

**REPORT ON THE ACTIVITIES CARRIED OUT BY RAC/SPA
SINCE THE FIFTH MEETING OF NATIONAL FOCAL POINTS
FOR SPECIALLY PROTECTED AREAS
(March 2001 – May 2003)**

INTRODUCTION

The present report has been prepared by RAC/SPA to inform the National Focal Points for SPAs at their Sixth Meeting (Marseilles, 17-20 June 2003) about the activities that RAC/SPA has been carrying out since their Fifth Meeting. The Report covers the period from March 2001 to May 2003. In addition to the information about the activities that RAC/SPA has been carrying out, the document includes recommendations to be proposed at the next Meetings of MAP Focal Points and Contracting Parties for the next two-year period (these recommendations are shaded in grey boxes).

1. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ACTION PLAN FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF THE MEDITERRANEAN MONK SEAL

A field mission was carried out in the late spring of 2002 with the purpose of identifying possible "hot spots" for the presence of the Mediterranean monk seal in the Cyrenaica coastal region in Libya. The fieldwork was conducted within a Memorandum coordinated by RAC/SPA and involving collaboration between the Environment General Authority (EGA) of Libya and the Istituto Centrale per la Ricerca Scientifica e Tecnologica Applicata al Mare (ICRAM) of Italy.

Concerning the general state of species, during the last Meeting of the National Focal Points for Specially Protected Areas (Valencia, 23-26 April 2001) RAC/SPA pointed out that the actions so far undertaken in the Mediterranean for the conservation of the monk seal are not sufficient to ensure the species' survival, and that it has not been possible to halt the decline of this species.

Following a discussion on this issue, the Meeting requested that RAC/SPA organise a group of experts to identify and plan concrete actions to protect and counter the Mediterranean monk seal's current decline.

The group was set up and includes specialists from various Mediterranean countries. They were invited to prepare a short concrete document concerning the actions to be undertaken and to attend a Meeting in Lathakia, Syria, on 29-30 September 2002. Five experts, and representatives of both the host country and RAC/SPA attended the Meeting. A document, which gives a proposal for priority activities for the species (including calendar of implementation and budget) was the main output of this Meeting. The document is being presented as Information Document UNEP(DEC)/MED WG.232/Inf.6.

At its recent Meeting, held in Sarajevo (19-20 May 2003), the MAP Bureau urged the Contracting Parties to put into effect more effective measures to safeguard the monk

seal; RAC/SPA was called on to remind the countries of the importance of this capital issue.

While stressing the importance of field surveys and inventories of habitats favourable for Mediterranean monk seals, RAC/SPA stressed - as it did at the previous Meeting of National Focal Points for SPAs - that the actions undertaken in the Mediterranean for the conservation of the monk seal are still not sufficient to prevent the species from vanishing, and that its decline is continuing. At the previous Meeting of National Focal Points for SPAs, RAC/SPA insisted on the need to envisage implementing the provisions of Paragraph 21 of the Action Plan (management through translocation, etc.), provisions that were not adopted.

The main urgent short-term priority to be addressed to prevent the extinction of the species is to halt the seal killings and the disturbance to caves by every legal means, a basic measure that is still not enforced, although wilful killing is still the main cause of monk seal deaths. A short document prepared by RAC/SPA regarding questions of major priority for the monk seal in the Mediterranean appears as Annex I.

Proposed Recommendations

Recommendations addressed to the Contracting Parties

To take note of the proposal elaborated by the experts, and pursue in particular the prompt implementation of the following emergency actions to counter the present high mortality and habitat degradation:

- to increase survival by enforcing the laws for halting the killing; promote the creation of systems of net insurance
- to neutralise habitat harassment by forbidding any approach to the seal caves, except for transiting fishing boats; avoid habitat degradation around the caves.

Recommendations addressed to the Secretariat (RAC/SPA)

To invite the Secretariat (RAC/SPA) to:

provide assistance to countries to increase the survival of monk seals and reduce seal habitat degradation

contact the relevant organisations with a view to establishing a tripartite Committee for the Conservation of Monk Seal Species

establish a databank to compile information about the programmes for Monk Seal conservation

promote the implementation of the activities recommended for the species in the document elaborated by the experts.

2. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ACTION PLAN FOR THE CONSERVATION OF MEDITERRANEAN MARINE TURTLES

RAC/SPA's activities in this field focused during the reporting period on the following subjects: (I) improving scientific knowledge about certain aspects of the marine turtles' biology, particularly the dynamics of their Mediterranean populations and nesting activities; (II) regulations relating to the conservation and management of marine turtle populations and habitats; (III) spreading information and exchanging experiences by organising training sessions and publishing technical documents; (IV) organising the First Mediterranean Conference on Marine Turtles. The following main activities have been developed.

RAC/SPA organised, jointly with the Secretariats of the Bonn Convention and the Bern Convention, the First Mediterranean Conference on Marine Turtles (Rome, Italy, 24-28 October 2001). The Italian Government, through the Ministry of the Environment and the ICRAM, made a financial and logistic contribution to the organising of the Conference. The Conference was attended by more than 200 participants from Mediterranean countries and from outside the region. The outcome of the Conference is annexed to the present document as Annex II.

At the request of the Turkish Focal Point, RAC/SPA assisted in undertaking a programme of monitoring green turtles in summer 2001 on the Kazanlı beach. The main aim of the study was to start a complete survey during the nesting season in order to provide the Turkish Ministry of the Environment with basic information for setting up a conservation strategy for the species in Turkey. A poster including the result of the monitoring campaign was presented at the last International Symposium on Marine Turtle Biology and Conservation in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

In 2002, the Turkish Ministry of the Environment, with RAC/SPA's support, continued to undertake conservation activities in southern Turkey, mainly on the Akyatan and Samandag beaches. The aim was to start a monitoring programme taking into account the Kazanlı model. National Expert training and awareness activities were carried out.

In the same context, the Lebanese Ministry of the Environment, with the support of RAC/SPA and the Mediterranean Association to Save the Sea Turtles, organised a survey to assess marine turtle nesting along the Lebanese coast. This survey provided further evidence of green turtle nesting in southern Lebanon and identified interaction with fisheries as a major problem.

In accordance with the recommendations made by the Twelfth Ordinary Meeting of the Contracting Parties, RAC/SPA elaborated a technical report on the standardization of tagging methods and to centralize information resulting from tagging programmes in a database. The document is presented as Information Document UNEP(DEC)/MED WG.232/Inf9.

RAC/SPA has elaborated draft guidelines to improve the involving of marine turtle rescue centres as an additional tool for reducing mortality. The guidelines aim to provide conservationists, decision-makers and those responsible for existing rescue centres with the necessary information and practical advice for the development and

effective implementing of these centres for the rehabilitation of sick and injured marine turtles. The draft guidelines are presented in Document UNEP(DEC)MED WG.232/Inf.10.

