- ii) develop training courses tailored to the strategic need of GEF; and

- iii) hold face-to-face biennial meetings among GEF agencies, project and partner personnel. In view of the potential use/involvement of the GPA Coordination Office and the Regional Seas Programme as regards to the development of clearing-houses, the draft project document as well as some preliminary comments provided by UNEP, were distributed to the participants. The participants were asked to provide any comments directly to the Secretariat of the consultation.

Agenda item 4. Summary presentations by Regional Secretariats/Regional Coordinating Units on the implementation of the Conventions and Action Plans

The Secretariat/Regional Coordinating Units presented their reports on the status of the implementation of their Conventions and Action Plans; ratification/ accessions; national compliance, ongoing and planned programme/activities, as presented in Annex V to this report.

Caribbean Environment Programme (CEP)

Mr. Nelson Andrade Colmenares, Coordinator of CEP presented the Cartagena Convention and its protocols.

He emphasized that the Convention was the only comprehensive environmental treaty for the region. In relationship with the implementation of global conventions, he pointed out that the Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPA) is directly linked with the Global Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) as well as with the CITES Convention. Furthermore, there is a relationship between the Assessment and Management of Environmental Pollution Programme (AMEP) and the Global Programme of Action (GPA).

A brief description of the composition of CEP was given, highlighting the latest developments in each sub-programme.

A description of the institutional developments with donors, UN Agencies and other international organizations was also given. He mentioned in particular the management with IMO / REMPETIC, as well as coordination with IOC, UNDP, ECLAC and within UNEP, with GRID, Infoterra, ROLAC, Industry and Environment, PAC Paris and IETC/Japan.

In his closing remarks, he recognized the need for this type of coordinating meeting.

Action Plan and Convention for the West and Central African Region (WACAF)

Ms. Nasséré Kaba, Interim Coordinator for the WACAF Region informed the meeting of the history and development of the Region's Action Plan and Convention.

Adopted together with an Action Plan in March 1981, the Convention and its Protocol have been ratified by only 10 countries out of the 21 in the region. During the period 1981-1990, the WACAF Action Plan tackled the main issues facing the region in cooperation with UNEP (as the Secretariat of the Convention and Action Plan), FAO, IOC, WHO, IAEA, IMO, UNIDO and IUCN. These issues being: marine and coastal pollution, coastal erosion, protection and conservation of marine areas and fauna, sea-level rise and integrated coastal area management.

In the line with the priority issues identified and adopted by the Contracting Parties to the Convention, new programmes on ICAM and land-based sources of pollution are being developed. Furthermore, her appointment as interim Coordinator to undertake some activities and promote the Regional Coordinating Unit (RCU) as a technical cooperative firm, has been important in building confidence among the Countries of the region in the programme.

She concluded by emphasizing that the continued support of UNEP/Water Branch is needed to help with the establishment of the WACAF/RCU in Abidjan.

Regional Organization for the Protection of Marine Environment (ROPME)

Dr. Abdul Rahman Al-Awadi, Secretary General of ROPME informed the meeting of the special circumstances that prevail in his region. The States surrounding the sea are the major oil producing countries in the world. The challenge that faces the region being the development of their oil industry and protection of the marine environment, noting that approximately 20 million barrels of oil and oil product passes through the region.

To face this challenge, the countries of the region decided to form ROPME with a major task of allowing development to continue and at the same time protecting the marine environment.

The Kuwait Convention was subsequently signed and ratified by eight members of the region, on 1st January 1982; Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, United Arab Emirates and Oman.

The Kuwait Action Plan was adopted to implement many ambitious programmes towards the protection of the marine environment of the region.

The Secretariat was established in Kuwait and a very extensive and ambitious programme was launched. This has yielded a great deal of enthusiasm and has propelled the environment in the petrochemical industries agendas.

To facilitate the implementation of the Convention four Protocols were signed, namely: the

- a) Protocol concerning Regional Cooperation in Combating Pollution by Oil and Other Harmful Substances in Cases of Emergency, 1978.
- b) Protocol concerning Marine Pollution Resulting from Exploration and Exploitation of the Continental Shelf, 1989.
- c) Protocol concerning Protection of the Marine Environment Against Pollution from Land-based Sources, 1990.
- d) Protocol on the Movements and Disposal of Hazardous Wastes and other Wastes, 1998.

Another protocol on Biological Diversity and Establishment of Specially Protected Areas, is under preparation.

He further stressed the need for better coordination and stronger links to be established between the Regional Seas Programmes, emphasizing that ROPME was ready to respond to any initiatives that would maximize efforts in protecting the marine environment.

Eastern African Action Plan Regional Activity Centre (EAF/RCU)

Mr. Richard Congar, the Interim Coordinator of the EAF/RCU informed the meeting that the Convention entered into force in May 1996.

Furthermore, the first meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Convention, held in Seychelles in March 1997 made a series of decisions and recommendations regarding institutional and financial matters, as well as priority activities to be implemented in 1997-1998 and within the next decade.

