

# Environment and Development in the Mediterranean: a New Analysis of the Plan Bleu

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The Plan Bleu course of action, published in 1989, depicted the possible prospects of one of the richest regions of the world in terms of history and diversity but also one of the most vulnerable ones. Fifteen years later, at the request of all the Mediterranean countries and the European Commission, the Plan Bleu has carried out a new regional analysis of the main trends in the environment and development fields in the Mediterranean. This second report will be published in September 2005 when the thirtieth anniversary of the Barcelona Convention and the tenth anniversary of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership are celebrated.

The alternative course of action in this second report is based on two fundamental assumptions concerning progress: firstly, the implementation of national policies integrating the environment into development and, secondly, the introduction of North-South and South-South co-operation, since the 1989 Plan Bleu had proposed that action should be taken to achieve a more "sustainable" Mediterranean.

Without reciprocal commitments by the countries and considerable North/South solidarity, it seemed difficult for the southern and eastern Mediterranean countries to confront the significant challenges resulting from demographic growth. And without integrating the environment into development, the forecasted evolutions gave cause to fear for high costs in terms

of deterioration for a region whose economy (tourism and agriculture) is chiefly based on the environment and natural resources.

With hindsight, we are better able to appreciate the pioneering nature of this regional reflection process, first thought of in 1975 by Serge Antoine and proposed to the countries by Mostafa Tolba, first executive director of the UNEP. It was also of a pioneer nature the concept of sustainable development which in 1992, in Rio, would be established worldwide, as much as the idea of a Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, which became a reality in 1995 in Barcelona.

In spite of some unexpected changes (the break-up of the system of blocks and a much swifter than anticipated fall in birth rates in the South and the East), the negative trends forecast in 1989 have, on the whole, been put into practice as envisaged in our course of action. Demographic upheavals, urbanisation and coastal development, a growth in international tourism and irrigated land all mesh with the forecasts. The gulf in income between developed and developing countries has by and large remained (the gulf remains at between 1 to 5 in purchasing power parity for many countries) and the region has seen its status in the world diminish.

The unsustainable modes of production and consumption which are a feature of many developed countries are spreading, often more rapidly than was imagined, as is the case with packaging consumption or automobile transport.

The over-exploitation and deterioration that had been forecast for natural resources (water, soil, coastline) can today be

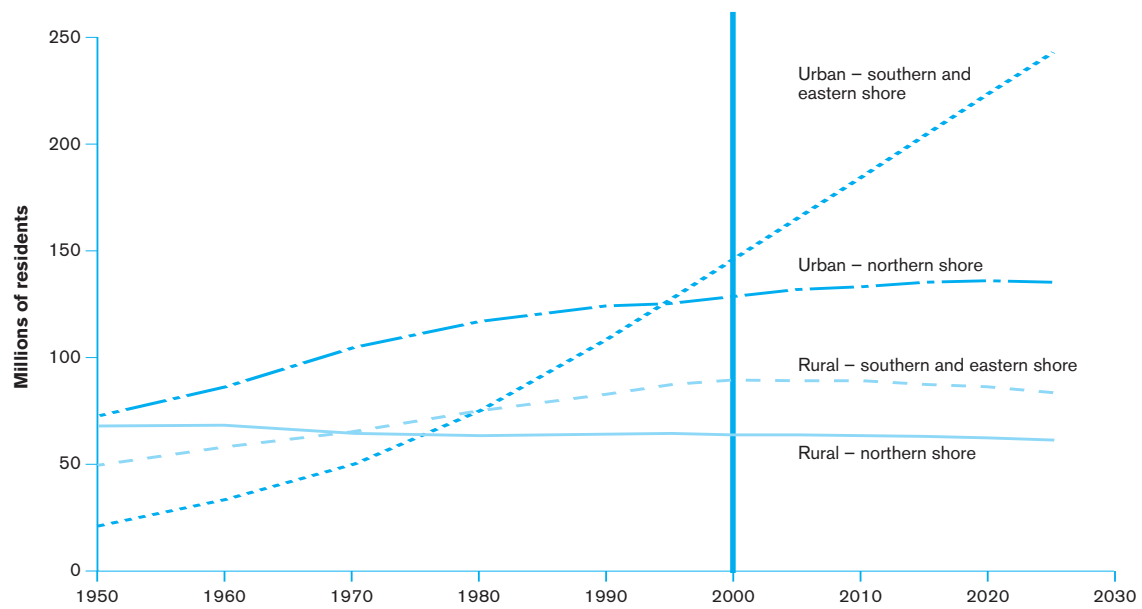
seen in a very large number of countries with increasing problems of reduction and salinisation of water, losses of quality and biodiversity, shortages, growing access costs and disputes and unequal competition between different uses. Lifestyle is also affected by air pollution problems (fairly serious ones in the South and the East, which impact on health), by the exploding amount of waste and by car traffic congestion.

