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الجمعية البرلمانية للبحر الأبيض المتوسط

**2nd Standing Committee on Economic, Social
and Environmental Cooperation**

Special Task Force on Environment and Climate Change

"Addressing Environmental Challenges Facing the Mediterranean"

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Introduction

1. Despite pioneering efforts that have been made by Mediterranean countries towards environmental management and protection, the Mediterranean region is still faced with environmental development challenges which, in some areas, have reached crisis levels.
2. Population growth and unsustainable economic development have increased the pressure on natural resources, especially water and land, which are already under stress. Urbanization has continued to spread unabated throughout the region. Air quality has deteriorated as a result of the use of polluting fuels in the transport, industrial and energy sectors. Mediterranean coasts have drastically changed over the past few decades both biologically and physically as a result of human activities. Changing water regimes, land and marine based pollution, artificial land cover in coastal areas have all resulted in impacts on coastal ecosystems. Coastal areas are degraded due to over-urbanization, industrialization and tourism development to the extent that unless this trend is arrested, by 2025, 50% of the Mediterranean coastline would be covered by concrete. Saline intrusion is on the increase due to excessive extraction from coastal aquifers. Invasive species have become new sources of coastal degradation. Climate change is compounding all these problems as a result of its negative impact.
3. This unsustainable development has been brought about primarily because, over the years, environmental considerations have not been taken into account when meeting social and economic challenges like growing job demands, fighting poverty and improving the citizens' standard of living. Sustainable environmental goals have not been integrated into decisions of investment and funding for development. There has also been lack of commitment towards sustainable development goals to address environmental challenges in the Mediterranean. Climate change is expected to exacerbate the economic and social damages in the region and in particular among the poorest segments of the population.
4. Unless measures are taken to redress these unsustainable development trends and reverse current practices in the loss of environmental resources, environmental degradation in the region will continue and will have economy-wide repercussions at the expense of the

countries' economies. Although it is difficult to assign specific values, the costs of environmental degradation are very significant. According to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the cost of environmental degradation in the region is estimated to be between 2.1 to 4.8% of the countries' GDP. With respect to the Middle East and North African region alone, the World Bank estimates that the annual cost of environmental damage varies from 4 to 9 per cent of GDP.

5. As representatives of the true voice of the people, members of Parliament in Mediterranean countries have the duty and responsibility to ensure that their countries' future development is environmentally and socially sustainable, that natural resources degradation is stopped and reversed and that risks from climate change are appropriately taken into account in development policies. They should ensure that environmental and social issues are internalized in traditional sectors on which development is usually based, such as water management, infrastructure, transport, agriculture, urban management and energy. They should also see to it that their countries honour their international environmental obligations through the ratification and implementation of national, regional and international legal instruments.

6. Through the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean (PAM) parliamentarians have the possibility to address these environmental problems collectively at the regional level. While sustainable development is a global objective and environmental problems know no boundaries, PAM should adopt international commitments to regional conditions to guide national policies towards sustainable development and to forge a dynamic partnership between countries in the region with different levels of economic progress. With the granting of observer status at the UN General Assembly, PAM's clout has been elevated from the regional to the international plane. PAM now has the opportunity of bringing the regional perspective to international debates on global environmental issues both at the level of the UN as well as at other regional and international fora.

Proposed Way Forward

7. Addressing environmental challenges facing the Mediterranean region is a tall order. As outlined above, the challenges are enormous and require substantial human and financial resources which the PAM does not have at its disposal. However, in line with its Charter, and as a unique forum for discussion of Mediterranean issues within a parliamentary framework, PAM presents an appropriate platform for discussion of regional issues, including environmental challenges. Working under the direction of the Bureau, the Standing Committee on Economic, Social and Environmental Cooperation has already addressed important issues including water and climate change. However, the Standing Committee should adopt a more structured approach in the choice of thematic issues to be addressed. In this regard, with the assistance of a Special Task Force, the Standing Committee should devise a work programme to address these challenges within specific time-frames.

8. As a way forward, it is proposed that a three to five-year work programme should be developed by the Standing Committee, identifying the most pressing regional environmental priorities that should be addressed in between PAM Plenary Sessions. Being an institution that brings together Parliamentary representatives from the Southern Mediterranean countries, members of the European Union, and North African Mediterranean states, and working under the auspices of the United Nations, when identifying the major environmental challenges of the region, consideration should be given to the environmental strategies and priorities of these institutions. In particular, account should be taken of the EU

Environmental Strategy, the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development of UNEP/MAP, the Mediterranean Sustainable Development Programme of the World Bank and the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the environmental objectives of the Union for the Mediterranean, the environment strategy for the Middle East and North African Region and the thematic work programme of the United Nations Commission for Sustainable Development. In parallel PAM should also continue to address emerging environmental issues on an ad hoc basis as it has already done with respect to climate change.