As at 17 March 1997, Contracting Parties to the Convention are: Comoros, France (La Réunion), Kenya, Seychelles, Somalia and Tanzania. Since that day, Mozambique, Madagascar have ratified the Convention and protocols; South Africa, the European Union, and Indian Ocean Commission, have expressed interest to ratify the Convention.

The Regional Coordinating Unit was established in the Seychelles in February 1997, and formally opened by the Executive Director of UNEP in August 1997.

The first meeting of Contracting Parties approved the four following components of the 1997-1998 work-programme: Operation of the Coordinating Unit; Capacity Building in integrated coastal area

management; Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-Based Activities; and Protection of Marine Biodiversity.

In accordance with the above mentioned work-programme, EAF/RCU is coordinating the following projects: EAF/5: protection and management of marine and coastal areas; EAF/6: monitoring and control of sources, level and effects of pollutants; EAF/14: preparation of the Eastern African Coastal Resources Database and Atlas. In addition, regional components of global/international initiatives or programmes are implemented in co-operation with, or by the Coordinating Unit: Global Programme of Action (GPA/EAF); ICRI; SIDS; GEF/Western Indian Ocean project, for the preparation of transboundary diagnostic analysis and strategic action programme; other regional projects contributing to the implementation of the Convention focus on the protection of biodiversity (GEF/IUCN), and the implementation of OPRC Convention (GEF/World Bank-Commission de l'Océan indien, COI).

In addition, a cooperative agreement between the Regional Environment Programme of COI (COI/PRE), the Secretariat for Eastern African Coastal Area Management (SEACAM) and the Regional Coordinating Unit (EAF/RCU) has already been submitted to UNEP for signature.

He emphasized that in order to strengthen cooperation in Eastern Africa, there was a need to promote the Convention and Action Plan, and secure yearly contributions of the Eastern African Countries.

South East Pacific Action Plan (CPPS)

Dr. Ulises Manaylla Alarcon, advisor of the Plan of Action of the South East Pacific, made a presentation of CPPS, which comprised of the following:

The Plan of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment and Coastal Areas of the South East Pacific was approved in 1981 by Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Panama with the main aim of protecting the marine environment and coastal areas to safeguard the health and well being of present and future generations. The general legal framework of the Plan of Action of the South East Pacific is the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and Coastal Zones of the South East Pacific "Lima Convention" signed in 1981.

He informed delegates about the activities under the Plan of Action, grouped in the following areas;

- a) Coordinated Regional Programme for the Research, Surveillance and Causes of Marine Pollution of the South East Pacific, known as CONPACSE
- b) Integrated Coastal Zone Management
- c) Environmental Support Assessment
- d) Protected Marine and Coastal Areas
- e) Conservation of the Marine Mammals of the South East Pacific
- f) Marine and Coastal Biodiversity
- g) Climate Changes

He also referred to the legal component as the most developed one within the context of the Regional Seas Programme.

He recognized the good interagency cooperation between CPPS and UNEP, and the valuable support of other United Nations agencies.

He emphasized that the Plan of Action was valuable in that it reinforced national capacity and catalyzed institutional actions to concentrate efforts on priority needs to protect the marine and coastal areas in their respective countries. He went on to present the programme of activities for the period 1998-1999, approved by the VIII Intergovernmental Meeting (November 1997).

North-West Pacific Action Plan (NOWPAP)

Mr. Robbert Droop from the GPA Coordination Office - The Hague introduced on behalf of Mr. Takehiro Nakamura, focal point of UNEP's Water Branch for NOWPAP, the main features of the action plan and some issues for future inter-regional cooperation.

After having been agreed at the Second Inter-governmental Meeting of Parties to NOWPAP in 1996, the action plan focuses on 5 priority projects:

- a) establishment of a comprehensive database and information management system;
- b) survey of national environmental legislation, objectives, strategies and policies;
- c) establishment of a collaborative, regional monitoring programme;
- d) development of effective measures for regional cooperation in marine pollution preparedness and response; and
- e) commence the establishment of regional activity centers and their networks.

Furthermore, the following activities are planned for 1998 and 1999:

- a) public awareness on the occasion of the International Year of the Ocean;
- b) application of a rapid assessment of pollution into the marine environment (implementation of the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment); and
- c) preparation of a programme on marine biodiversity (assessment of marine biodiversity, coordination of marine protected areas, etc.).

in order to implement NOWPAP, the following are deemed to be the areas for inter-regional cooperation and assistance:

- exchange of information on reference materials used under the various regional programmes, and comparison between international reference materials (IAEA/IOC/UNEP) and regional ones
- information exchange on the development of a regional contingency plan for emergency marine pollution, and review of such draft NOWPAP contingency plan by other regional programmes based on their experiences.
- exchange of information on existing programmes relevant to marine biodiversity in other regions

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