

Akyaka Declaration

The Second International Conference / Workshop on The State-of-the-Art of ICZM in the Mediterranean & Black Sea: Immediate Needs for Research, Education/Training, & Implementation (MED & Black Sea ICM 08)

convened in Akyaka, Turkey, on 14-18 October 2008, 12 years after the first conference / workshop organized in 1996 (Sarigerme, Turkey). The Conference was attended by 62 participants representing 22 countries, UNEP's Mediterranean Action Plan and the Black Sea Commission Permanent Secretariat. The work was carried out in oral and poster paper presentation sessions, followed by four discussion sessions. The Conference was co-organised by two prominent international programs for the Mediterranean and Black Sea, namely by the Mediterranean Action Plan/ Priority Action Programs Regional Activity Centre of UNEP, and the Black Sea Commission Permanent Secretariat and supported by the UNEP MAP Coordinating Unit, the Municipality of Akyaka and two Turkish Universities.

We, 62 participants representing 22 countries, UNEP's Mediterranean Action Plan Priority Actions Programme and the Black Sea Commission Permanent Secretariat, in appreciation of the charms of the Town of Akyaka and the Gokova Bay, enhanced by the warm Turkish hospitality and;

- Knowing the uniqueness of the Mediterranean and the Black Sea coastal environment, the importance of the coastal areas for economic development of the riparian states and their culture since antiquities, as well as for people from elsewhere who repeatedly choose these areas for recreation;
- Being aware of the Mediterranean countries under the framework of the UNEP's Mediterranean Action Plan (MAP) and the Black Sea countries under the system set forth by the Bucharest Convention and the Black Sea Commission for regional collaboration in various environmental issues including improvement of integrated coastal management in their regions;
- Congratulating the Mediterranean countries for preparing and accepting the recent Protocol on Integrated Coastal Zone Management for the Mediterranean and noting that this is the first ever international legal instrument targeting better management of coastal areas;
- Applauding the interest of the European Union for contributing to capacity enhancement of the non-EU states of the Mediterranean and Black Sea countries to better managing their coastal and marine areas;
- Concerned by the fact that the interest for economic development still overtaking from time to time conservation and protection concerns in both regions, which often result in unrecoverable, important losses;
- Appreciating the eighteen-year long MEDCOAST activities for advancing integrated coastal management in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea countries by generating means for sharing data, information, knowledge and experience and by offering opportunities for region-wide capacity building and welcoming the establishment of the Mediterranean Coastal Foundation;

Unanimously agree to bring out the following observations and recommendations to the attention of the national, regional and international institutions dealing with coastal and marine issues, as well as of the public:

1. Despite significant work carried out by the Mediterranean Action Plan and the Black Sea Commission as well as other regional and other international programs, support of donor institutions, noteworthy efforts of non-governmental organizations for advancing integrated coastal management in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea countries, the progress has been desperately slow in developing national management structures capable for integrated management of coastal areas based on scientific data and information and involvement of major stakeholders. It is observed that thirteen findings of the 1996 Conference and fourteen recommendations are still valid after 12 years due to this extremely slow progress. We do not wish to relist all these findings and recommendations and make reference to the old document which can be found in MEDCOAST's web site (www.medcoast.org.tr).
2. The Protocol on Integrated Coastal Zone Management for the Mediterranean provides useful guidance to national, regional and local administrations of the Mediterranean countries in shaping their integrated coastal management systems, programmes and projects. It is at the same a powerful instrument for academics, NGOs and the civil society in general for urging the authorities to initiate and implement an integrated coastal management system and programs in their specific countries. We urge the governments of the Mediterranean and Black Sea countries to ratify without delay all protocols under the Barcelona and Bucharest Conventions and to comply meticulously with the rules and regulations set forth by these regional legislative documents. At the same time, we call on the academics, NGOs and the civil society to work for speeding up the process of ratification and the implementation of the regional protocols by the authorities of their respective countries. It would be useful to organize a pan-Mediterranean workshop to be attended by representatives of the governmental institutions, academics, NGOs and private sector for discussing the implementation issues of the ICZM Protocol with the goal of speeding up its enforcement.
3. We recommend comprehensive regional assessments, to be carried out by the regional institutions and the scientific community, of the state of integrated coastal management in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea countries together with successes and failures of the significant programmes and projects carried out in the past or the problems and shortcomings of those in implementation today. This effort would no doubt be extremely useful for deriving a list of valuable "lessons learnt", shedding light to the areas where urgent improvement is needed and deducing a set of recommendations for designing new intergovernmental or donor-driven programs, projects and other actions in order to achieve best results from limited opportunities and scarce funds in the future.
4. The SMAP III call of the European Union, which provides financial support to eight projects preparing coastal management action plans for specific sites in six non-EU countries of the Mediterranean, reflects the importance given by the European Union to enhancement of integrated coastal management in these countries. However, the success and impact of these projects are severely limited by a number of factors including the insufficient local and national ownership of several projects, leadership of six projects by EU institutions, the low level of involvement of national experts and insufficient support from national governments. European Union and other international donors are urged to support integrated coastal management projects in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea countries that are really demand-driven projects from local to national scale (rather than brought in from outside), target a change in the existing management system (rather than preparing just a plan), use the national expertise in full, invest in national capacity building in order to have a level of continuity after the project ends.

5. The Mediterranean Programmes of the European Union that supported Euro-Mediterranean networks in several fields (environment, media, local government, etc) in early 1990's were effective for capacity building in the EU and non-EU Mediterranean countries. Continuation of several successful networks like MEDWET, MED-CITIES, MEDCOAST in to our times proves the usefulness of this initiative. The European Union is urged to start a new program for supporting thematic Euro-Mediterranean-Black Sea networks of institutions and experts dealing with important issues contributing to coastal management like coastal erosion and shoreline management, beach management, management of specially protected coastal and marine areas, ecosystem management, conservation of flagship marine species, land use planning in the coastal zone, coastal management in changing climate, etc. Initiation and support for cross-basin networks of NGOs, local administrators and private sector involved in issues of coastal management would also be useful.