Regional priorities

9. A cursory look at the main environmental challenges identified in the various strategies for the region developed by different institutions, one finds a number of common thematic issues. All Mediterranean countries have somewhat similar long-standing environmental problems. They only differ in magnitude and severity.

10. For the next five years, the **UN Commission for Sustainable Development (UNCSD)** has chosen the following thematic cluster of issues namely (1) transport, chemicals, waste management, mining and consumption and production for 2010/2011; (2) forests, biodiversity, bio-technology, tourism and mountains for 2012/2013; (3) and oceans and seas, marine resources, small island developing states, disaster management and vulnerability for 2014/2015.

11. The **EU Sustainable Development Strategy (EUSDS)** identifies seven key priorities namely (a) Climate change and clean energy (b) Sustainable transport (c) Sustainable consumption & production (d) Conservation and management of natural resources (e) Public Health (f) Social inclusion, demography and migration and (g) Global poverty and sustainable development challenges.

12. The **Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (MCSD) of UNEP/MAP** identifies seven priority fields of action including (a) better management of water resources and demand; (b) improved rational use of energy, increased renewable energy use and mitigation and adaptation to climate change; (c) sustainable mobility through appropriate transport management; (d) sustainable tourism as a leading economic sector; (e) sustainable agriculture and rural development; (f) sustainable urban development; and (g) sustainable management of the sea, coastal areas and marine resources.

13. The specific areas identified for priority investments by the **Mediterranean Sustainable Development Programme (MSDP) of the World Bank and GEF** include (a) de-pollution with respect to waste water, solid waste, industrial pollution and land and sea based pollution; (b) sustainable management of vulnerable ecosystems in particular waste water reuse, land degradation, integrated coastal zone management, and protection of marine resources; and (c) adaptation and mitigation measures to combat climate change.

14. According to the **Declaration of the Paris Summit of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) in 2008** the priorities of the Union for the Mediterranean focus on cooperation to provide new foundations for effective development including (a) preserving valuable terrestrial and marine ecosystems; (b) addressing climate change (c) sustainable management of water, soil and energy as well as tourism, agriculture and industrial activities.

15. The **World Bank's environment strategy for the Middle East and North African (MENA) Region** identifies the following priorities for the region (a) water scarcity and quality (b) land degradation and desertification, (c) coastal degradation, (d) urban and industrial pollution, (e) weak institutional and legal frameworks.

Proposed thematic issues

16. Taking into consideration the various strategies outlined above, in devising its three or five-year work programme PAM's Standing Committee on Economic, Social and Environmental Cooperation should identify the thematic issues that are most relevant and pressing for the Mediterranean region. As an institution under the aegis of the United Nations, special consideration should be given to the thematic work programme of the UNCED. This will enable the PAM to contribute and give its input to the discussions during the annual meeting of the UNCED in New York.

17. The objective of this exercise should be for the Standing Committee to draw up detailed reports on each environmental thematic issue together with a Parliamentary Resolution for discussion and adoption by the PAM's Plenary Session. The approved Resolution, apart from being of guidance to the national Parliaments, should also be the PAM's contribution to the discussions both at the national, regional and international levels, on the specific thematic issue on the world's environment agenda.

18. The following are some of the environmental challenges facing the Mediterranean, not in order of priority, which are being proposed for the consideration of the Standing Committee on Economic, Social and Environmental Cooperation in the preparation of the three to five-year work programme:

I. The threat to biodiversity

The region's rich biodiversity, both marine and terrestrial, continues to be threatened with invasive species and habitat destruction. The loss of marine and coastal biodiversity should be stopped in particular through the implementation of regional protocols for the preservation of biodiversity and the recommendations of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). In 2002 the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg endorsed the target of a significant reduction of the current rate of biodiversity loss at global, regional and national levels by 2010 as a contribution to poverty alleviation and to the benefit of all life on earth. Are the targets being met?

Biodiversity is one of the themes for discussion in the 2012/2013 two-year cycle of the UNCED. Moreover, in order for the world to work towards the safeguarding and reduce the loss of biodiversity, the United Nations proclaimed 2010 to be the International Year of Biodiversity.