RAC/SPA has published in three languages (Arabic, English, and Maltese) an information/awareness module for fishermen, with the aim of reducing mortality due to accidental capture of marine turtles by fishing gear. The document will also be published in French. Following on an agreement with several National Focal Points, the module will be published in local languages (Croatian, Slovenian). The module will be used to undertake awareness campaigns targeting fishermen in different Mediterranean countries.

At the request of the Tunisian National Focal Point for SPAs, RAC/SPA supported the scientific survey that had been set up since 1996 to carry out monitoring, nest management and research activities on the Kuriat Islands in 2001 and 2002.

Recommendations for the further implementation of the Action Plan

Recommendations addressed to the Contracting Parties

To take note of the “Guidelines to improve the involvement of marine turtle rescue centres” as an additional tool to reduce mortality.

Recommendations addressed to the Secretariat (RAC/SPA)

To invite the Secretariat (RAC/SPA) to:

- organise a coordination workshop on the standardisation of tagging programmes and centralisation of information

- elaborate a Mediterranean project for fishery by-catch assessment

- establish collaboration with FAO-GFCM to undertake educational campaigns for fishers to correctly haul, handle, release and record incidentally caught turtles

- create a permanent website for assembling available data of interest for the conservation of marine turtles in the Mediterranean. The site of the Mediterranean Conference will be used and will include also a Mediterranean newsletter, as recommended by the Action Plan.

3. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ACTION PLAN FOR THE CONSERVATION OF CETACEANS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA

A Mediterranean Database of Cetacean Strandings (MEDACES) has been set up at the University of Valencia (Spain) through a Memorandum of Understanding with RAC/SPA and is currently being supported by the Spanish Ministry of the Environment. The importance of MEDACES is twofold: (1) For the first time, all the

stranding data will be gathered in a single database. Researchers, civil servants and people interested in the biology and conservation of Mediterranean cetaceans will have access to information on stranding locations, characteristics of stranded animals, and storage institutions where samples from these mammals are kept for future analysis and study; (2) distribution maps will be produced using a Geographical Information System (GIS). The form for entering the above data has been reviewed by several specialists from ACCOBAMS and RAC/SPA. Once the corrections and suggestions are included, the form will be accessible as a web page. The provisional web page is under construction at <http://medaces.uv.es>. Annual or biannual reports will be also accessible online. MEDACES is being developed as a joint initiative within the framework of RAC/SPA and ACCOBAMS.

Since a stranding network should be formed in every riparian country, a document on the matter has been elaborated by the University of Valencia via a MoU with RAC/SPA.

The work was done on the basis of the experience gained with the Italian network for monitoring cetacean strandings and contains guidelines for developing national networks (notification of stranded animals, skill and role of the local correspondents, sampling and standardisation of records, equipment, national coordination, regular meetings, workshops, etc.).

The guidelines appear in Document UNEP (DEC) MED WG.232/Inf.8.

To mark the recent entry into force of ACCOBAMS, RAC/SPA organised, in collaboration with the Agreement's Interim Secretariat and the Tunisian Government, a workshop aimed at producing a guide to elaborating National Action Plans for the conservation of cetaceans. The recommendations made by the workshop are being used to assist several Mediterranean countries in developing National Action Plans that take into account the provisions of ACCOBAMS and the Barcelona Convention's Cetacean Action Plan.

An initiative was started by RAC/SPA in 1995 to standardize photo-identification catalogues. The initiative was followed by the Europhlukes European programme. A directory of teutophagous cetacean photo-identification was initiated in 2002 by RAC/SPA via a contract with an expert from the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes of Montpellier, France. Up to 268 individuals belonging to three teutophagous species inhabiting the western basin can be identified thanks to the work done in the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes for this Directory, which is compatible with Europhlukes directives.

Considering the rapid growing of whale-watching worldwide, RAC/SPA has asked one of the best scholars on whale-watching worldwide to elaborate a document that can be a useful tool for the Parties in the future development and control of whale-watching activities in a way that is compatible with cetacean conservation in their respective areas. The document has been elaborated taking into account the existing relevant initiatives and harmonized with the ACCOBAMS guidelines. It is being presented to the Meeting as UNEP (DEC)/MED WG.232/Inf.5.

Recommendations for further implementation of the Action Plan

Recommendations addressed to the Contracting Parties

To take note of the “Guidelines for the development of National Networks of Cetacean Strandings” and promote the development of such networks at national level.

To take note of the “Document on recommendations for a code of conduct for whale-watching in the Mediterranean Sea” and facilitate its use by the institutions and companies involved in the matter in their respective countries.

To promote research programmes to identify critical areas for the threatened *Tursiops truncatus* and *Delphinus delphis* populations and discover the wintering areas of *Balaenoptera physalus*.

Recommendations addressed to the Secretariat (RAC/SPA)

To invite the Secretariat (RAC/SPA) to:

assist countries in creating national stranding networks and try to set up a regional network for strandings in close coordination with the ACCOBAMS Secretariat

assist countries in elaborating National Action Plans for the Conservation of Cetaceans

assist countries in promoting practices aimed at broadening coastal fishermen’s activities to include alternative ones that are more compatible with the conservation of dolphin populations

collaborate with the relevant organizations to assess the level and effect of by-catch on cetacean populations in the Mediterranean fisheries.

4. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ACTION PLAN FOR THE CONSERVATION OF MARINE VEGETATION IN THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA

Having carried out all the tasks for which it was responsible, according to the calendar of the Action Plan, RAC/SPA has directed its activities during the period covered by the present Report towards assisting those countries which have requested support in mapping and monitoring *Posidonia* meadows. For that purpose, RAC/SPA, in collaboration with the Principality of Monaco, has helped Slovenia to map the meadows existing within its territorial waters and to carry out a national awareness campaign on the interest these phanerogam meadows present. RAC/SPA has also provided assistance in the studying of *Posidonia* meadows in three locations in Tunisia (Monastir bay, Sidi Raïs and Kerkennah).

A meeting was held in Marseilles with the Action Plan Partners on April 2002 to facilitate further cooperation with them. During this Meeting, the Partners examined the following points: (I) practical modalities for developing the Mediterranean database on marine vegetation, (II) standardising symbols for marine vegetation mapping; (III) inventorying Mediterranean flora species; and (IV) organising the 2nd Mediterranean Symposium on Marine Vegetation.

RAC/SPA has contacted the Greek National Centre for Marine Research (NCRM), through the National Focal Point for SPAs in Greece, with a view to organising in Athens the 2nd Mediterranean Symposium on Marine Vegetation. The event will take place on 12-13 December 2003.

