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The Mediterranean Sea safeguarded by Marine Ecosystem Protection Plan

Livorno, Italy, 4 August 2005 (IUCN) - A group of experts from the World Commission on Protected Areas - the Marine Mediterranean Group in cooperation with the IUCN Centre for Mediterranean Cooperation, is working together on a process aiming to implement a region-wide system of ecologically and culturally representative networks. Under a strategically planned and multi-institutional framework, this process will also contribute to build capacity in support of existing networks, such as the SPAMIs (Specially Protected Areas of Mediterranean Importance) and Natura 2000, the European Protected Areas Network.

Despite the Mediterranean's image as vastly overpopulated and polluted, it is a thriving ecosystem upon which many cultures depend. It was the first region in the world to put in place a Regional Sea Programme. Now the Mediterranean is poised to lead the world towards effective conservation of large marine ecosystems, by being the first region to adopt a strategic plan for utilizing marine protected areas to safeguard the vital areas that keep the sea healthy and beneficial to coastal communities.

The initiative is part of an expert process to support the Mediterranean coastal states in their commitment to reach the marine protected area network goals by 2012, set at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in 2002.

Steps for the process

The design of the process is already set up and several phases have been identified. In a preliminary phase, a thorough investigation will be made to identify all the institutions, organizations, NGOs and individuals committed to the World Summit on Sustainable Development process. Those will be involved in the effort of designing, establishing and managing Marine Protected Areas in the Mediterranean to ensure that the envisaged process will proceed in a fully participatory fashion. The main phase of the process would address the ecological aspects of assisting in designing a representative system of MPA networks, setting up a region-wide effort to describe "what is there in the Mediterranean that requires protection". This will include a description of their current status, with an updated review of MPAs in the Mediterranean, the definition of criteria and methods (including both Delphic tools and software) that would be adopted for selection of priority areas where MPAs could be established to protect all the different habitats (including transboundary areas and areas beyond national jurisdiction).

[Report: Scoping Meeting to support Mediterranean States to meet the 2012 WSSD target on Networks of Mediterranean Marine Protected Areas](#)

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