The World Bank calculates the annual cost of environmental deterioration in several countries in the south and the east at between 3 and 5 percentage points of GDP. Vulnerability to natural risks is also constantly increasing with inappropriate urbanisation and construction, and this is also true in the North, where many recent buildings have been constructed in areas at high risk of flooding or forest fire.

However, the last 15 years have also seen significant progress in a number of fields.

The countries which had already joined the EU or which joined it in 2004 have made a lot of progress in political and economic terms, proving that when prospects and means are provided, results follow. Cyprus, Malta and Slovenia have over recent years clearly come close to the average of other EU Mediterranean countries (France, Italy, Spain and Greece). The respective commitments are, however, still inadequate as regards North-South and South-South co-operation, despite the introduction of a Euro-Mediterranean Partnership with ambitious objectives. The indicators show that the EU's efforts in terms of solidarity have mainly been in fact focused on

<sup>1</sup> The Plan Bleu is a Regional Activity Centre of the Mediterranean Action Plan, which is part of the United Nations Environment Programme.



Source: Attané and Courbage: Plan Bleu 2002.

the Adriatic East. The Partnership nonetheless constitutes a new co-operation framework of huge significance for the future.

Today, Mediterranean countries are much more aware of the risks to their environment. All the countries, including in the Adriatic East and in the South and East, have put in place environment policies. Some of them who had done so at an early stage, like Tunisia, have benefited from them. Others, such as Algeria or Albania, have made a lot of progress in recent years. The countries which have joined the EU have brought in vigorous policies, implementing EU directives. However, environment policies have, on the whole, retained an "end of the pipe" character rather than focusing on prevention and integration, and the application of laws often leaves a lot to be desired, due to a lack of application resources.

Regional cooperation on the environment also made progress when in 1995 the Barcelona Convention was revised (extended to include the coastline), a Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development was set up and new protocols and action plans were adopted to prevent and reduce pollution originating on land or at sea and to protect biodiversity. Civil society is also much more active than it was 15 years ago,

with many NGOs organised into Mediterranean networks.

Above all, as emphasised in this second report of the Plan Bleu, many innovations in the field of the environment and development have emerged, demonstrating that, when one looks for them, appropriate solutions to the specific features of Mediterranean problems, lands and cultures can be found.