In the context of the provisions of Paragraphs 25 and 26 of the Action Plan, RAC/SPA received a request from the Greek National Centre for Marine Research (NCRM, Greece) expressing its interest in becoming an "Action Plan Associate" for implementation, and a request from Nautilus (Italy) expressing its interest in becoming an "Action Plan Partner".

Recommendations for further implementation of the Action Plan

Recommendations addressed to the Contracting Parties

To take the necessary steps to carry out, within the programmed deadlines, the activities envisaged in the implementation calendar of the Action Plan for the Conservation of Marine Vegetation

To Grant, according to the terms of Paragraphs 25 and 26 of the Action Plan for the Conservation of Marine Vegetation in the Mediterranean Sea, the status of Action Plan Associate to the Greek National Centre for Marine Research (NCRM, Greece), and the title of Action Plan Partner to Nautilus (Italy).

Recommendations addressed to the Secretariat (RAC/SPA)

To invite the Secretariat (RAC/SPA) to assess the implementing of the Action Plan for the Conservation of Marine Vegetation in the Mediterranean Sea, and to present a report on this subject at the next Meeting of National Focal Points for SPAs.

5. ELABORATION OF THE ACTION PLAN FOR THE CONSERVATION OF CARTILAGINOUS FISHES (CHONDRICHTHYANS) IN THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA

At their Twelfth Ordinary Meeting (Monaco, November 2001), the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention invited RAC/SPA to prepare an Action Plan for the conservation of Mediterranean species of cartilaginous fish. RAC/SPA, in collaboration with the Istituto Centrale per la Ricerca Scientifica e Tecnologica Applicata al Mare (ICRAM), organised a Meeting of Experts to elaborate this Action Plan. The Meeting took place in Rome, Italy, from 10 to 12 October 2002. Its main

work was devoted to reviewing the draft Action Plan prepared by the Secretariat. The Meeting was attended by experts who represented the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention and the following international organisations: IUCN-Centre for Mediterranean Cooperation, IUCN-Shark Specialist Group, and ACCOBAMS.

The draft Action Plan (UNEP(DEC)/MED WG.232/5) is being presented here to the Sixth Meeting of National Focal Points for SPAs with a view to submitting it to the Contracting Parties for adoption.

Proposed Recommendations

Recommendations addressed to the Contracting Parties

To adopt the Action Plan for the Conservation of Cartilaginous Fish (Chondrichthyan) in the Mediterranean Sea.

Recommendations addressed to the Secretariat (RAC/SPA)

To invite the Secretariat (RAC/SPA) to:

work for the implementation of the following actions provided in the Action Plan according to the implementation timetable:

- establish a network and directory of collaborators
- support the defining of Protocols for (i) monitoring commercial landings and discards by species and (ii) recording data on rarely observed, endangered and protected species
- contribute to information campaigns and publishing materials for public awareness
- create guidelines for reducing the presence of sensitive species in by-catch and releasing them if caught, prepared and published in the appropriate languages
- organise a Symposium on Mediterranean chondrichthyan fishes
- support the establishing of, or feed the existing, centralized databases.

6. ELABORATION OF THE ACTION PLAN FOR THE CONSERVATION OF BIRD SPECIES LISTED IN ANNEX II TO THE PROTOCOL CONCERNING SPECIALLY PROTECTED AREAS AND BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

Following a recommendation made by the Twelfth Ordinary Meeting of the Contracting Parties, RAC/SPA started to work on the elaboration of an Action Plan for the conservation of bird species listed in the SPA Protocol. To this end, it contacted different organisations (MedWet, Tour du Valat, Medmaravis, Birdlife International, AEWA) to join the process of the elaboration of the Action Plan. An ad hoc meeting was held in Tour du Valat (France) on 7 and 8 February 2003 to define the outline of the Action Plan and to gather inputs from the partners.

The draft Action Plan (Document UNEP(DEC)/MED WG.232/4), is being presented here to the Sixth Meeting of National Focal Points for SPAs to be submitted to the Contracting Parties for adoption.

Proposed recommendations

Recommendations addressed to the Contracting Parties

To adopt the Action Plan for the Conservation of Bird Species Listed in Annex II to the SPA Protocol and Biological Diversity.

Recommendations addressed to the Secretariat (RAC/SPA)

To invite the Secretariat (RAC/SPA) to:

work for the implementation of the actions provided for in the Action Plan according to the implementation timetable.

7. ELABORATION OF THE ACTION PLAN CONCERNING SPECIES INTRODUCTIONS AND INVASIVE SPECIES IN THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA

In order to elaborate this Action Plan, RAC/SPA invited the National Focal Points for SPAs to designate experts to represent their respective countries in the working group in charge of elaborating the Draft Action Plan. RAC/SPA afterwards agreed with the appointed experts on the objectives and priorities of the Action Plan. Based on these agreements, a preliminary Draft Action Plan was elaborated and addressed to a Meeting of the Experts designated by the countries, which worked on it further. In addition to those experts, several others, representing international organisations (IMO, IUCN, etc.), contributed to the preparation of the Action Plan.

The Draft Action Plan (UNEP(DEC)/MED WG.232/6) is being presented here to the Sixth Meeting of National Focal Points for SPAs to be submitted to the Contracting Parties for adoption.

Proposed Recommendations

Recommendations addressed to the Contracting Parties

To adopt the Action Plan concerning Species Introductions and Invasive Species in the Mediterranean Sea.

Recommendations addressed to the Secretariat (RAC/SPA)

To invite the Secretariat (RAC/SPA) to:

work for the implementation of the actions provided for in the Action Plan according to the implementation timetable.

8. ASSISTANCE TO COUNTRIES IN THE SELECTION, ESTABLISHMENT AND MANAGEMENT OF SPECIALLY PROTECTED AREAS

During the reporting period, RAC/SPA's activities in this field were focused mainly on implementing the Regional Project for the Development of Marine and Coastal Protected Areas in the Mediterranean Region (MedMPA). The European Commission and RAC/SPA signed the contract in late December 2001, and the MedMPA Project started up on 1 February 2002 for a total duration of 30 months. The concerned countries are: Algeria, Cyprus, Israel, Malta, Morocco, Tunisia and Syria.

RAC/SPA's partners in implementing the Project are:

- Istituto Centrale per la Ricerca Scientifica e Tecnologica Applicata al Mare (ICRAM), Italy
- Unidad de Biología Marina (UBM) of the Instituto Universitario del Agua y de las Ciencias Ambientales, Alicante University, Spain
- Atelier Technique des Espaces Naturels (ATEN), France.

The main activities carried out in the framework of this Project are as follows:

Inventory of available documentation

Since one of the problems addressed by the Project is the insufficient information available on marine biological diversity in the Mediterranean, a computerized database containing the bibliographic records for studies and documentation available on biological diversity that are of relevance for the Project was prepared.

