



**MARBENA**

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**Electronic conference on  
'The Southern and Eastern  
Mediterranean Sea and the Black  
Sea: New challenges for marine  
biodiversity research and monitoring'**

**6 to 24 September 2004**

**Summary of discussions**

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Flanders  
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The topics and issues raised in the electronic conference have been presented to the Marbena Workshop in Piran (Slovenia) held on 27 November – 1 December 2004. This volume includes introductions and summaries of discussions. All the discussion points raised during the conference can be reviewed by registering onto <http://www.vliz.be/marbena>

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## **\*Summary of discussions on Topic 2.5: Regional and international cooperation and comparative situations in the Mediterranean and Black Seas**

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The last topic of the joint Eastern and Southern Mediterranean and the Black Sea session addressed the issue of regional and international cooperation in these two marine basins. Introducing this topic, the Chairs stressed that despite many international agreements on different aspects of ocean monitoring, research, and sustainable use and some successful regional programmes, there is a need of a concerted cross-nation effort of researchers and decision makers to improve communication and to establish concrete biodiversity research and monitoring priorities in the two regions. A series of questions were posed in particular on how to bridge north and south, east and west in the Mediterranean and Black Sea regions. This challenging issue stimulated a very lively discussion on the theme which continued till the end of e-conference. Oksana Tarasova from the Commission on the Protection of the Black Sea against Pollution (Turkey) expressed her opinion that the legal and international frameworks are aimed at building such bridges. She explained that the Black Sea Commission, through its institutional network, is making attempts to clearly formulate the needs in scientific research aimed at reducing scientific uncertainty and on integration of new knowledge into the work program of the Commission. The Black Sea information system that is being created and is expected to be finalized in one year will give an opportunity for the Black Sea scientists. On the other side, the knowledge obtained by scientific research shall be formulated in a manner that will allow translating scientific findings in policies and actions for relevant information. She believes that the financial sources for such activities could be national, regional, international or private but clearly stated and justified research priorities will help to identify which source could be used for a specific purpose. As an example of the Commission's activity taking advantage of new electronic tools, Tarasova mentioned establishment of a zooplankton expert network of which Ahmet Kideys of the Institute of Marine Sciences, METU (Turkey), who has been working extensively on zooplankton of the Black Sea for a long time was unaware. Kideys remarked that inclusion of majority of good scientists and institutes from the region is essential for success of the programme and gave the NATO programme as positive case.

Ferdinando Boero (Lecce University – Italy) agreed with the situation depicted in the introduction about many agreements but much less integration. He went further in stating that protocols signed by authorities rarely started factual cooperation among the scientific communities. His experience

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\* Please refer to this section as:

Ammar, I.; Magni, P.; Malej, A.; Moncheva, S. (2004). Summary of discussions on Topic 2.5: Regional and international cooperation and comparative situations in the Mediterranean and Black Seas. Pp 87-90 in Magni, P. *et al.* (eds): Electronic conference on 'The Southern and Eastern Mediterranean Sea and the Black Sea: New challenges for marine biodiversity research and monitoring' - Summary of discussions, 6 to 24 September, 2004. Flanders Marine Institute: Oostende, Belgium.

when preparing a report on Mediterranean biodiversity for the Mediterranean Regional Activity Centre on Specially Protected Areas (RAC/SPA) indicated that there were scientists in all Mediterranean countries but the state of knowledge was sparse and there was no strategy. Boero suggested that the scientific community should identify some issues of high priority and inform decision makers that this information is most needed. As a first step, he proposed the preparation of a formal description of habitat types in the Mediterranean followed by reconstruction of their distribution; by Boero's opinion this is doable in relatively short time if proper funds become available. He also came up with the proposal that we should try to establish world-wide activities to assess marine biodiversity in a similar manner as geophysical mapping was done in the sixties during the International Geophysical Year. And finally he called for a strong theoretical effort and for building of a conceptual model regarding marine biodiversity. In reply to Boero's message, Kerim Ben Mustapha of the Institut National des Sciences et Technologies de la Mer (Tunisia) suggested to start with the "easiest" issues, i.e. each country should start by recording all the lists and bibliography related to marine biodiversity. This would give more accurate picture of the actual state and would also help to identify gaps. Kerim Ben Mustapha also advocated the need for joint field work either bilateral or multilateral/regional that would help to harmonise scientific culture among scientists from different countries. By his opinion increasing number of regional/international fora/agreements has not brought concrete cooperation of scientists from different countries on field; therefore he called for proposals for joint field campaigns focusing on biodiversity. His ideas were supported by Morad Award of the National Institute of Oceanography and Fisheries (Egypt) who stressed the importance of initiating a project on sensitivity mapping covering the whole southern and eastern Mediterranean shores. This major project would be contributed and participated by all the surrounding countries, as well as by the international agencies and organizations. Furthermore, Morad Award gave the MAMA project (1st MedGOOS network project) as a good example of coordination; this project established the multi-national network with a partnership from all riparian countries and a regional platform for marine observations and forecasts. He also believes that cooperation and communication could be improved through enhancing cooperation among MAP countries and the Euro-Mediterranean partnership, by creating European/Northern/Southern Mediterranean Centres, launching technology platforms, increasing mobility and improving coordination of national and international research programmes. Ahmet Kideys underlined the importance of the NATO Science for Stability projects in the Black Sea region with very successful cooperation of scientists from riparian countries that produced hundreds of good quality publications and also helped create the environmental database for the Black Sea.

