

CALL FOR COLLABORATION TOWARDS AN ASSOCIATION AMONG THE MEDITERRANEAN PARKS

This call is addressed to the authorities and subjects in charge of the management and coordination of the protected areas of the Mediterranean Basin – State Departments, Regions and Autonomous Communities, Provinces and Districts, Associations representing parks on a supranational, national, and regional level – which are interested in looking for and experimenting a strong mutual collaboration in order to increase the effectiveness of their actions and, as a consequence, the advantages for the ecological balance of the whole Basin, for the territories of each Country, and for the local population.

The call has been welcomed and promoted by a group of IUCN subjects. Urged on by common aspirations after the harmony and cooperation among Mediterranean people, the promoters agree on the need to take special actions in order to achieve soon forms of collaboration which are essential to increase the degree of general awareness as far as the environmental issues involving the region are concerned, to draw the attention of international organisms to the role and potentialities of parks and other protected areas of the Mediterranean Basin, to contribute with common ideas, proposals, and experiences to face in the region the question of the relationship between the safeguard of biodiversity and the sustainable development of local and national communities.

The promoters' general reference framework is represented by the main international agreements in the environmental field adopted by the World Summit on Sustainable Development, the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, the Convention on Wetlands of international importance, and by several other Conventions urging prompt and new actions.

As far as protected areas are concerned, the promoters aim at responding to the Call by the World Park Congress held in Durban, which urged commitment *“to expand and strengthen worldwide systems of protected areas, prioritized on the basis of imminent threat to biodiversity, natural and cultural heritage”* and *“to mainstream protected areas within overall development agendas”*. In particular, the promoters are united by the willingness to carry out concretely the resolutions and recommendations regarding the Mediterranean Basin approved by the World Conservation Congress held in Bangkok and to respond to the invitation contained in the Final Declaration of the IUCN Mediterranean Members Meeting held in Naples and urging *“all Mediterranean countries to coordinate their actions to promote specific strategic plans for the conservation of the major Mediterranean environmental systems...”* and to *“support the establishment of an association of protected areas of the Mediterranean”*.

The over 500 parks and thousands of nature reserves existing in the Mediterranean area – one of the highest concentrations of protected areas in the world – represent an extraordinary heritage. If we consider it as a whole – as an element contributing to a unitary policy aimed at the implementation of shared programs – it could represent a powerful instrument not only for the application of management practices characterized by criteria of sustainability, biodiversity conservation, perpetuation of typical landscapes, but also for the creation of relationships based on peace and collaboration and for the involvement of the local population in building a future characterized by a balanced and long-lasting development.

The authorities creating its national or regional elements have invested, with firm belief and far-sightedness, considerable amounts of energies and financial, scientific, and human resources: for this reason, they should aim at the recognition of their potentialities by every supranational organ and at presenting proposals exploiting their experience in handling complex environmental issues like those regarding sub-regional geographical systems.

For this reason and according to these bases, the promoters urge all the involved subjects to participate in the creation of an association capable of

- pressuring and influencing the choices of the competent international subjects so that the needs, as well as the role and the opportunities, represented by the whole of the Basin protected areas are considered in the elaboration of the trends and of the programs regarding the Mediterranean;

- pressuring and influencing the choices of international, national, regional, and local subjects on which depend, also indirectly, the general and operative conditions – environmental, organizational, and financial conditions – of the protected areas of the Mediterranean Basin, so that these conditions are always adequately considered;
- studying, elaborating, promoting, and suggesting – to the international community and competent organisms – specific policies on a Mediterranean level, aimed at supporting and enhancing the forefront and experimental role of the protected areas;
- implementing actions aiming at a better integration of the activity of the protected areas in the territorial development programs elaborated on a Mediterranean Basin level as well as on a national and regional level in the areas of the Basin;
- supporting each activity which is linked to the running of the protected areas and may help improving and strengthening the relationships among the Mediterranean Countries and communities, based on peace, reciprocal understanding and cooperation, fair and balanced development of the different areas;
- elaborating and implementing common actions by the joining subjects, aimed at supporting the cooperation among protected areas, or networks of protected areas, of the Mediterranean Countries, and in particular at supporting the cooperation among the Countries of the two geographical shores;
- supporting the activities of IUCN, its Office in Malaga and other offices which have the task to study the environmental problems of the Mediterranean Basin and to contribute in the improvement of the most adequate solutions;
- promoting and supporting any useful initiative favoring the participation of the local and regional communities in the identification and implementation of cooperation programs among protected areas and protected areas networks in the Mediterranean.

The aim is to create an open, democratic, and joint association pursuing the above-mentioned goals, established after a political choice by the authorities and subjects in charge of the management or coordination of the protected areas of the Mediterranean Basin, whose action should be based on the elaboration of common platforms, programs, and actions aimed at recognizing the importance and adequate role of protected areas and at shouldering direct responsibilities in the implementation of their choices.

The concrete forms of this association will be jointly decided by the promoters, according to the principles of equality and reciprocity, in order to ensure the gathering of any useful contribution, the synergy among the activities of each subject, and the greatest penetration and diffusion of the results to achieve.

The promoters consider themselves committed from this moment to the diffusion and promotion of this call, to coordinated actions, to the integration of all the joining subjects into the provisional promoter committee of the representatives, waiting for a general meeting to be held in the year 2006.

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Generalitat de Catalunya, Junta de Andalucia, Regione Emilia Romagna, Diputació de Barcelona, Federazione Italiana dei Parchi e delle Riserve naturali, Fédération des parcs naturels régionaux de France.