Elaboration of Management Plans for marine areas

In this activity, management plans are being elaborated for the marine areas of:

- the Al Hoceima National Park (Morocco)
- the proposed protected area of Rdum Majjiesa-Rass Raheb (Malta)
- the Zembra and Zembretta National Park (Tunisia)
- the Rosh Hanikra Nature Reserve (Israel)
- the El Kala National Park (Algeria)
- Oum Toyour (Syria).

To elaborate the management plans, preliminary missions were made to Morocco (27 May - 2 June 2002), Malta (16-20 June 2002), Syria (9-13 September 2002) and Tunisia (10-15 June 2002) in order to make preparations for the field surveys that would be carried out in the respective marine areas. The preliminary missions enabled the concerned actors to be informed about the Project's anticipated objectives and activities and enabled the details of the composition of the teams, the necessary equipment and material and the programmes of the field surveys to be defined. The mission teams are generally made up of experts from Project partners, national consultants, national staff from the relevant authorities, RAC/SPA international consultants and RAC/SPA staff.

Field surveys were carried out in the Al Hoceima National Park (3-21 September 2002) and in the Zembra and Zembretta National Park (11-20 October 2002). These surveys aimed at preparing zoning plans based on biological mapping and uses, with a view to elaborating a Management Plan for the respective marine areas. During the field surveys, several aspects linked mainly to the marine and coastal environment and secondarily to socio-economic activities in the surroundings of the considered area were dealt with.

On the basis of the results of the preliminary missions, mainly the field surveys, provisional versions of the Management Plans are being prepared.

Elaboration of National Plans for the development of Marine Protected Areas

This activity includes two actions, (I) the elaboration of a National Plan for the Development of Marine Protected Areas in Cyprus and (II) the elaboration of a National Plan for the Development of Marine Protected Areas in Syria.

This activity aims at carrying out field surveys along the coasts of Cyprus and Syria with a view to identifying marine sites of conservation interest to be proposed as protected areas within the framework of a National Plan. To this end, a series of field surveys were carried out in several sites in Cyprus (16 November-1 December 2002) and Syria (1-4 October 2002 and 8-15 November 2002).

Elaboration of guidelines and technical tools

One of the main objectives of the Project is to produce the technical tools needed in the Mediterranean and aimed at helping the managers and the authorities in charge of protected areas to further conserve natural sites and species. Two technical tools will be finalised during the second year of the Project:

- guidelines for the establishment and management of Specially Protected Areas
- a practical Guide on species in need of special care in the Mediterranean coastal zone (identification, population and habitat management, monitoring).

Notification of SPAMIs to relevant international organisations

RAC/SPA has carried out a consultation mission to the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) aimed at studying the modalities for the notification of SPAMIs to this organisation. The output of this consultation is that the most appropriate proposition for the SPAMIs is that of Particularly Sensitive Sea Areas (PSSA).

The Particularly Sensitive Sea Areas (PSSAs) established within the framework of the IMO are areas that need special protection through IMO because of their importance owed to identified ecological, socio-economic or scientific reasons and vulnerable to damages originated by International Maritime traffic. In order to be designated a PSSA, an area must satisfy one of the criteria listed in Section 4 of the Guidelines for the identification and designation of PSSAs existing in Resolution A.927(22) of the 22nd session of the OMI Assembly.

Presently, five marine areas are designated as PSSAs worldwide:

- the Great Barrier Reef (Australia, designated in 1990)
- the Sabana-Camaguey archipelago (Cuba, designated in September 1997)
- Malepo Island (Colombia, designated in April 2002)
- the Waden Sea (Denmark, Germany and Holland designated in October 2002)
- the surroundings of the Florida Keys (USA, designated in April 2002).

New proposals for inclusion in the SPAMI list

RAC/SPA received from the Spanish NFP for SPAs presentation reports for the following sites proposed for inclusion on the SPAMI List:

- the Parque Nacional Maritimo-Terrestre del Archipiélago de Cabrera
- Acantilados de Maro-Cerro Gordo
- the Islas Chafarinas

The presentation reports appear in document UNEP(DEC)/MED WG.232/9.

Proposed Recommendations

Recommendations addressed to the Contracting Parties

To support the requests for PSSAs

To include on the SPAMI List the sites proposed by the Focal Points Meeting for SPAs.

Recommendations addressed to the Secretariat (RAC/SPA)

To invite the Secretariat (RAC/SPA) to:

provide assistance to countries to improve the management of marine protected areas

provide assistance to countries to prepare and implement prevention and contingency plans for MPAs.

9. TRAINING ACTIVITIES CONCERNING SPECIALLY PROTECTED AREAS AND SPECIES CONSERVATION

The main training activities developed by RAC/SPA in 2001/2002 are described below.

RAC/SPA sponsored the participation of trainees from Lebanon and Israel in the training courses on marine turtle conservation held at Lara Station, Cyprus. The initiative is being carried out in collaboration with the Cyprus Wildlife Society, with the

support of the General Directorate of Fisheries (Cyprus). Training sessions lasting approximately ten days were organised in July and August 2001 and 2002.

To strengthen the national capabilities of the Mediterranean countries in the field of inventorying and mapping benthic biocenoses, RAC/SPA included a training component in each of the field surveys organised during the reporting period. This enabled the national experts involved to be trained in techniques of mapping plant formations and benthic biocenoses.

The lack of skilled staff being among the main constraints faced by the southern Mediterranean countries in the field of marine protected area management, it was essential that supportive training activities, that take the specific needs of each country into account, be included in the MedMPA Project. These are the training activities provided for by that Project:

- National Training Workshop on the development of tourism in relation to protected areas (Morocco)
- National Training Workshop on the development of tourism in relation to protected areas (Israel)
- National Training Workshop on the management of marine protected areas (Algeria)
- National Training Workshop on the techniques for the monitoring of marine protected areas (Tunisia)
- Regional Training Seminar on "Marine protected area management planning".

According to the Project planning, National Training Workshops and a Regional Training Seminar are to be organised in 2003.

RAC/SPA permitted to 5 staff working on protected areas to take part of a training session in Egypt.

Within the preparation framework for the Mediterranean strategy on taxonomy, the lack of taxonomists has been identified as one of the main problems in this field. This deficiency is getting worse because of the lack of training possibilities.

Proposed Recommendations

Recommendations addressed to the Contracting Parties

To promote the training of taxonomists, inviting the concerned university institutions to encourage post-university specialization in taxonomy as well as organizing national and/or bilateral cooperation systems to encourage students to specialize in taxonomy (fellowships, grants, etc.).

Recommendations addressed to the Secretariat (RAC/SPA)

To invite the Secretariat (RAC/SPA) to:

develop, through bilateral cooperation and other appropriate channels, a regional training programme on the management of protected areas, taking into account the existing initiatives at national and regional level.

