



Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity

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Biodiversity and Climate Change

Statement

by

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At the

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Honourable Chair,
Distinguished Delegates and Observers,
Ladies and gentlemen

It is a great pleasure and honor to deliver a statement at the INFO/RAC Session of the Joint National Focal Points Meeting for the Mediterranean Action Plan.

First of all, I would like to express my special thanks to Dr. Sergio Illuminato and Dr. Alessandra Sensi, for inviting the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity as well as various international/regional organizations and partners, together with the national focal points, and providing us with this valuable opportunity to share our experiences and lessons learned in achieving the common vision of sustainable marine and coastal development. My heartfelt appreciation also goes to the Government of Italy for hosting this important meeting in the beautiful and historic city of Palermo.

Covering an area of 2.5 million square km and having about 46,000 km of coastline, the Mediterranean Sea has been contributing to our history as a cradle of civilization and the crossroad of diverse cultures. For those who are involved in ocean and coastal management, the Mediterranean Sea, a virtually enclosed miniature ocean, has become an inspiration as a cradle of the UNEP Regional Seas Programme, as, in 1975, it became the first region to adopt an Action Plan (MAP) after the initiation of the Programme in 1974.

Since the adoption of the Mediterranean Action Plan, we have seen dynamic developments in regional cooperative arrangements in this region to address the threats to the sustainability of the Mediterranean Sea. These threats include intense and rapid coastal urbanization and tourism development, overfishing and destructive fishing, loss of marine and coastal species, land- and sea-based pollution, and introduction of alien species, which are in fact common concerns, to a different degree, in other parts of the oceans and seas. We have been learning a lot by examining the challenges and opportunities associated with your key milestones including, *inter alia*, the adoption of the Convention for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea against Pollution (Barcelona Convention) in 1976, the adoption of various protocols, and the establishment of relevant regional activity centres, including INFO/RAC. We are particularly happy to witness the significant progress made with INFO/RAC in past years, as the Centre for Information and Communication of the Barcelona Convention. I am confident that your collaborative endeavors in past several decades toward protecting environment while promoting sustainable development of the Mediterranean Sea region will provide us with valuable lessons, further strengthening our capacity toward sustainable use of marine and coastal resources and protection of biological diversity.

To achieve a more effective and coherent implementation of the three objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity, Parties to the Convention committed themselves to achieve by 2010 a significant reduction of the current rate of biodiversity loss at the global, regional and national levels as a contribution to poverty alleviation and to the benefit of all life on Earth. This target was later endorsed by the World Summit on Sustainable Development and forms now part of the Millennium Development Goals. It is very encouraging that the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (MSSD), which was approved in 2005 by the 21 Mediterranean countries and the European Community, takes a due account of 2010 biodiversity target as well as the programme of work on protected areas adopted by the Convention on Biological Diversity.

As such, the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Mediterranean Action Plan share common interests and mandate, with particular respect to the achievement of 2010

biodiversity target, the establishment and implementation of marine protected areas, and the application of integrated coastal management approach.

Building upon this common ground of mutual interest and synergy, the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity and INFO/RAC-MAP signed a letter of intent on 12 March 2007 for cooperation to enhance collaborative efforts toward the shared goals and objectives, particularly in the context of their respective outreach, communication and education strategies and activities. The participation of the representative of the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity at this meeting reflects our sincere commitment to further operationalize and advance our collaboration through the undertaking of specific joint activities.

In addition to our collaboration with INFO/RAC on outreach, communication, and education, I would like to also highlight that many of the work programmes of the Convention on Biological Diversity, not limited to marine and coastal biodiversity, collectively contribute to addressing the priority seven fields of action of the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development.

For example, the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity has recognized that integrated marine and coastal area management (IMCAM) provides an overarching management framework for addressing cross-sectoral issues related to marine and coastal biodiversity conservation, and incorporated IMCAM as key element of the elaborated programme of work on marine and coastal biological diversity (decision VII/5). IMCAM enhances the application of ecosystem approach, the establishment of marine protected areas, and planning of proper coastal land and watershed use, which were also identified as useful approaches and tools to address threats to sustainable ocean development in the Plan of Implementation of the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development.

At the Summit, countries also committed themselves to the establishment of representative marine protected areas networks by 2012. This target is also reflected in the elaborated programme of work on marine and coastal biodiversity under the Convention, adopted in 2004 through decision VII/5. The ecosystem approach, which is the primary framework for action under the Convention and was endorsed by the WSSD, is now explained and operationalized through an extensive database of case-studies and a comprehensive toolkit to assist Parties with implementation. Other agreed measures of particular relevance to the MSSD include: implementation of climate-change adaptation and mitigation measures in land-use and coastal zone planning and strategies; integration of biodiversity into water-resource and river-basin management and relevant sectoral plans and policies; and the application of low-cost technology and innovative approaches to water resources management; and identification of management practices and technologies that manage impacts of agriculture and forestry on biodiversity.

In line with our efforts for strengthening collaboration with the Regional Seas Programme, as requested by the Conference of the Parties, the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity is ready to actively cooperate with various actors and stakeholders of the MAP, and I invite all of you to contribute to implementation of the relevant programmes of work under the Convention, in particular those related to the implementation of integrated marine and coastal area management, establishment of marine protected areas, and the application of ecosystem based management, within the context of MSSD.

Before I conclude my statement, I would like to inform you that we, together with Parties to the Convention, various international/regional and national partner institutions, NGOs, schools, academe, and other civil society groups, successfully celebrated this year's International Biodiversity Day (IBD) on the theme of "Climate Change and Biodiversity" on 22 May. In this regard, I would like to extend my special appreciation to the INFO/RAC MAP for joining us in IBD celebration, particularly through their *EcoMEDia* web-magazine. Your collaboration further highlighted our world-wide joint achievements.

With this, I would like to express the sincere wish that the Mediterranean Sea will become another cradle of demonstrating synergy between the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Regional Seas Programme, which can be replicated in other regional seas programmes.

I thank you for your attention.