Aldo Manos of the NAGREF - Fisheries Research Institute (Greece) argued that one of the functions of marine environment research, though not the main one, is to influence policies that can correct undesirable trends which have been identified and quantified, and for which clear links have been established with specific human activities. In order to influence policy the results of research must reach decision makers in a form that are both understandable and relevant to them. He suggested that transparency has to be improved particularly between programmes since they are developed without an over-all picture of all the other relevant activities in the same field. Duplication of efforts by the same research institutions, in the same areas, and on the same subjects, is thus hard to avoid. Manos questioned whether requirement of full disclosure and exchange of information between programmes when planning and financing new research should become a routine. This would promote specialization in research and ensure that a critical mass of resources is devoted to priority subjects. He also highlighted transparency of research to the general public as a prerequisite of long-term political and financial support, therefore the provision of information to the media and NGO should become a standard feature built into research projects.

MAP / MED POL views on regional cooperation on Mediterranean marine diversity monitoring were communicated by Colpan Polat Beken, MED POL programme officer (Greece). Marine biodiversity is not included in the core objectives and activities of MED POL as these issues are

handled by MAP/SPA/RAC. Anyhow, Polat Beken referred to monitoring and research components of the two strategic action programmes SAP-MED and SAP-BIO. In particular, SAP-BIO programme aims to protect the biodiversity and living resources of the Mediterranean, as well as their habitats. The programme was approved recently (2003) and it defines the overall needs and gaps at the regional level. Inventorying, mapping and monitoring of Mediterranean coastal and marine biodiversity are defined as one of the top priorities of the programme. National reports provided during the preparation of the SAP-BIO commonly highlighted the need to establish regional and national monitoring programme on biodiversity and to enhance research efforts to further improve the knowledge. For a better management of the monitoring activities within the frame of MAP mandate and activities, cooperation between the regional activity centres and MED POL is essential. SAP-MED and SAP-BIO need to be interactively implemented and some of the programme objectives, for example those of monitoring, could be bilaterally checked and common technicalities and needs of information should be discovered.

Izdihar Ammar of the Tishreen University (Syria) raised the point that the lack of knowledge and absence of strategy to work jointly is a responsibility of institutional administration and not only of the researchers themselves. Many steps have been taken by the Syrian government to encourage and support scientific collaboration with other universities and scientific institutions and centres in and outside the country. In the field of marine sciences, there are now many scientific cooperation programmes between Syrian researchers and researchers from Lebanon, Egypt, Oman, Greece, Tunisia, Italy and France. The list of joint projects which are being carried out by national and non-national efforts indicates that despite limited coast and financial and other problems, Syria is putting a lot of effort into the study of the marine ecosystem; she supplemented her statements with an extensive list of publications in Arabic. Nevertheless, Ammar was not optimistic concerning the future of marine biodiversity and called for action by competent authorities. In reply to her message, Boero stated that the long list of contributions on Syrian biodiversity is not available to most people. The documents in Arabic are not understandable by most of the scientific community, and the contributions to CIESM and SIBM societies are available only to those who attend the congress and to the associates of the society. He believes that very important information is published in a way that is not easy to find. In contrast to Boero, Kerim Ben Mustapha understood Ammar's pessimism, which, he believes, can be linked to the lack of involvement of the scientific communities in thinking globally. He also argued that the SPA & BD protocol of the Barcelona convention, which rules the implementation of MPA in high seas and countries bordering waters (SPAMI), should be better explored as a tool for multilateral cooperation. Further to this, Amir Ibrahim of the Tishreen University (Syria) suggested joint research projects carried out under the umbrella of the regional organization and authorities are the direct and most effective way of cooperation. In reply to Ibrahim's message, Kideys invited Ibrahim and his colleagues to the Middle East Technical University, Erdemli in Turkey, to discuss bilateral cooperation.

Messages that were posted on this topic:

<a href="#"><u>Introduction in English (original)</u></a>	16 Sep 04	Forum Admin
<a href="#"><u>the extremely important conference!</u></a>	17 Sep 04	Oksana Tarasova
<a href="#"><u>zooplankton expert network !</u></a>	17 Sep 04	Ahmet Kideys
<a href="#"><u>common projects on priorities</u></a>	17 Sep 04	Ferdinando Boero
<a href="#"><u>Let us lists</u></a>	17 Sep 04	Kerim Ben Mustapha
<a href="#"><u>For the project support on Integarted Senistivity maps</u></a>	20 Sep 04	MORAD AWAD
<a href="#"><u>NATO contribution</u></a>	17 Sep 04	Ahmet Kideys
<a href="#"><u>IMPORTANT QUESTIONS? AND TRYING TO ANSWER</u></a>	20 Sep 04	MORAD AWAD
<a href="#"><u>Introduction en Français</u></a>	16 Sep 04	Forum Admin

<u>mailling lists</u>	20 Sep 04	Kerim Ben Mustapha
<u>Introduction in Russian</u>	17 Sep 04	Forum Admin
<u>Introduction in Arabic</u>	17 Sep 04	Forum Admin
<u>improving transparency</u>	18 Sep 04	aldo manos
<u>MAP/ MED POL voice</u>	20 Sep 04	Sevcac Colpan Polat Beken
<u>Sub-regional cooperation</u>	20 Sep 04	Izdihar Ammar
<u>Cousteau and the mediterranean</u>	20 Sep 04	Ferdinando Boero
<u>marine organizations??</u>	20 Sep 04	Izdihar Ammar
<u>SPAMI</u>	21 Sep 04	Kerim Ben Mustapha
<u>EU Conferences</u>	22 Sep 04	Iouri Oliouline
<u>Sharing the idea on regional cooperation</u>	23 Sep 04	Amir Ibrahim
<u>Syria-Turkey cooperation</u>	24 Sep 04	Ahmet Kideys