II. Air quality degradation from transport, industrialization and energy generation

In most countries poor air quality from transportation, industrialization and energy generation is compounded either by the lack of standards or the non-enforcement of air quality legislation at the national level. Measures need to be introduced by the countries' legislative assemblies and enforced by the regulatory authorities, for the reduction of urban air pollutants through appropriate vehicle standards, urban traffic policies, the strengthening of public transport networks and the use of clean fuels.

III. Sustainable consumption and production

Sustainable consumption and production maximises business' potential to transform environmental challenges into economic opportunities and provides a better deal for consumers. The challenge is to improve the overall environmental performance of products throughout their life-cycle, to boost the demand for better products and production technologies and to help consumers in making informed choices.

In addressing this thematic issue account should be taken of the Marrakech Process which is the UN framework programme on sustainable consumption and production in order to assist countries in their efforts to green their economies, help corporations develop greener business models and encourage consumers to adopt more sustainable lifestyles. Action should be taken to promote sustainable production and consumption.

IV. Marine pollution

Marine pollution is caused by land based and sea-based activities.

Mediterranean coastal waters are affected by land-based sources of pollution which are responsible for 80% of the total pollution of the Mediterranean. Primarily this is the result of industrial effluent and waste water being discharged into the Mediterranean sea untreated. This problem is compounded by the illegal dumping of hazardous waste.

Mediterranean waters are also affected by pollution originating at sea. Although representing only 0.7% of the earth's ocean surface, the Mediterranean Sea carries 30% of the world's maritime traffic. Pollution from ships is mainly operational, including illegal and accidental oil discharges and ballast water. Sea-based pollution has increased as a result of the growth in maritime traffic. Although prevention and emergency measures are in place to combat sea-based pollution, the threat of a major oil spill in the Mediterranean is always present.

V. Water quality and quantity

Saying that water is a scarce and fragile resource is a cliché. At the same time the reality is that Mediterranean countries are faced with several water related problems ranging from scarce water resources, lack of safe drinking water, and wasteful practices. Developed Mediterranean countries face the challenge of how to accustom individual consumers and industry to practices which save water while developing countries still struggle to provide safe drinking water and sanitation to their population. Recent studies show that global warming and its associated reduction in precipitation, are expected to reduce further inland water flow and water yields in the region.

In most countries water is not managed in a sustainable way and action is needed to reduce the use and misuse of this natural resource, to introduce greater efficiency in the use of water for irrigation, industry and urban areas and to

provide access to this commodity at a reduced cost to meet the social and economic needs of the people.

National institutions should be called upon to introduce integrated water demand management practices with the aim of improving water use efficiency, reducing unnecessary losses, implementing water saving measures, and, of utmost importance, creating awareness among the population of the importance of making judicious use of this natural resource.

VI. Land degradation and desertification

The Mediterranean region is affected by frequent severe environmental events such as forest fires, floods, landslides, drought, torrential rains, heat waves and water scarcity leading to both land degradation and desertification. Land degradation is caused by over cultivation, overgrazing, deforestation and inefficient irrigation. Desertification is another form of land degradation effecting semi-arid and dry areas resulting from climatic conditions and human activities. Land degradation and desertification are global problems which are being addressed through the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (CCD).

Mediterranean countries should identify and implement relevant regional actions to support the implementation of international conventions like the CCD. They should also take steps to reduce the impacts of desertification and the irreversible loss of agricultural land, promote forest landscape restoration, expand protected areas, and promote adaptation measures to combat the impact of climate change. These should be some of the objectives of future action in the Mediterranean region to combat land degradation and desertification.

VII. Promoting sustainable tourism

The Mediterranean is the world's leading tourist destination. Tourism is a major industry in terms of employment and income in the region. It is an essential economic sector for all Mediterranean countries because of the amount of tourist flows, the amount of money spent, the contribution of the sector to GDP and because of the creation of jobs and added value.

On the negative side, in many countries of the region, tourism has been developed in an unsustainable manner. This has led to insufficiently controlled development, especially along coastal tourist areas, thus generating negative impacts of an environmental and socio-cultural nature. Tourism causes also strains on the countries' infrastructure and resources in particular on water resources, energy and transport facilities.

Among the objectives that should be aimed for in future strategies, Mediterranean countries should reduce the adverse territorial and environmental impacts of tourism, especially in existing coastal tourist areas, promote sustainable tourism enhancing Mediterranean diversity and specificities in the process, promote within countries a more balanced distribution of tourists in terms of destination and seasons, and strengthen the implementation of relevant international legal instruments.

