

Sustainable Development in the Mediterranean Basin in 2008: New Perspectives

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With regard to sustainable development in the Mediterranean, 2008 will be remembered as the year when the Union for the Mediterranean was launched. In order to make the “Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean”, inaugurated in Paris on 13 July 2008, more visible and comprehensible to public opinion, specific projects were required.

The joint declaration of the Summit for the Mediterranean held in Paris on 13 July 2008 took up this concern for clarity: this process consisted of “translating [it] into concrete projects more visible to citizens” in order to “inject a new continuing momentum into the Barcelona Process” by making the relations among the States concerned “more concrete and visible through additional regional and sub-regional projects relevant for the citizens of the region.” The annex to the 13 July 2008 joint declaration mentions that the Secretariat of the “Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean” will have to present in detail “a certain number of key initiatives,” among which is the de-pollution of the Mediterranean Sea.

Sustainable Development in the Mediterranean: A Major Issue at Stake

The Mediterranean Sea, an endangered maritime habitat, is also at the heart of an initiative which, incidentally, is not innovative in itself because the project is based on pre-existent initiatives as well as on studies and reports drawn up earlier (Plan Bleu: 2005). The latter indicate that the Mediterranean Basin is highly sensitive to pollution. The Mediterranean Sea

is highly frequented. It serves as a vehicle for 30% of world maritime trade, including 22% of the world's oil transport. Over 2,000 ships are plying the sea at any given moment, among them 200 to 300 oil tankers, with an annual average of some 220,000 ships navigating the Mediterranean (Cartapanis: 2003). Archaeological finds have established that the Mediterranean Sea was bounded by vast forests which have, for the most part, disappeared over the course of the centuries due to agriculture and other effects of human presence. Forests now cover no more than 5% of the Mediterranean Region, primarily on its northern shore. The preponderant consequence of this deforestation is that the surface humus is carried away by rain; this, in turn, causes soil erosion and thus, a decrease in biodiversity: today, soils are generally impoverished. Pines, which can survive on poor soils, have thus replaced the oak genus. (Pelt: 2000)

The shores of the Mediterranean are overpopulated: over 150 million inhabitants, that is, nearly 1/3 of the population of countries with a Mediterranean shoreline. This coastal population has nearly doubled over the past 40 years. The coast is subjected, in certain areas, to often poorly-controlled, rampant construction. By 2025, half of the Mediterranean coastline will be built-up. The Mediterranean Region is the leading tourist destination in the world. It must therefore be taken into account that the regular, year-round population living along the Mediterranean coastline is increased by 200 million or so tourists spending their holidays there every year. It is estimated that by 2025 the number of tourists will rise to 300 million per year, the majority of them staying in buildings within 100 metres of the shoreline, whereas a highly significant rise has already been observed every summer in marine water pollution due to a great deal of biodegradable organic matter. Urban and agricultural wastewater, as well as rain runoff carry with

them and drain solid waste matter, 70% of which are plastic items, bottles and toxic products, all of them with a low degree of biodegradability. These waste products are carried by the currents, though weak, and the wind; they constitute a threat to marine fauna and flora. A study done in 2004 concluded that in the summer, up to 2m³ of waste was left behind per day and kilometre of coastline. Moreover, 70% of the sewage being discharged into the Mediterranean every year is not treated. (Plan Bleu: 2005) The number of coastal inhabitants and the summer rise in population increase the phenomenon of pollution from land sources, while in some countries, as, for example, those of the Middle East and North Africa, it also brings a shortage of potable water, which is often affected by rubbish and sewage. Along the coastline, the increasing needs often surpass the development of infrastructures, particularly wastewater treatment plants.

The 13 July Summit in Paris: A Catalyst

In the face of these observations, a long Euro-Mediterranean regulatory and financial process was undertaken and led, during the course of the November 2005 Euro-Med Summit, to the “Horizon 2020” initiative, which addressed the environmental problems in the whole of the Mediterranean Region. In November 2006, the Euro-Mediterranean Inter-ministerial Conference on the Environment was held outside of Europe for the first time, namely in Cairo. There, an agreement was signed for an action timetable for measures to be carried out as part of the Horizon 2020 programme to struggle against the major sources of pollution in the Mediterranean Sea by 2020. One of Horizon 2020’s pillars, numbering four in total,¹ is financing projects to reduce the most significant sources of pollution.

