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MEDITERRANEAN ACTION PLAN

Tenth Ordinary Meeting of the Contracting Parties
to the Convention for the Protection
of the Mediterranean Sea against Pollution
and its Protocols

Tunis, 18-21 November 1997

General Principles and Definitions of the Geographical Coverage for the Preparation of Inventories of the Elements of Biological Diversity in the Mediterranean Region, and Criteria for the Preparation of National Inventories of Natural Sites of Conservation Interest (Draft)

INTRODUCTION

Section 2.1 of the Mediterranean Action Plan - Phase II and Articles 3.3 and 15 of the Protocol concerning Specially Protected Areas and Biological Diversity in the Mediterranean contain provisions for the preparation of inventories of the elements of biological diversity important for its conservation and sustainable use. MAP Phase II also provides for such inventories to be prepared according to common criteria jointly established by the Contracting Parties.

In this framework, the Regional Activity Centre for Specially Protected Areas (SPA/RAC) was invited by the Extraordinary Meeting of the Contracting Parties held in Montpellier, 1-4 July 1996, to prepare common criteria and guidelines for the preparation of inventories of sites, species and other elements of biological diversity.

Within the fulfilment of this mandate, SPA/RAC established an *ad hoc* group of experts composed of representatives of international organizations competent in this domain, with a view to preparing a first draft of the criteria. The group met in Tunis on 6 and 7 March 1997, prepared a first draft of the criteria and issued recommendations on their further elaboration.

The Meeting of the MAP National Focal Points held in Athens, 7-9 July 1997 invited SPA/RAC to finalize the criteria for submission and approval by the Tenth Ordinary Meeting of the Contracting Parties. To this purpose, SPA/RAC has convened in Athens from 8 to 10 September 1997 a Meeting of experts representatives of the Contracting Parties with the main tasks of further elaborating and finalizing the common criteria.

The present document includes the different sections of the criteria which have been finalized by the meeting of experts above-mentioned. They are proposed for consideration and approval by the Tenth Ordinary Meeting of the Contracting Parties.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES AND DEFINITION OF THE GEOGRAPHICAL COVERAGE FOR THE PREPARATION OF INVENTORIES OF THE ELEMENTS OF BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY IN THE MEDITERRANEAN REGION, AND CRITERIA FOR THE PREPARATION OF NATIONAL INVENTORIES OF NATURAL SITES OF CONSERVATION INTEREST (DRAFT)

The present criteria are established for the purposes of the preparation of inventories of the elements of biological diversity in the Mediterranean region, pursuant to section 2.1 of the Action Plan for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Sustainable Development of the Coastal Areas of the Mediterranean (MAP Phase II) and Articles 3 and 15 of the Protocol concerning Specially Protected Areas and Biological Diversity in the Mediterranean.

I. GENERAL PRINCIPLES

1. The main objective of the preparation of the inventories will be the collection of data useful for the conservation of Mediterranean biological diversity.
2. To conveniently meet conservation purposes, the inventories shall:
 - be regularly updated;
 - contain for each listed element the information useful for its conservation and monitoring.
3. With a view to fostering the exchange of information concerning biological diversity in the Mediterranean, and in order to ensure comparability and regional integration, national inventories shall:
 - be accessible for comparative evaluation and regional integration in accordance with procedures that are appropriate to the requirements of conservation;
 - be compiled according to commonly agreed standard formats;
 - be available in English or French.

II. GEOGRAPHICAL COVERAGE OF THE INVENTORIES

1. The geographical coverage of the inventories shall include the marine and terrestrial coastal areas, including wetlands, of the Mediterranean region.
2. Concerning marine areas, the definition of the Mediterranean Sea Area delimited in Article 2 of the Protocol shall apply, it being understood that, for the purposes of the preparation of national inventories, it shall be limited to the areas under the sovereignty or jurisdiction of the Party concerned.
3. Concerning terrestrial coastal areas, including wetlands, the following definitions shall apply:
 - (a) Coastal sites: sites including a stretch of coastline or being directly affected by the marine environment (e.g. coastal lagoons, estuaries, tidal flats, dunes, cliffs, ...);
 - (b) Coastal species: species directly linked to the marine environment in at least one stage of its life cycle and/or regularly occurring in coastal sites.