10. DATA COLLECTION AND ASSISTANCE TO COUNTRIES FOR PREPARING INVENTORIES OF SPECIES AND SITES

RAC/SPA's activities in this field have focused on: (I) elaborating and finalising technical tools for the inventories, and (II) acquiring scientific and technical information on habitats and species in sites of conservation interest. The following main activities were developed during the reporting period.

In accordance with the recommendations made by the Contracting Parties, RAC/SPA organised a Meeting of Experts to define a reference classification of coastal (terrestrial and wetland) habitat types for the Mediterranean region and to draw up a list of Mediterranean coastal (terrestrial and wetland) habitat types of conservation interest. The Meeting was held in Montpellier, France, from 1-3 November 2001. The Meeting was organised in collaboration with the Maison de l'Environnement de Montpellier (MEM). The Draft Classification List appears in Document UNEP(DEC)/MED WG.232/11.

As to harmonizing the two classification systems (RAC/SPA and MedWet systems), RAC/SPA, in collaboration with MedWet, entrusted a small group of experts with the task of both working on practical modes of simultaneous application of the two systems to inventory the Mediterranean coastal sites containing wetlands, and furthering the MedWet typology concerning marine areas to take into account the classification of marine habitat types adopted within the MAP framework.

To test the Classification List, RAC/SPA is supporting three case studies in Tunisia, Turkey and Spain. The case studies aim at the application of both classification systems, RAC/SPA and MedWet, and assessment of the Classification List.

Following a request from the Greek National Focal Point, RAC/SPA is supporting *Posidonia* meadow mapping in the National Marine Park of Zakynthos, using the SDF. The activity will be undertaken as a pilot case study and will provide an opportunity for training the manager of the Park in the matter.

To assist Mediterranean countries in inventorying marine habitats and using the SDF, RAC/SPA elaborated an interpretation manual of marine habitats. The manual, considered as a tool for identifying and assessing the state of conservation of the marine habitats, satisfies three requirements: scientific rigour, possibility for non-specialists to understand it, and compatibility with other systems (Corine, Habitat Directive).

In addition to the above, technical and scientific advice has been given to local Albanian experts on mapping *Posidonia* meadows. Albania is implementing a project supported by the GEF/Small programme, that consists in several exploratory dives in the main Albanian ports. Within this program, a pilot mapping of *Posidonia* meadows (Saranda Bay or Durres area) was envisaged. RAC/SPA appointed an expert to give technical advice on procedures and methodologies for such mapping. The project is now being developed with the collaboration of an expert from the University of Pisa.

Following a recommendation made by the Contracting Parties, RAC/SPA launched in collaboration with the CBD Secretariat a process to establish a Mediterranean

Clearing House on marine and coastal biological diversity. To this end, a workshop was organised (Tunisia, Tunis 16-17 May 2003) to investigate appropriate ways of establishing a Mediterranean CHM at both national and regional level. An information document on the state of art of the global CHM of CBD, including also the outcome of the workshop, appears in UNEP(DEC)/MED WG.232/Inf.13.

Proposed Recommendations

Recommendations addressed to the Contracting Parties

To adopt the Reference List of Coastal (terrestrial and wetland) Habitat Types for the Selection of Sites to be included in the National Inventories of Natural Sites of Conservation Interest.

Recommendations addressed to the Secretariat (RAC/SPA)

To invite the Secretariat (RAC/SPA) to:

integrate the Reference List of Coastal (terrestrial and wetland) Habitat Types for the Selection of Sites to be included in the National Inventories of Natural Sites of Conservation Interest in the Standard Data Entry Form (SDF) and assist the Contracting Parties in its use

assist countries in carrying out case studies on Inventories of Natural Sites of Conservation Interest, using the SDF.

11. PROJECT FOR THE ELABORATION OF THE STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN FOR THE CONSERVATION OF BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY IN THE MEDITERRANEAN REGION (SAP BIO)

Within the Strategic Action Programme to address pollution from land-based activities in the Mediterranean region (SAP MED), the preparation of a "Strategic Action Plan for Biodiversity in the Mediterranean Region" (SAP BIO) was approved by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) Council in April 2000. The RAC/SPA was appointed as the Lead Agency.

The main objective of the SAP BIO Project is to provide for an outline of activities over a thirty-month period, in order to produce a SAP for the conservation of biodiversity, to be presented to and adopted at the Thirteenth Ordinary Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention. The SAP BIO provides a logical base for the implementation of the new (1995) SPA Protocol. The starting point has been both an assessment at regional and national level of Mediterranean marine and coastal biodiversity, based on existing inventories and databases, and knowledge of all the projects, international agreements, and national plans concerning biodiversity in order to work in connection with these existing programmes.

Within the framework of the Project, factors that are negative for biodiversity,

remedial actions, approaches, measures and investment portfolio have been identified at national and regional level. National Reports followed by National Action Plans have been elaborated by the countries.

To promote coordination and avoid duplication, it was agreed that in the elaboration of the SAP BIO, due account would be taken of what had already been developed at national and regional level. Furthermore, an Advisory Committee was established at the outset of the Project; it included representatives from international and regional bodies and has given technical advice in the process of elaborating the SAP BIO.

The Mediterranean countries were invited, through their MAP National Focal Points, to designate National Correspondents whose main role has been to coordinate activities at national level and to give guidance to RAC/SPA in implementing the Project.

The SAP BIO Project commenced on 1st January 2001. A total three meetings of the Advisory Committee have taken place since then. The first Meeting of the Advisory Committee took place in Tunis on 22-23 February 2001, the second was held, also in Tunis, on 23-24 January 2003, and the last took place just before the commencement of the Second Meeting of National Correspondents of the SAP BIO Project (Athens 8-10 May 2003). The Reports of the Second and Third Meetings of the Advisory Committee are being presented to the Sixth Meeting of NFPs as Information Documents (UNEP(DEC)/MED WG.203/6 and UNEP(DEC)/MED WG.222/9).

The First Meeting of National Correspondents was held in Alicante (Spain) on 2-4 July 2001, and the Second in Athens (Greece) on 8-10 May 2003.

Between the 1st and the 2nd Meeting of the National Correspondents, 19 Mediterranean countries undertook national processes and RAC/SPA played its part of Lead Agency in implementing the SAP BIO Project. A total 19 National Reports, 57 National Action Plans on specific biodiversity issues, 10 Regional Documents and the preliminary draft of the Strategic Action Plan for the Conservation of Marine and Coastal Biodiversity (SAP BIO Document) were produced.

The main objective of the 2nd Meeting of National Correspondents was to examine and provide inputs to the preliminary draft of the SAP BIO Document, prepared by RAC/SPA, initially as a first draft on the basis of the "Guidelines" and then revised following the recommendations made by the 2nd Advisory Committee Meeting (Tunis, 23-24 January 2003).