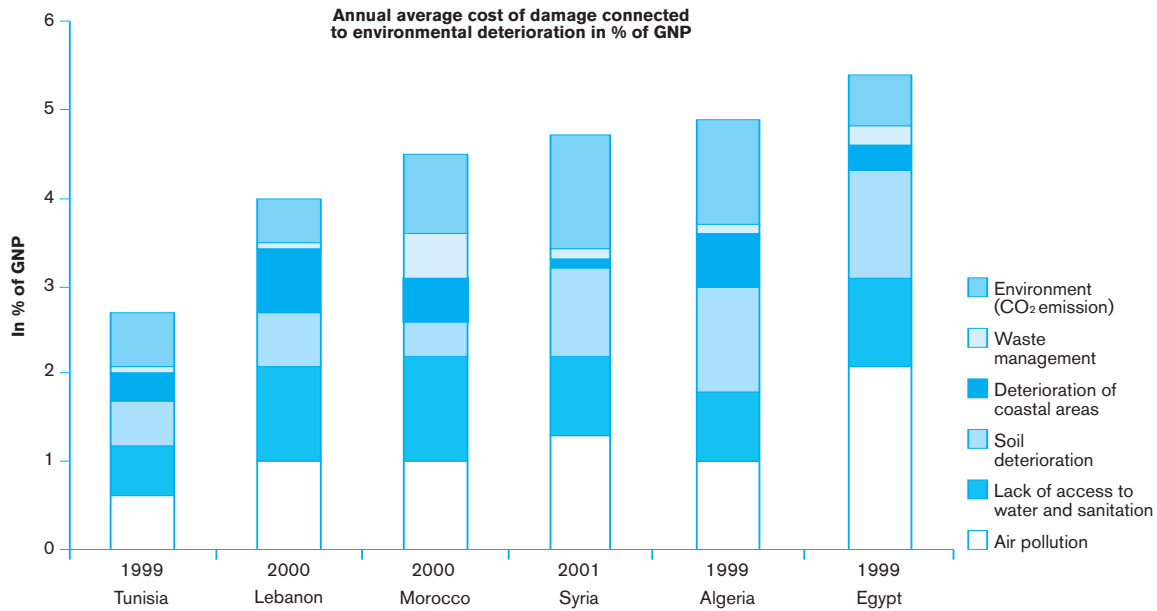
However, progress of this kind has remained much too scarce and limited to allow a change in attitude, given the ominous trends which remain.

The new Plan Bleu report explores possible developments in the region, while analysing certain choices which ought to be taken into consideration in order to build a more desirable future.

Great uncertainty remains concerning the economic growth possible in the region in the new context of globalisation and free trade. The countries of the east Adriatic and Turkey are due to benefit from the prospect of joining the EU. Without greater reciprocal commitments (implementation of mobilising regional projects and economic partnerships, solidarity and internal reforms), the gap between those in the North and those in the South could widen even further, in both economic and environmental terms. The risks of heightened internal fractures are also possible. The question of the

future of many poor rural peoples in the South and the East is extremely preoccupying. The gulf between agricultural productivity in the southern and in the northern shores is ever-widening, and the rural economy is still very undiversified. Many agricultural communities in the South and the East are vulnerable to the shock of free trade, while the possible benefits of any opening-up have to be considered in context. The problems of rural poverty and their repercussions in terms of driving people towards the towns, for emigration and for the environment, might thus increase. Climate change, with its possible consequences in terms of availability of natural resources and an increase in extreme conditions (droughts, floods) is another problem in addition to the difficulties forecast.

The expected increased pressure on our spaces, our resources and our lifestyle by 2025 remains considerable, including the developed countries of the North, where the population has, however, stabilised. The southern and eastern shores of the Mediterranean will increase by another 98 million citizens, a good third of them in the coastal regions. Tourism could still grow by 273 million, of which 137 million would be in the coastal regions. The growth in land, sea and air transport, made worse by free trade and by shifts in our modes of consumption



Source: World Bank, 2004.

and production, will become a major phenomenon in the coming 25 years, with serious consequences in terms of harmful effects and the risk of maritime accidents. Total demand for primary energy could grow by 65% in 25 years, and for water by another 25 km<sup>3</sup> in the South and East (it was already at the level of 101 km<sup>3</sup> in 2000). The total volume of waste produced each year could more than double. With the development of transport and tourism infrastructure, urban growth and the changes in modes of consumption, the accumulated pressure on the coastal plains and coastlines will be considerable. Urban sprawl, if it is not arrested, will lead to an even greater increase in the waste of agricultural areas and land. It is probable that vast linear conurbations along the coasts will be created. The saturation and congestion of coastal areas will be more and more problematic. Almost half of all coasts could be concreted over by 2025.