VIII. Conservation and management of natural resources

The Mediterranean economy is highly dependent on natural resources. Agriculture depends on accessibility to water; tourism thrives on unpolluted seas and clean coastal areas; urban development relies on the availability of space and energy on the use of hydrocarbons. Paradoxically, the Mediterranean countries tend to overexploit and mismanage these resources which are in constant decline. The situation is bound to get worse as a result of an increase in population especially in the Southern Mediterranean states. Moreover, global patterns of resource use are of concern as they are reducing the earth's regenerative capacity and the services that nature provides.

Mediterranean countries should find innovative solutions for a better management of natural resources. They have a major role in ensuring success, by reconciling development and the environment, ensuring sustainable resource management, providing a long-term regulatory framework that rewards eco-innovation, supporting businesses developing sustainable activities and promoting sustainable consumption and production.

IX. Climate Change

As stated earlier Climate Change should continue to be addressed by the Standing Committee as an ongoing priority. The international debate on the topic will continue up to and beyond 2012 when the Kyoto Protocol is expected to be replaced by a comprehensive agreement. The emphasis should be on the mitigation and adaptation measures that should be taken in the region to address the challenges from climate change and to meet the new emission reduction targets. On this topic, the Standing Committee should continue the debate from where it left off in preparation for PAM's input to the Copenhagen Summit of 2009.

Main Actors

The following main actors, which have valid contributions to make in future studies on the thematic issues identified earlier, may be involved in future work by the Steering Committee:-

- 1. United Nations Commission for Sustainable Development (UNCSD)**
The UNCSD promotes sustainable development through technical cooperation and capacity building at international, regional and national levels. The goals of the Commission include the integration of the social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable development in policy-making at international, regional and national levels; wide-spread adoption of an integrated, cross-sectoral and broadly participatory approach to sustainable development; and measurable progress in the implementation of the goals and targets of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation. www.un.org/esa/dsd
- 2. Marseille Centre for Mediterranean Integration (MCMI)**

Launched by the World Bank, the European Investment Bank (EIB) and a number of Mediterranean countries, the centre facilitates access to knowledge and practices and improves cooperation to support development policies geared towards greater integration and convergence in the Mediterranean region. The Centre also offers a platform for public and independent institutions from the region to discuss development challenges, learn from each other and strengthen local, national and regional capacities to manage interdependence. www.worldbank.org/mena

3. Secretariat of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM)

The Union for the Mediterranean was launched in 2008 at the Paris Summit for the Mediterranean in order to raise the political level of the strategic relationship between the EU and its southern neighbours. Projects for the Mediterranean are at the heart of the UfM. The Secretariat, based in Barcelona, is responsible for identifying and promoting projects of regional, sub-regional and trans-national value that will promote growth, employment, regional cohesion and socio-economic integration. The Paris Summit has already identified a number of key areas: de-pollution of the Mediterranean; maritime and land highways; civil protection; Mediterranean Solar Plan; Euro-Mediterranean University; and a Mediterranean business development initiative.

4. Mediterranean Commission for Sustainable Development (MCSD) Established by UNEP/MAP in 1996 as an advisory body to the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention, it is a think-tank on policies for sustainable development in the Mediterranean. It makes recommendations on future actions relating to key Mediterranean themes for the promotion of sustainable development in areas such as tourism, trade, industry and urban management. www.unepmap.org

5. Centre for Environment and Development for the Arab Region and Europe (CEDARE)

The Center for Environment and Development for the Arab Region and Europe (CEDARE) was established in 1992 in response to the convention adopted by the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible For the Environment (CAMRE) , in 1991 and upon the initiative of the Arab Republic of Egypt, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Arab fund for Economic and Social Development (AFESD).

CEDARE's strategic objective is to build a qualified and responsible human resource base, capable of addressing the complex array of environmental challenges and concerns, as a commitment to a sustainable future, through collective action, reform and renewal. To achieve this objective CEDARE has a programme of action addressing water resource management, land resources management, dissemination of knowledge and information technology, trade investment and the environment. www.cedare.int

6. European Environment Agency (EEA)

The European Environment Agency (EEA) is an agency of the European Union. Its task is to provide sound, independent information on the environment. It is also a major information source for those involved in developing, adopting, implementing

and evaluating environmental policy, and also the general public.
www.eea.europa.eu