Taking into account the comments and views expressed during the 2nd Meeting of National Correspondents, a second draft of the Strategic Action Plan was finalised. It is being presented to the Sixth Meeting of NFPs for SPAs as Document UNEP(DEC)/MED WG.232/7.

The SAP BIO Project was presented to the "Working group for addressing the 2010 target at international level" at the "2010 – The Global Biodiversity Challenge" Meeting (London 21-23 May 2003) organised by CBD, UNEP, WCMC and UNDP. It was presented on 22 May 2003, International Biodiversity Day.

The importance of implementing the activities envisaged in the SAP BIO Project was further enhanced after the recommendation made by the CBD Secretariat to the Regional Seas Programmes, during the London Meeting, to contribute to the 2010 target by envisaging such a goal as part of their activities.

Proposed Recommendations

Recommendations addressed to the Contracting Parties

To adopt the Strategic Action Plan for the Conservation of Biological Diversity in the Mediterranean Region (SAP BIO).

Recommendations addressed to the Secretariat (RAC/SPA)

To invite the Secretariat (RAC/SPA) to:

carry out actions provided for in the follow-up chapters of SAP BIO concerning the preparatory phase and the launching of SAP BIO.

12. COASTAL AREA MANAGEMENT PROGRAMMES (CAMPs)

CAMP Algeria

RAC/SPA participated in the start-up workshop of CAMP Algeria. The workshop was held in Sidi-Fredj, Algiers on 15-16 September 2002. The activity that RAC/SPA will develop within the framework of CAMP Algeria has two objectives:

- to undertake pilot activity related to the marine biotope inventory, using the inventory tools adopted within the MAP
- to initiate and to provide the base and experience for continuous activities for the conservation of marine protected areas within the country by formulating protection and management measures for the marine part of the CAMP zone.

The terms of reference of the activity are being developed. To undertake the activity, two teams were selected to work in closer collaboration on the marine and coastal part of the CAMP zone.

CAMP Malta

Following the agreement related to the PAC, RAC/SPA made a detailed study of the marine biotopes of the zone between Rđum Majjiesa and Rass Raheb (north-east of Malta). The main outcome of this study is a series of distribution maps of the benthic populations of the zone. Based on these studies, orientations for the management of this zone as a protected area were defined, bearing in mind the socio-economic parameters of the area. This was all done by experts from Malta University and the Planning Authority, with the support of RAC/SPA. The results of all these activities were presented at the Meeting for the final presentation of the PAC Malta Project, held on November 2002.

Implementing the recommendations of the PAC Malta Project for the Rđum Maijjesa-Rass Raheb zone is one of the objectives of the MedMPA Project, financed by the European Commission and carried out by RAC/SPA in collaboration with ICRAM (Italy).

CAMP Lebanon

Following on the organisation of the start-up workshop, the concerned national authorities launched a process for identifying a partner organisation (NGO and/or university) to collaborate with RAC/SPA in implementing the "Marine conservation area" CAMP Activity. The activity is expected to start in the coming months.

CAMP Slovenia

RAC/SPA is collaborating with PAP/RAC in the preparation of the project document for the CAMP Slovenia. It is expected that the document will be finalised in June 2003.

13. COLLABORATION WITH OTHER ORGANISATIONS:

Within the framework of the SAP BIO Project, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed by RAC/SPA and the Fisheries Department of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) concerning the role to be played by FAO in implementing the Project. Under the Memorandum of Understanding, FAO prepared, in close cooperation with RAC/SPA, five technical documents and guidelines to facilitate the national processes for elaborating the Strategic Action Plans provided for by the Project to face the impact of fishing activities on biological diversity.

Apart from the above-mentioned collaboration with FAO on the SAP BIO Project, this organization was on the SAP BIO's Advisory Committee. Other organizations on this committee were: WWF-International Mediterranean Programme, MedWet Programme under the auspices of the Ramsar Convention, IUCN-WESCANIA, IUCN Centre for Mediterranean Cooperation, ALECSO (Arab League), ACCOBAMS Secretariat, European Thematic Centre for Nature Conservation (ETC/NC), Council of Europe (Secretariat of the Bern Convention) and the MAP's Coordination Unit.

RAC/SPA has become the Sub-regional Coordinating Unit for ACCOBAMS (under the Bonn Convention), since it entered into force in June 2001. To this end, the ACCOBAMS Secretariat and RAC/SPA signed a Memorandum of Understanding.

In accordance with the recommendations made by the Contracting Parties, RAC/SPA pursued its contacts with the Secretariats of the following Conventions: Bern Convention, Bonn Convention, Ramsar Convention and CBD. The Director of RAC/SPA will inform the Sixth Meeting of NFPs for SPAs about the main results of these contacts.

With a view to developing common activities related to prevention and contingency plans to confront the pollution likely to affect protected areas, contacts have been under way with REMPEC since February 2003.

14. OTHER ACTIVITIES

Manual to support the implementation of species-related commitments

RAC/SPA prepared a Manual to provide policy-makers and implementing agencies and managers with practical checklists on legal measures for implementing species-related commitments under the Barcelona Protocol. The Manual is expected to improve communication and the sharing of information within and between Mediterranean governments and institutions, with regard to workable legal strategies and tools. Parties are invited to provide feedback, corrections and new information and examples, so that the Manual can be regularly updated to provide a useful resource for all concerned.

Common Criteria for the inclusion of additional species in the Annexes to the SPA Protocol

Taking into account the procedures for amending the Annexes to the Barcelona Convention and the Annexes to its Protocols, as well as similar procedures within the framework of other international conventions/organisations for establishing and amending the list of endangered/threatened species, RAC/SPA elaborated a document with draft guidelines for amending Annexes II and III to the SPA Protocol. These guidelines are presented in Document UNEP(DEC)/MED WG.232/13.

Mediterranean Initiative on Taxonomy

In accordance with the recommendations made by the Contracting Parties, RAC/SPA prepared, in collaboration with an ad hoc group of experts, a draft Mediterranean Initiative on Taxonomy. It appears in Document UNEP(DEC)/MED WG.232/12.

Dissemination of information about the SPA Protocol

RAC/SPA is collaborating with the NFPs for SPAs in several Mediterranean countries (Croatia, Lebanon, Malta) on carrying out activities to inform people about the SPA Protocol and the Action Plans adopted within MAP for the conservation of species. These activities include translating the Protocol into the various national languages, elaborating brochures and organising information events.

Proposed Recommendations

Recommendations addressed to the Contracting Parties

To adopt the Guidelines for the amending of Annexes II and III to the SPA Protocol.

To take note of the Mediterranean Initiative on Taxonomy and promote its implementation at national and regional level.

