



***Marine Mammals Plan of Action:
evaluation of its development and achievements***

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II. CONCLUSIONS

7. In general terms progress in implementing the Action Plan has not been satisfactory: there has been a limited adherence to it and many of the recommendations have yet to be carried out or have been only tackled in a partial manner. Four main reasons are adduced for this lack of progress; they are : (1) changing government priorities and a certain lack of political clarity and will to act, (2) universally severe budgetary constraints, (3) the Plan itself did not provide a sufficiently clear framework for action, (4) insufficient efforts were made to promote implementation by all potentially active collaborators. A summary of the main conclusions of the evaluation is presented below:

(i) The impact of the Action Plan on the conservation, management and utilization of marine mammals has not yet been significant. There is no clear evidence that the Plan has been very influential or that the status of marine mammals has improved during the period since the Action Plan was first approved. The status of large cetaceans has stabilised somewhat but this has been as a result of the moratorium on whaling proclaimed in 1982, before the Plan was endorsed.

(ii) The effectiveness of the implementation of the Action Plan has also not been fully satisfactory, being impaired by : (1) the failure to establish sufficiently strong institutional arrangements that could support the promotion, catalysis and coordination of action; (2) the lack of a clear policy framework for action; (3) the lack of a clear strategy for implementation of the plan, with carefully determined priorities, targets and time frame; (4) the decision to concentrate on projects, rather than on mobilizing governments, international institutions and the public for strategic action; (5) the lack of a secure source of funding for the programmes of action.

(iii) The efficiency in carrying out the actions that were implemented has been uneven. Undoubtedly some of the contributions were carried out in a timely manner, but the same cannot be said for the projects supported by UNEP. In all cases there have been very serious delays, and most of the expected outputs are not yet available. In mitigation, one can surmise that internal reorganizations in UNEP negatively affected the early stages of implementation.

(iv) UNEP's coordinating and catalytic role, performed through its acting as the Secretariat to the Plan, has been less vigorous than expected. By failing to set up appropriate policy, advisory and supportive structures, UNEP was unable to tackle the main functions of the Secretariat. There was very little leadership and guidance for the implementation; no sustained efforts were made to coordinate action, other than trying to elicit proposals for projects; no attempt was made to systematically monitor progress and finally, only limited action was taken in promoting information exchange and public relations.

(v) UNEP's intellectual input was significant when the Plan was being developed, but subsequently its contributions have diminished. In particular, not enough attempts have been made to identify areas needing priority attention and to identify opportunities for influencing or catalyzing actions that could have a meaningful impact on the status of marine mammals.

(vi) Financial support from the Environment Fund, though modest, should have been sufficient to influence positively the implementation of the Plan. However, the funds were not put to the most effective use, inasmuch as only a few small projects were supported. While they may be useful in themselves, they do not in most cases constitute important contributions to the furthering of the main objectives of the Plan.

(vii) The contributions of the other major agencies interested in the implementation of the Plan have likewise been limited. FAO, as one of the original promoters of the Plan, should have had a very visible role but in effect has made only modest contributions. The undeniable

1. INTRODUCTION

1. The Global Plan of Action for the Conservation, Management and Utilization of Marine Mammals was developed between 1978 and 1983 jointly by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in collaboration with other inter-governmental and non-governmental bodies concerned with marine mammal issues, particularly the International Whaling Commission (IWC) and the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN). In October 1983, the FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI) endorsed the principles of the Plan, and in May 1984 the UNEP Governing Council followed suit. The IWC endorsed the cetacean component of the Plan at its annual meeting in June 1984 and in November of that year the General Assembly of the IUCN endorsed the promotion of the Plan as a matter of high priority. This series of formal endorsements officially launched the implementation of the Plan.

2. The basic objective of the Plan was to promote the effective implementation of a policy for conservation, management and utilization of marine mammals which would be widely acceptable to governments and the public. The Plan was built around five concentration areas, namely policy formulation, regulatory and protective measures, improvement of scientific knowledge, improvement of law and its application and enhancement of public understanding. Thirty eight priority actions were recommended as necessary to implement the Plan under these areas. An Annex contained a brief description of over one hundred projects that were designed to take action to the practical level. (See Annex I for a brief description of the main points of the Plan).

3. The Plan was intended to stimulate, guide, assist and where necessary co-ordinate activities of existing organizations giving emphasis to international actions, while recognizing the importance of national actions. The main organizations identified as having an important role in the implementation of the Plan included UNEP, FAO, The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), other specialized agencies of the United Nations, the CITES Secretariat, IWC, the Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research (SCAR), IUCN, The World Wildlife Fund (WWF) as well as governments and non-governmental organizations in general. (Annex II lists all the major organizations, as identified in the Plan, having an interest in marine mammals).

4. The implementation of the Plan has gone through two distinct stages - an initial attempt to get the plan moving, followed by a phase of carrying out specific activities. (See Annex III for a brief description of the different stages of implementation).