There are alternatives which could reverse this rather grim scenario. They must exploit the strengths that are a feature of our region and the experience acquired over recent decades in all the countries bordering the Mediterranean. A major objective will be an improvement in making all those involved responsible for and motivated to achieve sustainable

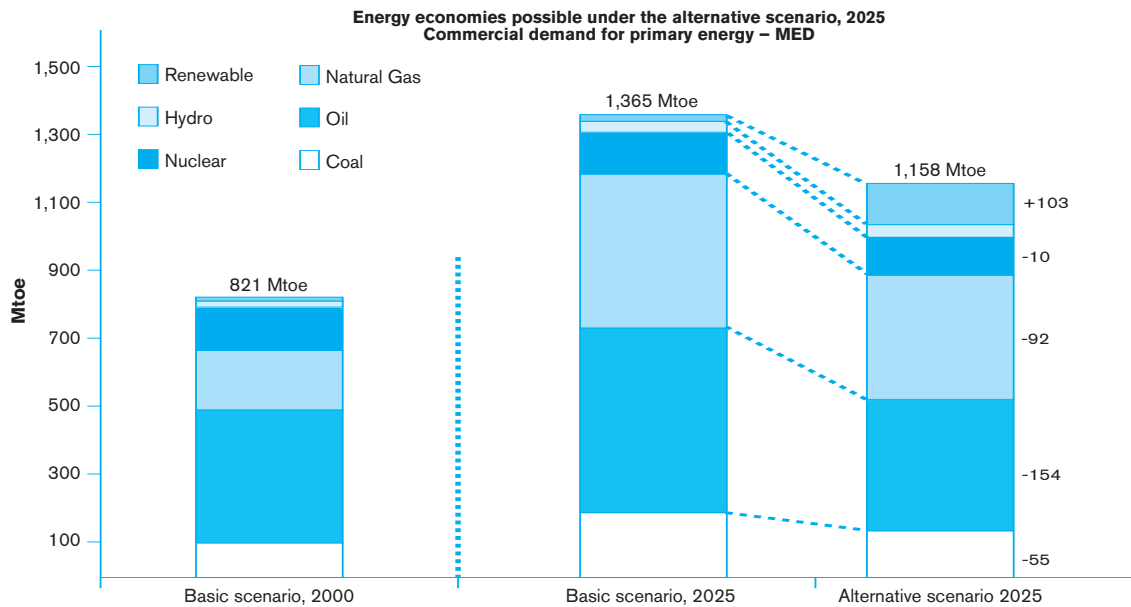
development and to develop a Mediterranean economy which is still, at present, too "leisured" and not very innovative (there are, however, happy exceptions). The report explores several paths in this direction.

A first approach consists of improvements in conserving and making use of our natural resources. In concrete terms, this means learning how to economise water, energy and agricultural land and to reduce pollution while succeeding in deriving greater economic and social profit per unit of resource consumed. Numerous examples, both in the North and in the South, demonstrate the possibility of decoupling economic growth from pressure on the environment and the double benefits, both environmental and economic, which can result from this. Success is in general achieved through the introduction of arrays of tools geared to the various different local or national contexts: using prices, tax treatment and subsidies, rules and labels, mobilising new technologies, training and awareness-raising, organisation of actors, partners and management systems, territorial actions and the creation of infrastructure which is more environmentally friendly (public transport).

In view of the current level of waste and mis-use, analysis of the future shows that considerable gains are possible

(agriculture/water, housing/energy, urbanism /agricultural land, waste management), producing much greater resource volumes at far lower costs than supply-based approaches, whether traditional or new (such as the desalination of sea-water).

