



# REGIONAL SEAS

UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME

*Co-ordinated Mediterranean Pollution  
Monitoring and Research Programme  
(MED POL)–Phase I:  
Programme Description*

*UNEP Regional Seas Reports and Studies No. 23*

*Prepared in co-operation with*



FAO



UNESCO



IOC



WHO



WMO



IAEA

UNEP 1984

Note: This document is a review of the projects carried out, or planned to be carried out, during the pilot phase of MED POL, as well as of the institutional arrangements and other supporting measures used in the implementation of these projects. The annexes of the document contain the "operational documents" for seven of the projects and the project descriptions of the remaining six projects.

The projects described in this document were planned and co-ordinated jointly by UNEP and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) of UNESCO, the World Health Organization (WHO), the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) under UNEP's overall co-ordination as part of the Mediterranean Action Plan under projects FP/1301-74-07, FP/1106-75-06, FP/0503-75-06, FP/0503-75-07, FP/0503-75-08, FP/0503-76-01, FP/0503-76-03, FP/0503-76-04, FP/0503-76-05, FP/0503-76-09, and implemented by eighty-three officially designated national research centres from sixteen Mediterranean States and the EEC.

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## PREFACE

The Regional Seas Programme was initiated by UNEP in 1974 with the launching of the Mediterranean Action Plan (MAP). Since then the Governing Council of UNEP has repeatedly endorsed a regional approach to the control of marine pollution and the management of marine and coastal resources and has requested the development of regional action plans.

The Regional Seas Programme at present includes ten regions and has over 120 coastal States participating in it. It is conceived as an action-oriented programme having concern not only for the consequences but also for the causes of environmental problems through the management of marine and coastal areas. Each regional action plan is formulated according to the needs of the region as perceived by the Governments concerned. It is designed to link assessment of the quality of the marine environment and the causes of its deterioration with activities for the management and development of the marine and coastal environment. The action plans promote the parallel development of regional legal agreements and of action-oriented programme activities.

The Intergovernmental Meeting on the Protection of the Mediterranean convened by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in Barcelona from 28 January to 4 February 1975 adopted an action plan for the Mediterranean covering four main aspects (see section on Background below).

Furthering the recommendations made by the Barcelona meeting, a number of expert meetings took place with the aim of defining the operational documents for the implementation of the Co-ordinated Mediterranean Pollution Monitoring and Research Programme (thereafter called MED POL).

The pilot phase of MED POL was developed between 1975 and 1980 and constitutes the most extensive co-ordinated environmental study ever made on the Mediterranean Sea, contributing to the management activities (including legislative) undertaken in the framework of the action plan. MED POL has now been extended into a long-term phase that will cover the next ten years at least and should provide additional information on the sources, levels and effects of pollutants in the Mediterranean basin.

The present document is a review of the projects carried out, or planned to be carried out, during the pilot phase of MED POL, as well as of the institutional arrangements and other supporting measures used in the implementation of the projects. The annexes of the document contain the "operational documents" for seven of the projects and the project descriptions of the remaining six projects.

This document is part of the series that also includes the final report on the pilot phase of MED POL and the individual reports of about 200 principal investigators who participated in MED POL - PHASE I.

The document was prepared by UNEP's Co-ordinating Unit for the Mediterranean Action Plan which acknowledges the assistance of all those persons and organizations on whose contributions the success of MED POL depended.

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## I BACKGROUND

Following the adoption by the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment (Stockholm, 5-16 June 1972) of the Action Plan for the Human Environment, including the General Principles for Assessment and Control of Marine Pollution, the United Nations General Assembly decided to establish the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to "serve as a focal point<sup>1/</sup> for environmental action and co-ordination within the United Nations system."

The organizations of the United Nations system were invited "to adopt the measures that may be required to undertake concerted and co-ordinated programmes with regard to international environmental problems" and the "intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations that have an interest in the field of the environment" were also invited "to lend their full support and collaboration to the United Nations with a view to achieving the largest possible degree of co-operation and co-ordination".

The Governing Council of UNEP chose "Oceans" as one of the priority areas in which it would focus efforts to fulfil its catalytic and co-ordinating role. While it was recognized that the environment has deteriorated considerably in many areas of the globe, the Mediterranean region was selected by UNEP as a "concentration area" where it would attempt, through the Regional Seas Programme Activity Centre, created in 1974, to assist the coastal States in the implementation of an ambitious and consistent Action Plan.

Concern had been expressed on numerous occasions during the late 1960s over the state of the Mediterranean Sea and in 1972 as part of their joint programme of Co-operative Investigations in the Mediterranean (CIM), the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO), through its General Fisheries Council for the Mediterranean (GFCM), the International Commission for the Scientific Exploration of the Mediterranean Sea (ICSEM) and the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC), prepared the first comprehensive review of the state of marine pollution in the Mediterranean. As a follow-up, in 1974 FAO (GFCM) organized two consultation meetings on the protection of living resources and fisheries from pollution in the Mediterranean. Proposals for a study of the impact of human activity on the development of the coastal marine environment in the Eastern Mediterranean had meanwhile been drawn up at an International Biological Programme (IBP)/UNESCO meeting in 1973 (Malta).