III. CRITERIA FOR THE PREPARATION OF NATIONAL INVENTORIES OF NATURAL SITES OF CONSERVATION INTEREST

1. The following definitions shall apply for the purpose of the use of this section of the criteria:

(a) *Natural habitat* means terrestrial or aquatic areas distinguished by geographic, abiotic and biotic features, whether entirely natural or semi-natural;

(b) *Habitat of a species* means an environment defined by specific abiotic and biotic factors, in which the species lives at any stage of its biological cycle;

(c) *Site* means a geographically defined area whose extent is clearly delineated;

(d) *Centre* means the Regional Activity Centre for Specially Protected Areas.

2. Each Party shall compile a comprehensive inventory of marine and terrestrial coastal sites under its sovereignty or jurisdiction important for the conservation of biological diversity.

3. The presence within the site of a significant sample of characteristic elements of Mediterranean biological diversity is the basic criterion for its inclusion in the inventory. Such elements shall include, in particular:

(a) threatened marine and coastal natural habitat types;

(b) the habitat of endangered or threatened species of the region.

To guide the identification of sites to be inventoried, the Parties shall jointly establish reference lists of these elements to be annexed to these criteria, taking into account Annexes 2 and 3 of the Protocol concerning Specially Protected Areas and Biological Diversity in the Mediterranean and a model classification established by the SPA/RAC on the basis, among other elements, of the work available in this field among the Contracting Parties.

These lists may be revised by the Parties.

4. The significance of a site for a given natural habitat type shall be assessed on the basis of the following criteria:

(a) Degree of representativity of the natural habitat type on the site;

(b) Area of the site covered by the natural habitat type in relation to the total area covered by that natural habitat type within national territory;

(c) Degree of conservation of the structure and functions of the natural habitat type concerned and restoration possibilities;

5. The significance of a coastal site for a given species shall be assessed on the basis of the following criteria:

- (a) size and density of the population of the species present on the site in relation to the populations present on the national territory;
- (b) degree of conservation of the features of the habitat which are important for the species concerned and restoration possibilities;
- (c) degree of isolation of the population present on the site in relation to the natural range of the species.

6. The significance of a marine site for a given species shall be assessed on the basis of the following criteria:

- (a) size and density of the population of the species present on the site in relation to the populations present on the national territory;
- (b) degree of conservation of the features of the habitat which are important for the species concerned and restoration possibilities;
- (c) the endemic characteristics of the species at the local, national and regional levels;
- (d) the role of the site in the whole or a part of the biological and food cycles of the particular species.

7. Information concerning each inventoried site will be compiled according to a standard format, which will have to be agreed by the Parties upon a proposal from the Centre. Such information will include, but will not necessarily be limited to, the fields detailed in Appendix I to these criteria.

8. The inventories so established shall be reviewed and updated at intervals not exceeding 5 years.

APPENDIX I

FORMAT OF INFORMATION CONCERNING THE SITES INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL INVENTORIES

1. Site name .
2. Site location.
3. Area.
4. Site length (if possible).
5. Description of the site:
 - (a) threatened marine and coastal habitats (as per agreed reference list) present on the site and site assessment for them;
 - (b) threatened marine and coastal species (as per agreed reference list) present in the site and site assessment for them;
 - (c) other habitats and species of conservation interest;
 - (d) invasive species;
 - (e) other prominent natural features.
6. Reasons for choice.
7. Conservation status.
8. Threats.
9. Human activities in and around the site and their impact.
10. Land tenure.
11. Protection status.
12. Main conservation regulations.
13. International designation.
14. Conservation projects being implemented.

15. Management plans and practices.
16. Authority responsible for the management of the site.
17. Other institutions/organizations involved in site management (universities , NGOs, ...).
18. Date of first compilation.
19. Update.
20. Documentation on the site:
 - (a) site map;
 - (b) scientific publications and reports;
 - (c) aerial photographs;
 - (d) other pertinent material.