Regional policy represents a second way of achieving significant progress in terms of sustainable development. Each region, and the Mediterranean is a mosaic of towns and local areas, in fact has its own aims, its cultural, natural and landscape riches, its products, its know-how and its businesses. And it is at regional level that it is best to organise the mobilisation factors, the integration of the environment into development, the organisation of functional synergies between different activities (for instance, between agriculture and tourism) and the creation of "clusters" (local activity systems which bring together small and medium-sized enterprises, training and research centres, associations, etc.) capable of making a mark within globalisation. It is also only by participative approaches to local development that real and sustainable progress may be made in order to combat, for example, desertification and rural poverty, as many recent experiments demonstrate, particularly in Morocco. Specific and innovative approaches to protect and add value to the coastline



Source: Blue Plan & OME: MED 2000.

or agricultural areas close to the cities are also vital.

These two basic approaches need advances in governance. The examples of successes argue in favour of a repositioning of public policies with the promotion of vigorous demand management policies and action for regional planning and local development which take account of the long-term stakes.

A good example of decoupling is provided by the Tunisian strategy on water conservation in irrigated agriculture. A good example of the regional policy to sustainable development is provided by the French regional natural parks which, within the framework of "charters," draw up and put in place regional plans for a period of 10 years, thus looking beyond the horizon of the electoral cycle. Many examples of urban regeneration and local agendas 21 in Italy and Spain could also be cited.

For the countries of the South and East, the main issue is to reinforce rural sustainable development policies in order to ensure, simultaneously, an improvement in basic services, sustainable management of natural resources and biodiversity and diversification of the economy. A reinforcement in the capacities of the towns is also needed. In comparison with other comparable regions in the world, these are still very limited,

as shown by the indicator which measures the share of local resources in the total public resources of the countries. In order to succeed in looking ahead, in integrating the environment into development and in mobilising and developing a sense of responsibility in all actors, it is in the interests of regional cooperation and the countries bordering the Mediterranean to define a shared goal and to introduce an appropriate "cadre porteur."

The Mediterranean Committee on Sustainable Development has been working for some years on drawing up the "Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development" announced at the Johannesburg Summit. This strategy, due to be adopted at the end of 2005, is a framework strategy. It sets some major desirable objectives for the region in terms of sustainable development and might thus help the Mediterranean countries in the course of drafting or revising their national strategies.

It might also help the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership to better integrate sustainable development as a guiding principle and thus to make the Mediterranean a world example of the application of international commitments (Rio, Kyoto, Johannesburg, etc.) while taking into account the specific features of the Mediterranean. The Barcelona Process would gain

much from this positive repositioning, which is of vital importance for the region's future. By setting itself concrete progress objectives that can be measured by indicators, in terms, for instance, of access to water, renewable energies, water and energy conservation, reduction of pollution or promotion of sustainable tourism or high-quality agricultural products, the joint commitment would mean a lot more to the peoples of the Mediterranean than the objective of lowering tariff barriers, often the only one that is translated into figures in Association Agreements. The shift towards regional free trade also makes it necessary to have an increased parallel commitment to sustainable development.

In view of the differences in socio-economic situation and environmental responsibility between the northern and southern shores of the Mediterranean, this reciprocal commitment ought to be structured within the framework of joint and differentiated approaches. The Kyoto Protocol, with its Clean Development mechanisms, gives a concrete example of this. The agricultural issue also deserves an asymmetrical approach (gradual change and exemptions in liberalisation) taking into account agriculture's multifunctional aspects (food safety, rural employment, non-commercial functions: countryside, biodiversity, conservation

## ROLE OF THE ARAB NETWORK FOR ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT (RAED) IN ENVIRONMENTAL CO-OPERATION AMONG MEDITERRANEAN STATES

RAED undertakes various activities in the Mediterranean basin from two perspectives:

1. The first relates to coordination between RAED and associations in the Mediterranean basin Arab countries.
2. The second relates to coordination between RAED and non-Arab associations through the Mediterranean Information Office for Environment, Culture and Sustainable Development (MIO-ECSDE) based in Athens. Many meetings were held to coordinate points of view on various environment-related issues among Arab and non-Arab associations affiliated to MIO-ECSDE within the Mediterranean basin.