5. The contributions of the different organizations involved have ranged from specific contributions by UNEP (See Annex IV for a brief description of UNEP supported projects), some of which have been carried out in close collaboration with IUCN, to more general contributions by organizations such as FAO, IWC and WWF which can be considered as being carried out within the framework of the Plan. (See Annex V for a listing of the major contributions of other actors).

6. As it is now over four years since the Plan was endorsed, UNEP considered that it would be useful to conduct an in-depth evaluation to assess the achievements and shortcomings of its implementation, and to make recommendations on the future implementation of the Plan in general as well as on the future orientation of UNEP's contributions to it. In making the evaluation the relevant files within UNEP and other organizations were analyzed and personal contacts made with staff of UNEP, FAO, IWC, IUCN as well as other organizations interested in the Plan. (Annex VI describes the terms of reference and logistics of the evaluation).

budgetary constraints to which it has been subject to in the last few years have had an influence, but the failure to deal with perceived contradictions between the needs for development of fisheries on the one hand and for the conservation and management of marine mammals on the other has probably been the determining factor in this lack of action.

(viii) The contribution of IWC has been very positive within the possibilities that its role allows. Other organizations such as the InterAmerican Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC), have also made useful contributions within their areas of concern.

(ix) IUCN has made some useful contributions to research, through its network of scientists and through the Species Survival Commission. However, not enough has been done by the IUCN Secretariat to take the best advantage of this contribution and place it firmly within the framework of the Plan. The independent contribution of the IUCN Secretariat has been limited by financial constraints to those actions carried out in collaboration with UNEP, which, as pointed out above, have not been successful for the most part. WWF has been active, particularly in the realm of protected areas.

(x) The contribution of governments within the framework of the Plan has been notably absent. This is not to say that they have not made positive contributions to the conservation, management and rational utilization of marine mammals. Indeed, many have been active and have promoted both international and national action, but without reference to the Plan, in spite of repeated calls for collaboration on the part of UNEP.

(xi) Non-Governmental Organizations of all types have been very active in promoting and implementing actions that are in the spirit of the Action Plan. However, all this activity has taken place outside of the framework of the Plan. This in itself is an indication that the Plan has only played a minor role in influencing the international community.

(xii) The Action Plan is still relevant in principle, particularly in terms of its overall goal to conserve and manage marine mammals. However, changing circumstances necessitate a renewed political commitment and the definition of new priorities which respond more to the needs of today. It is clearly urgent to put the Action Plan on its feet again and the recommendations that follow are intended to assist in this.

8. The overall lesson learnt is that if a plan of action that involves the international community is to be successful, there are certain necessary conditions that must be met. If these conditions are not met, then the plan will remain only a hollow document, a symbol perhaps of good intentions but not a vehicle for positive change. The first requirement is political will and a formal commitment, both on the part of governments and international institutions to take action. The second requirement is that the Plan itself be substantively of high quality and be backed by appropriate institutional and financial arrangements.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS

Specific recommendations concerning the Global Plan of Action

9. As a matter of urgency, the Plan of Action should be reviewed and made more responsive to the needs of the present, and its implementation promoted in a renewed manner. This will entail redefining the substantive, financial, strategic and institutional underpinnings of the Plan and reestablishing firm commitments to its implementation. The recommendations below are intended to assist in the task:

(i) As a matter of the first priority the substantive framework of the Plan should be reviewed and updated. In order to assist this process, the following actions are recommended:

- (a) conduct a review and assessment of the current status of marine mammals, and of the policy, legislative, management and conservation actions currently being carried out by governments, international agencies and NGOs;
- (b) on the basis of this assessment, identify the critical elements of conservation and management that need to be given attention now setting a hierarchy of priorities. The five areas for action originally identified by the Plan are still relevant, but it is suggested to concentrate on those areas which can produce the greatest positive changes: policy interventions; fostering public awareness and support; promoting legislative and protective measures, in that order;
- (c) review the existing substantive framework of the Plan and identify the recommendations that are still valid;
- (d) within each of the critical areas chosen for attention, define goals to be attained therein within the medium range period of five years and identify the strategic actions that should be undertaken. Preference should be given to those actions that will have the greatest impact and promote the overall objectives for that area;
- (e) outline a minimum programme of action that will help attain the goals. It is recommended to initially draw up a two year programme.

(ii) An essential prerequisite for action under the Plan is the definition of a policy framework. While keeping some of the elements of a species based perspective, a more integrated approach to the conservation and management of marine mammals is recommended, stressing overall resources management within an ecosystem or regional approach. Policy stances on specific issues such as catch quotas, fisheries/mammals interactions and others should also be defined.

(iii) An explicit strategy and revised programme for implementing the Plan should be developed. This should outline the sequence of events, the actions that have to be undertaken at different stages of the process, the means by which cooperation and coordination shall be obtained and the promotional efforts that will be carried out.