Recommendations addressed to the Secretariat (RAC/SPA)

To invite the Secretariat (RAC/SPA) to make contact with the relevant international organisations and collaborate with them in implementing the Mediterranean Initiative on Taxonomy.

15. EVALUATION OF RAC/SPA

As part of the overall assessment of MAP, a group of three independent consultants has been appointed by the MAP Coordinating Unit to assess the activities and structure of RAC/SPA. The preliminary results of the assessment will be presented at the Sixth Meeting of NFPs for SPAs.

QUESTIONS OF MAJOR PRIORITY PROPOSED BY RAC/SPA FOR THE MONK SEAL IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

Introduction

The parties to the Barcelona Convention included among their priority targets to be achieved by 1995 the protection of the Mediterranean monk seal (Genoa, 9-13 September 1985).

The population of the Mediterranean monk seal has declined rapidly and drastically along the 18 years passed since then. Concerted and effective action by all the countries of the Mediterranean concerned is required in order to reverse this trend.

At its last meeting held in Sarajevo (19-20 May 2003), the Bureau of MAP exhorted the contracting Parties to put in practise more effective measures to safeguard Monk Seal and RAC/SPA has been called to remind the countries the importance of this capital question.

The situation is too critical to put off action any longer. Action must be taken now. For a species in critical danger of extinction the risk of doing nothing may be even greater than risking starting management actions and may justify active intervention.

The reasons driving to the monk seal extinction are very well known: the main one is killing, mostly deliberate but also accidental, almost exclusively by fishermen; it is followed by human degradation of breeding areas. Although actions at several levels are needed for the long term survival of this species, priority should be given now to direct measures to neutralise these two root problems, concentrating on them every effort and economic allocation on behalf of the species within the areas where it still subsists, and rescheduling other measures until a trend in this long lasting situation changes.

URGENT ACTIONS CALLED TO BE IMPLEMENTED

A) Increase of survival

- 1) To create a **zonation to both sides of breeding cave locations** where the use of trammel nets should be prohibited. The zones would comprise trenches 5 nautical miles wide to both sides of the caves, extending seawards either 5 nautical miles or to the 50 m depth contour, whichever is reached first. Long-line fishing would be still allowed in those areas. This measure should statistically reduce interactions to 1/3 of the actual one. This means that the level of damages to nets would hardly reach 3% in areas with important monk seal populations in the Mediterranean, an endurable damage which does not inflame to kill the seals. Drowning of seals would be strongly reduced too.

- 2) To perform a technical program to assess the feasibility of implementing nation-wide systems of **trammel net insurance** for seal damages. Under this scheme, insurance payment should be “conditio sine qua non” to get the annual fishing license. A nation-wide trammel net loss of no more than 5% owed to seals would be a realistic estimate in monk seal areas. The ideal scenario should contemplate a fast reposition system of the destroyed net to the affected fisherman by the appropriate Ministry.
- 3) To perform a feasibility project aimed to **allow trammel net fishermen** to have yearly licences **to take tourists with them** on their fishing trips, making a profit of it. The licenses should be issued only in the coasts where healthy marine mammals presence is yearly proved, as an encouragement measure for the loss of income provoked by interactions, and it would be valid for the year after. The respect to the traditional fishermen activity -although of doubtful profit nowadays- while encouraging their shifting to tourism industry must be underlined.
- 4) To **halt killings by every legal mean**. This basic measure continues to be absent in practise - so far not a single prosecution in court to contraveners having killed monk seals seems to have been achieved in the Mediterranean - in spite of purposed killing still being the main cause of monk seal depletion. Seal killers feel full impunity after 15 years of the Action Plan being initiated and this is a main reason of its limited efficiency up to now. Actions should follow example of similar actions implemented world around to halt killing of highly threatened mammals such as, rhinoceros, pandas, bears, etc. The measure should envisage the urgent creation of specific effective legislation, regulations and urgent enforcement actions to achieve that purpose. It would be advisable to include the mobilisation of an “ad hoc” prosecution authority within the frame of existing National Legislations; as for example some countries have efficiently implemented to address illegal financial issues or threatened species traffic. Such authority should initiate a prosecution process, to research every seal killing recorded in the country, immediately after the fact is noticed. The implementation of such measure only in the scarce protected areas for the species in the Mediterranean would not be effective to save the monk seal from extinction. Efforts should concentrate in achieving this priority and make it effective in less than two years from now. Collaboration among Mediterranean countries to quickly build such schemes could help to preclude further intentional mortality acting on the species population. RAC/SPA full collaboration and expertise is offered to facilitate such group effort.
- 5) To **increase survival up to reproductive status**. Protection attempts along twenty-five years to reverse the species' decline have not been clearly successful except for the Portuguese Desertas Archipelago, (out from the Mediterranean and uninhabited). The following measures had been previously considered to confront such situation: captive breeding; translocation of isolated, non-reproducing individuals to better protected groups; and the transfer of pups from healthy colonies to undersized or newly established ones.

No artificially managed habitat can be compared to fully wild ones, but the present survival expectance for monk seal pups until entering reproductive status is already minimal, given the level of killings. On the other hand, reproduction still occurs in several tens of caves in a yearly basis so captive reproduction does not seem to offer, at present, mitigation to the problem. Monk seals, as free ranging mammals, cannot enjoy real protection even if there are some reserves for their habitats, unless a proper enforcement of protection laws precludes further killings country-around.

Neither “Passive Protection” nor “Habitat Approach” are anymore enough to short-term save this species from extinction, given the very slow pace facilitated to its needs along the last decades. On the contrary, “Active Protection” and “Species Approach” (management) are needed to preclude a further shrinking in the individuals’ number. The start of the former actions should not in any case justify the stopping of the former ones - economic sources permitting - which are also long-term basic for the species.

A necessary and feasible action to optimise the recovery of the species is the increase of survival, through the temporary transfer of both weaned pups and every captive raised one from areas were killings continue into fully safe semi-captivity locations.

These locations should be enclosures of wild areas and not fully artificial installations, as always proposed before. The seals should be raised there, including life fish on their diet, to the verge of maturity (four years the females and seven years the males) with minimal visual close contact with humans. Locations should preferably be less than three, until first successful raisings being fully on course. They should be properly preserved areas within the historical distribution area of the species and separated from present wild stocks, to preclude them to be affected by any stochastic catastrophe hitting wild individuals (epidemic, red tide, oil spill, etc). Raised animals should be released in their exact places of origin to restock them or, should it be risky for them, in the closest full-safe one. One example of physically suitable location to raise the seals could be the Meleda lagoons, in the National Park of Mljet, Croatia, which possesses advantages as protection status, big size, and easiness to enclose seals inside it, fact already done in the middle ages to trap them. However, other feasible locations should be researched, the criteria being the most optimal possibilities for the species and the willingness of host countries to collaborate on its behalf.