A series of meetings was held in 2004 to prepare and implement environment-related activities aiming to disseminate and raise awareness about the environment in the Mediterranean basin.

RAED has cooperated with MIO-ECSDE with in the field of environmental education through publishing the Arabic version of the book entitled *Water in the Mediterranean*. A ceremony was held in the Arab League's headquarters in December 2004 to celebrate the event in which both parties participated. In addition, MIO-ECSDE trainers contributed in training 150 teachers and advisers on how to implement the educational activities laid down in the book.

RAED also organized the *Arab Youth and Renewable Energy* workshop in Cairo from 17th to 18th April 2004, in which seven delegations (Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Palestine, Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco) participated. The focus of the workshop was on the prospects of and obstacles to using renewable energy. Discussions were also held about how to encourage Mediterranean basin countries to use environmentally-friendly alternative energy. Within the framework of environmental education, RAED organized a semi-regional meeting to revise the environmental expectations of young African people and environmental trends in Africa. The resulting booklet is an environmental point of reference for young people and a tool for disseminating environmental information, through the contributions of young people in preparing an environmental report on Africa. Delegations of young people from Egypt, Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco attended the meeting.

In the field of human development, RAED participated in the events of the international seminar held in Tunisia on *Civil Society and the Quality of Water in Mediterranean Countries* from 11th to 13th October 2004. The seminar was organized by "the Mediterranean Network for Sustainable Development." A review was undertaken of the efforts made by RAED to rationalize the use of drinking water and the

recycling of waste. RAED also collaborated with the meeting *The Land and Human to Advocate Progress* held in the Kingdom of Jordan by organizing a six-day meeting for young people on sustainable development-related issues in Mediterranean basin countries. States participating in the meeting included Egypt, Morocco, Lebanon, Spain, Italy and Jordan.

With regard to the increasing awareness-raising about environmental issues, the Arab Office for Youth and Environment (AOYE) is in charge of the publication *RAED Mediterranean Quarterly* on issues related to the environment and sustainable development.

Within the framework of Arab and international participation in environmental events, RAED participates in the World Environment Day (and Arab Environment Day) through directing its coordinators to discuss specific issues and undertaking applied activities of benefit to civil society.

At the Arab League headquarters, RAED also organized a seminar in December 2004 to follow up the Johannesburg Summit's resolutions for trainees of RAED affiliated NGOs and to analyze the role of society in implementing the Johannesburg recommendations.

Emad Adly  
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of water and soil, place for public recreation, etc.) to avoid destabilising any further an environment and communities which are already fragile, while taking the region on a path towards more balanced development and a better positioning within a globalised context. There is also a need for specific support by the developed countries to help in reabsorbing the accumulated weight of environmental damage, protecting regional public assets, particularly the sea and the coastline, promoting innovative actions of looking ahead and integrating the envi-

ronment into development policies and in taking in hand the problems of desertification, rural poverty and illiteracy. The promotion of decentralised cooperation (between towns and between regions) will facilitate local support.

The environment, both a fundamental preoccupation for our societies and in the Mediterranean, a cultural product just as much as it is a product of nature and a platform for development, is not a "sector." The preservation of the environment, social justice and economic success are the three interdependent

aspects of a single development process. Regional development can only gain from the implementation of a plan around this concept of sustainable development, a mobilising force for the 21st century. Measuring progress made by monitoring indicators, analysing case studies, sharing experience, organising debates between opposing viewpoints and promoting and valuing diversity will constitute powerful tools for making our Mediterranean a unique example of sustainable co-development.