1974 proved to be an important turning point for the Mediterranean. It was by then obvious that fisheries were not the only interests likely to be affected. In September, an International Workshop on Marine Pollution in the Mediterranean was held in Monaco. This workshop, sponsored by FAO (GFCM), IOC, ICSEM and UNEP, reviewed major pollution problems of the area and recommended co-operative projects. At a meeting of the GFCM working party on Marine Pollution, which immediately followed this workshop, plans were drawn up for the implementation of four of these pilot projects dealing with protection of living resources and fisheries. These

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<sup>1/</sup> United Nations General Assembly Resolution 2997 (XXVII).

were subsequently included in the environmental assessment component of the Mediterranean Action Plan (see Outline of the Programme below).

In late 1974 UNEP established a "task force" of selected scientists, experts and government officials who joined with representatives of FAO, the World Health Organization (WHO), the Inter-Governmental Maritime Consultative Organization (IMCO), and IOC to draw up the elements of an action plan for the region. An Intergovernmental Meeting was convened by UNEP in January 1975 which 16 coastal States attended. The action plan was approved<sup>2/</sup> and plans were made for its implementation, which included four main aspects:

- (i) Integrated planning of the development and management of the resources of the Mediterranean Basin;
- (ii) Co-ordinated programme for research, monitoring, and exchange of information and assessment of the state of pollution and of protection measures (MED POL);
- (iii) Framework convention and related protocols with their technical annexes for the protection of the Mediterranean environment;
- (iv) Institutional and financial implications of the Action Plan.

All components of the action plan were interdependent and provided a framework for comprehensive action to promote both the protection and the continued development of the Mediterranean region. No component was an end in itself. Each activity was intended to assist the Mediterranean Governments in improving the quality of the environmental information on which formulation of their national development policies was based. Each activity was also intended to improve the ability of Governments to better identify options for alternative patterns of development and to make better rational choices for allocation of resources.

Furthering these recommendations, a second meeting took place in Barcelona early in 1976 at which the 16 participating States and the European Economic Community (EEC) adopted the Convention for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea against Pollution, a Protocol for the Prevention of Pollution of the Mediterranean Sea by Dumping from Ships and Aircraft and a Protocol concerning co-operation in Combating Pollution of the Mediterranean Sea by Oil and other Harmful Substances in Cases of Emergency. This became known as the Barcelona Convention and entered into force in 1978. UNEP was designated as the secretariat of the Action Plan and the Barcelona Convention. On 17 May 1980, in Athens, a third protocol, Protocol for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea against Pollution from Land-Based Sources, was adopted and signed by twelve Mediterranean States and the EEC.

The meeting which took place in Barcelona in 1976 approved seven pilot projects (see Outline of the Programme below), which became the basis for the Co-ordinated Programme for Research and Monitoring of Pollution in the Mediterranean (MED POL). Later on, six other projects were defined and some of them implemented to broaden the scope of the Programme, or to provide support. The Programme was co-ordinated by UNEP's Regional Seas Programme Activity Centre until it was handed over to a separate Co-ordinating Unit for the Mediterranean Action Plan (MAP), which was

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<sup>2/</sup> Mediterranean Action Plan and the Final Act of the Conference of Plenipotentiaries of the Coastal States of the Mediterranean Region for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea (Barcelona, 1 - 16 February 1976). UNEP 1978.

established by the decision of the First Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention (Geneva 1979). Day-to-day co-ordination of the MED POL activities was carried out by FAO, WHO and IOC.

More than 200 scientific groups belonging to 83 institutions from 16 countries bordering the Mediterranean participated in the programme's activities. The data produced were submitted to the agencies where they were processed, taking into account the results of the intercalibration exercises co-ordinated by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) from its International Laboratory for Marine Radioactivity (ILMR), at Monaco. The achievements of the Programme are described in detail in the Final Report and in the Scientific Reports of the Participants.

The Programme's pilot phase activities that started in 1975 came to their end in 1980. The experience gained through them allowed UNEP to prepare, in close collaboration with FAO, WHO, IOC, UNESCO, WMO and IAEA, a proposal for a Long-term Pollution Monitoring and Research Programme (MED POL - PHASE II) endorsed at the Second Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention (Cannes, March 1981). This long-term programme covers four different and complementary monitoring activities: monitoring of sources of pollution; monitoring of coastal areas including estuaries; monitoring of open-sea reference areas; monitoring of transport of pollutants through the atmosphere; and twelve research projects ranging from the development of reference methods and of environmental quality criteria to studies on basic oceanographic processes and on toxicity, carcinogenicity and epidemiology of selected pollutants of special relevance to the Mediterranean region.

This second phase of MED POL will last from 1981 to 1991. The activities will be carried out by national laboratories designated by the Mediterranean Governments and will be co-ordinated by the Co-ordinating Unit for MAP in close co-operation with FAO, WHO, IOC, UNESCO, WMO and IAEA. The experience gained under the pilot phase of the Programme should be the guaranty for the success of the Long-term Programme in fulfilling the overall objectives of the environmental assessment component of the MAP, namely:

- to assess, on a continuing basis, the state of pollution of the Mediterranean Basin;
- to identify the sources, pathways, amounts and effects of pollutants entering the Mediterranean Sea;
- to establish temporal trends in the levels of pollution;

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