(iv) As part of the strategy, it is suggested that ways should be devised in which comprehensive programmes, such as the worldwide initiatives on National or Regional Conservation Strategies, the UNEP Regional Seas Programme, FAO initiatives in marine resources management, IUCN and WWF Protected Areas and Coastal Areas Management programmes could be taken advantage of and influenced to give greater consideration to marine mammals. In addition to this, ways and means of assisting the dissemination of basic information on marine mammals should be found, for example, through already established endeavours such as, the FAO fact sheets for species identification and the World Conservation Monitoring Centre (WCMC) data books.

(v) An explicit financial plan should be developed for the priority actions identified. In particular, ways and means should be suggested on how to approach the major donors and sources of funds, and how to launch a funding campaign for the Plan, or portions of it.

(vi) As a matter of urgency, it is necessary to establish the institutional arrangements which will support the promotion, coordination and management of the Plan. In principle, the recommendations of the Plan are sound, but it is necessary to reaffirm what the functions of each of the support structures will be. It is important also that sufficient time and effort be devoted to making these structures perform effectively. It is suggested that the following minimal functions be considered:

- (a) The Secretariat, under the guidance of the ad-hoc Planning and Coordinating Committee, shall have the responsibility for day-to-day actions to promote the Plan, monitor progress and coordinate implementation. It shall also serve as a clearinghouse for information which it should widely disseminate among appropriate audiences.
- (b) The ad-hoc Planning and Coordinating Committee shall have as a principal function determining policy issues, fixing priorities; outlining a programme; searching for sources of funding, coordinating action and promoting the Plan.
- (c) The ad-hoc Scientific Advisory Committee shall provide an expert view on the status and opportunities in the conservation and management of marine mammals and give advice on priorities.

(vii) Immediate attention should be given to the establishment of a network of institutions, policy makers and scientists which have an interest in marine mammals and which could collaborate actively in the implementation of the Plan. A useful model to follow in terms of the nature, mode of operations and mechanisms for its establishment could be the network supporting the programme for pollution monitoring and research in the Mediterranean (MEDPOL) under the Mediterranean Action Plan.

(viii) In order to ensure that the Plan will have the necessary support, there should be formal agreements as to the role that each agency will play in the coming years and the way in which each agency is prepared to contribute to the Plan. UNEP in particular, as the Secretariat to the Plan, and in keeping with its catalytic and coordinating function within the UN System, should outline its contribution clearly. Governments should again be approached to obtain their commitment and support. As to the involvement of NGOs, these should be the subject of a separate campaign to elicit their general cooperation.

(ix) Immediate action should be taken to complete pending activities, particularly those funded by the Environment Fund. In particular:

- (a) Speed up the process of establishing a mechanism for incorporating the IUCN network of marine mammals scientists, policy makers and institutions into the framework of the Plan.
- (b) Finalize all the pending activities and produce the final project reports.
- (c) Begin publications under the Marine Mammals Technical Report Series, taking those manuscripts that are already available under the UNEP projects and in the IUCN Species Survival Commission Specialist Groups on Marine Mammals and deemed relevant and useful.
- (d) Set up a mechanism for the regular publication of the Plan Newsletter "The Pilot" and redefine its functions very clearly in terms of goals, content and audience.

Specific recommendations for UNEP action

(i) UNEP should define clearly what its future contribution to the Plan of Action for Marine Mammals will be, in terms of

- (a) discharging the role of Secretariat to the Plan

(b) supporting specific actions through the Environment Fund. Here it is suggested that priority be given to:

- policy level leverage at the international and national level
- promotion of compliance with international agreements
- promotion of cooperative ventures and comprehensive approaches
- fostering greater public awareness and eliciting public support
- supporting the publication of technical and information material

(ii) UNEP should examine with attention the recurring problems in regard of project management and of its relations with supporting and cooperating agencies and introduce corrective action.

(iii) UNEP should reconsider the manner in which it supports action plans in general, defining a policy that gives greater emphasis to policy level leverage, coordination of strategic actions and judicious catalysis of critical actions.

General recommendations concerning Action Plans

Action plans formulated by the international community have not always been well defined or structured. It is therefore recommended that UNEP assist in improving the process by preparing guidelines for the preparation of action plans, similar to those already prepared for its Regional Seas Programme (Regional Seas Report and Studies Series, No. 15, 1982), and based in part on the experience gained in the implementation of the present Plan.

IV. ANALYSIS

10. Information which provides the factual basis for the analysis presented below on the achievements and shortcomings in the implementation of the Global Plan of Action, appears in: Annex I - The Global Plan of Action for the Conservation, Management and Utilization of Marine Mammals: Main Points; Annex II - International Organizations, Agreements and Programmes concerned with Marine Mammals and their Environment; Annex III - Historical Summary of the Development and Implementation of the Global Plan of Action; Annex IV - The UNEP Supported Contribution to the Implementation of the Global Plan of Action; Annex V - Other Major Contributions to the Implementation of the Global Plan of Action.

Relevance of the Global Plan of Action

11. The concept of having a common framework around which the international community could

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