Although wild animals, especially migratory ones, are *res nullius*, (they cannot be claimed as properties) monk seals managed in programmes including a country other than the original one should be considered for practical reasons as always belonging to the voluntarily donor country and bonded to its final agreement on the release spot. Nationals of the donor country should be involved in the programme implementation. On the other hand, it should be also underlined the need to apply the Endemism Responsibility Principle: “There is a greater moral obligation for countries where particular species are restricted to their jurisdiction. If endemics are threatened the affected country should give it preference in recovery efforts as a matter of international

solidarity and public affair". The immediate threat of extinction faced by a species should not be managed by the countries where it remains as an exclusive internal problem.

B) Neutralisation of habitat harassment

1) **Disturbance** is a major threat. Tourist visits to marine caves in the countries having monk seals should be rapidly specifically prohibited by law and regulations implemented, wherever it has not been done yet. Historical reasons cannot be argued to keep this activity since it is a very recent one. In addition, there are many other tourist activities that can be done in the same areas without entering the breeding and resting habitat of a critically endangered species. A minimum no-approach belt of 500 m should be implemented around seal caves for tourist and private vessels, but transit rights should be granted to fishing boats.

2) **Degradation of breeding habitat** is sharply increasing since the 90s. It is normally linked to road and building construction already illegal in national legislations. Experience shows that monitoring of such facts has not been efficient for the species since it has not being tactically followed by immediate actions to stop degradation and by restoration activities. Future habitat monitoring should be concentrated on efficiently carrying out such processes, which are essentially land-based, easy to follow up at local level (Municipalities and local government schemes) and do not normally need costly sea patrolling.

Countries should report in detail after two years since now the progress made concerning all these priorities and the possible effects derived for the species as a result of that progress.

**KEY POINTS OF THE FIRST MEDITERRANEAN
CONFERENCE ON MARINE TURTLES
(Rome, 24-28 October 2001)**

LEGISLATION

1. Strengthening the enforcement and implementation of existing instruments (legislation, programmes), including setting up of SPAMIs

Mediterranean riverine states may be invited to conclude agreement in view of progressively setting up of a network of SPAMIs (Special Protected Areas of Mediterranean Importance) for nesting, feeding and wintering sites of marine turtles, as well as on main migratory routes. Other legal instrument can be further explored.

Habitat protection and interaction with stakeholders

2. Identifying and mapping important marine habitats

There is an acute need to better identify and map marine habitats relevant for turtles at sea. This is a priority for research as it is likely to provide valuable information for conservation purposes.

3. Initiating and strengthening protection of already identified critical nesting areas

There is urgent need to obtain better protection and enforcement of protection measures for key nesting sites

4. Designating protected areas prior to development, following a precautionary approach

Designation of protected areas for marine turtles should preferably precede development, thus applying the precautionary approach.

5. Drawing management plans for areas of importance

All areas of importance for marine turtles, and especially the ones with development, need to be subject to management plans containing measures aimed to minimise adverse impacts on marine turtles.

6. Early involvement of local communities and stakeholders key to success

In protected areas or in areas to be protected, involvement of local communities at an early stage is key to conservation success. It is recommended a wide consultation process with local communities and appropriate stakeholders. In this context it is of importance to connect with the fishing and tourism industry (locally and also international tourism operators).

7. Reassessing tourism activities for the benefit of sea turtle conservation and implementing strict controls at critical nesting areas

In areas where tourism interferes with marine turtle conservation, tourism needs to be modified so as to enhance the value of marine turtles in compatible ways with their conservation. In important nesting areas tourism activities should be strictly controlled to avoid interference with conservation priorities

FISHERIES INTERACTIONS

8. Determining real impacts of fisheries to be able to propose possible gear modification, changes in fishing practices, etc.

Given the high number of marine turtles caught by fisheries, there is an acute need of more precise data on the real impact of fisheries on marine turtles population, so it may be possible to draw conservation conclusion such as the possible need of gear modification and/or changes in fishing practices.

9. Emphasising action on high seas fisheries, requesting ICCAT and GFCM to collect information and report on bycatch

Special emphasis for impact should be given to high sea fisheries, with data on by-catch reported to organisations such as GFCM and ICCAT.

RESEARCH AND MONITORING

10. Collecting necessary information (e.g. age of maturity, survivorship) so as to facilitate population modelling

In order to elaborate functional population models it is necessary to acquire reliable information on various population parameters.

11. Focussing research

Research efforts to be focussed on:

- size, structure and dynamics of populations,
- better estimates needed of impact of each type of fishery in different fishing grounds (caution should be taking in extrapolating large scale total catch or mortality from local catch or mortality rates),
- delayed mortality estimates

12. Extending migration studies (including satellite telemetry) and genetics so as to assist in the identification of critical habitats

Migration studies and genetics should be seen as a priority line of research for their potential for providing useful conservation information.

13. Establishing and continuing long-term monitoring programmes to permit informed management decisions

The most important fact in monitoring is consistency over a long period of time.

AWARENESS/EDUCATION

14. Raising awareness and training of fishermen to reduce mortality

As reduction of marine turtle mortality is so dependent on attitudes and knowledge of fishermen, it is vital to invest in awareness with them and training them, adapting techniques and tools to local realities and in the respect of their culture, values and views. Results of training and awareness efforts should be properly assessed.

ANNEX III

Main lines of the activities RAC/SPA intends to suggest to the Contracting Parties for the period 2004-2005

Activities	To be financed by MTF	External funding
Data collection and periodic assessment of the situation		
- Collection of data and assistance to countries for the preparation of inventories of species and sites		*
- Mediterranean Initiative for Taxonomy	*	*
- Development of a Mediterranean clearing-house mechanism on biological diversity	*	
Legal Measures		
- Assistance to countries in setting up and enforcing their national legislation related to sites, habitats and species conservation	*	
Planning and management		
- Implementation of Action Plans adopted within MAP for threatened species and species management	*	*
- Establishment of strategies and plans in the field of biodiversity conservation	*	*
- Workshop on the monitoring of the introduction of marine species and invasive species	*	
- Assistance to countries for the establishment and management of SPAs	*	*
- Elaboration of indicators on marine and coastal biodiversity	*	
- Expert meeting on the indicators on marine and coastal biodiversity	*	*
Public information		
- Elaboration and dissemination of data and information relevant to biodiversity conservation and sustainable use	*	*
- Assistance to the National Focal Points for SPA for information actions on the SPA Protocol and the Action Plans	*	
Exchange of experience and strengthening of national capabilities		
- Training sessions on the scientific and technical aspects of the conservation of the common natural heritage	*	
Meeting of the SPA National Focal Points	*	