In April 2008, the European Commission and the European Investment Bank (EIB) published a list of 44 priority projects to be carried out in Southern

Mediterranean countries.² In May of 2008, Ambassador Alain Le Roy, in charge of the Union for the Mediterranean on behalf of France, clearly adopted this presentation as his own when he asserted that “130 sites needing attention have already been identified and the project itself targets 44 sites for an estimated investment of € 2.1 billion.” On 6 May 2008, the Neighbourhood Investment Facility (NIF) was officially launched as part of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), as a new means of financing infrastructure projects in the energy, transport and environment sectors in the Mediterranean. This fund comprises a regional component of € 33 million dedicated to the environment for the 2007-2010 period. This Facility could be implemented through the granting of subsidies designed to provide support for loans by public European financial institutions such as the EIB or Germany’s KfW.³ It is in this context that the Union for the Mediterranean was launched on 13 July 2008. Initiated in mid-2007 by the French Head of State, the project to create the Union for the Mediterranean, which aimed to strengthen and develop cooperation between Northern and Southern Mediterranean States, was officially inaugurated on 13 July at the Paris Summit for the Mediterranean, attended by 43 European and Mediterranean States, EU Institutions and regional organisations. Based on the observation that the development gaps are widening between the Mediterranean North-South, thus aggravating the risk of instability throughout the region, the President of the French Republic, thereafter in conjunction with all other European and Mediterranean Heads of State and Government, initiated a new dynamic fostering partnership in the Mediterranean. The aim is to use as a base the *acquis* of the Barcelona Process, launched 13 years ago primarily on the initiative of Spain and France, but also to considerably expand the ambitions, functioning and means of action. The Union for the Mediterranean project is based on three simple yet essential principles: political mobilisation at the highest level through biennial sum-

¹ The three other pillars are: capacity-building measures to help neighbouring countries create national environmental administrations that are able to develop and police environmental laws; using the Commission’s Research Budget to develop and share knowledge of environmental issues relevant to the Mediterranean; and developing indicators to monitor the success of Horizon 2020. cf. http://ec.europa.eu/environment/enlarg/med/horizon_2020_en.htm

² The report, Horizon 2020 – Devising a Mediterranean Hot-Spot Investment Programme (MeHSIP), concerns these 44 projects and reports on studies done in Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, the Palestinian Territories, Syria and Tunisia. For further information, see website indicated in Footnote 1.

³ Nicolas Sarkozy has announced that France will allocate € 730 million to the Horizon 2020 initiative through its Agence Française de Développement (AFD), namely to finance the implementation of depollution programmes and projects for the Mediterranean Sea. The AFD has already allotted € 230 million since then for projects in Morocco, Tunisia and Egypt.

mits of heads of state and government; governance on an equal level via North-South co-presidency and a permanent Secretariat with equal representation from both sides; and priority on specific regional projects capable of creating de facto solidarity. This new regional governance has already resulted in the holding of a Ministerial Conference on 22 December 2008, on the shores of the Dead Sea in Jordan.

At this conference, a double objective was attained, with a substantial contribution by civil society actors meeting on 21 December. First of all, the Ministers defined the general lines of a Mediterranean Water Strategy allowing a response to the challenges of climate change and its impacts. This Strategy, which will be brought before these same Ministers in the first semester of 2010 and before the Heads of State and Government in late 2010, will allow problems to be tackled that surpass the means of action of any single country or organisation. It will entail two primary goals concerning the preservation of water quality and the reduction of pressure on water resources by economising on their use. Moreover, the Ministers brought to the attention of the authorities of the Union for the Mediterranean the urgent need to effect new water facilities projects coherent with the Strategy. With this in mind, they put forth a series of projects that will be discussed in the first quarter of 2009. These projects will be completed by the 5th World Water Forum to be held in Istanbul in March 2009 and the first set of financing will be finalized by the Ministerial Conference on Sustainable Development in Monaco in late March 2009.

Another specific result of the Paris Summit was the holding of a conference on 18 December 2008 in Nice on the integrated management of coastal zones, intended in particular to examine the means to be implemented in order to apply the new protocol on this topic signed on 21 January 2008 by 14 Member States of the Barcelona Convention. Four areas for priority action were identified:

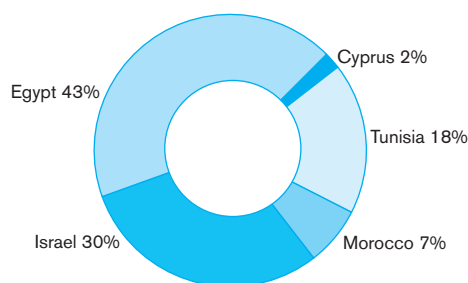
- Sustainable tourism
- Climate change and receding coastline
- Exchanges and networks: teamwork and collaboration among actors; governance; financing; cross-border approaches
- Network of protected areas and ecological corridors.

Climate Change in the Mediterranean in 2008: New Data

In addition to this movement towards sustainable development undertaken by the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, 2008 will also have been the year that the issue of climate change burst onto the Mediterranean stage. On 23-24 October 2008, a seminar was held with the presence of all the National Focal Point delegates from the Mediterranean Countries signatories of the Climate Convention, whose conclusions accentuated the need to get action on the regional level underway.⁴ The Mediterranean has been identified as one of the regions of the world most threatened by future climate change. However, no regional initiative of any magnitude had been undertaken in the Mediterranean so far. Indeed, until 2008, the Kyoto Protocol lent itself little to concerted action on the regional level. First of all, essentially striving towards the objective of stabilizing greenhouse gas concentrations, it focused efforts on emissions reduction. Secondly, the financial instruments it established were hardly adapted to the general situation in the Mediterranean: Emissions Trading is essentially addressed to countries subject to reduction targets, while Joint Implementation is addressed to the transition economies of Central and Eastern Europe. Insofar as the Clean Development Mechanism, the Mediterranean has very little presence (0.14% of the emissions credits registered by the Climate Convention Secretariat, June 2008). Moreover, up to 2008, only five countries had sold emissions credits: Cyprus, Egypt, Israel, Morocco and Tunisia.

CHART 27

Recorded Emissions Credits Sold (situation at 1 June 2008)



Source: Plan Bleu, via <http://cdm.unfccc.int/Statistics/index.html>

⁴ www.planbleu.org/themes/atelier_changement_clim.html

TABLE 17 Results of Application of Commitments Made by Annex 1 Mediterranean Countries

States	Greenhouse Gas Emissions, Base Year (in millions of tons)	Greenhouse Gas Emissions in 2005	Evolution Base Year-2005 (in %)	Objective (in %)
Cyprus	6.0	9.9	+63.7	n/a
Spain	289.4	440.6	+52.3	+15
France	663.9	663.4	- 1.0	0
Greece	111.1	139.2	+26.4	+25
Italy	519.5	582.2	+12.1	-6.5
Malta	2.2	3.4	+54.8	n/a
Slovenia	20.2	20.3	+0.4	-8
Croatia	34.62	29.7	-14.2	-5
Monaco	0.1	0.13	+30.0	-8

Source: Plan Bleu, via http://unfccc.int/ghg_data/ghg_data_unfccc/time_series_annex_i/items/3814.php

This situation changed radically in 2008, under the effects of two types of evolution:

1. The results of application of the commitments made by Mediterranean Countries appearing in Annex 1.

Upon analyzing these results (Table 15), it becomes evident that no Mediterranean Country can guarantee attainment of the Kyoto Objectives for 2012 on the sole basis of its national efforts. Knowing in addition that these will be reviewed and toughened for the post-2012 period, the Mediterranean Countries appearing in Annex 1 are now in the position of important purchasers of emissions credits (in the near future, Turkey will be added to this list, as it is in the final stage of the Kyoto Protocol ratification).

2. The decisions of the Conference of the Parties (COP) at the UN Climate Convention in Bali in December 2007.

Two decisions taken at the COP considerably changed the situation in the Mediterranean:

- The creation of an Adaptation Fund
- The participation of all Parties in emissions reduction efforts

A regional initiative aiming on the one hand to create financing mechanisms able to sustain the reduction efforts of Southern and Eastern Mediterranean Countries, and on the other hand to organise the structure of cross-border adaptation projects funded by

the Kyoto Protocol Adaptation Fund would thus make a great deal of sense.

We can only trust that the hopes raised are not shattered by the effects of the world economic crisis we are now experiencing

In this regard, it would therefore be highly logical for all Mediterranean Countries to organise with a view to speaking with a single voice at the COP to be held in Copenhagen in November 2009.

We can only trust that the hopes raised in the year 2008 in terms of sustainable development are not shattered by the effects of the world economic crisis we are now experiencing.

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