



IUCN has over 160 [members](#) in the Mediterranean region, including 15 governments. IUCN is recognised as an official observer with an International Government Organisation at the United Nations. The IUCN Center for Mediterranean Cooperation mission is to influence, encourage and assist Mediterranean societies to conserve and use sustainably the natural resources of the region; and to work with IUCN members and cooperate with all other agencies that share the objectives of the IUCN within the Mediterranean region.

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For more information on IUCN Centre for Mediterranean Cooperation, please go to www.uicnmed.org.

- The previous IUCN World Parks Congress (1992) recommended that states should protect 10% of their area. Today, protected areas cover 13,5 % of France, 8,4% of Spain, 2,8% of Albanian, 2,5% of Algerian and 0,3% of Tunisia.



Vth IUCN World Park Congress: Sustain Protected areas to enrich Mediterranean lives

Next September (8-17th), the IUCN Vth World Parks Congress will welcome about 2, 500 world wide participants in Durban, South Africa, to review the global status of protected areas, explore new challenges, issues and opportunities, and lay out the global agenda for protected areas in maintaining biodiversity and key ecological services in the 21st century. Both Patrons of the Congress, Mr Nelson Mandela and her Majesty Queen Noor of Jordan strongly endorse its theme: “**Benefits Beyond Boundaries**”.

Protected areas will not only serve conservation objectives but will also constitute opportunities for the sustainable development of societies of any region by developing 3 key pillars, the “3E”: Environment, Equity, and Economy. IUCN’s vision of protected areas will meet the Millennium goals of the United Nations Millenium Summit (September 2000) by working to the enrichment of areas and lives.

Mediterranean, a mosaic of natural richness

The Mediterranean region has the world’s second highest percentage of endemic species. It home to about 25, 000 species of flowering plants of which 13, 000 are indigen ous, together also with endemic large carnivores and herbivores.

The short running rivers and streams, mountain lakes and coastal lagoons support migrating birds and endemic fish species. The coastal area, including both marine and terrestrial habitats, represents one of the region’s most important natural heritage, with its unique wetlands, dune systems, and seagrass meadows. However, the Mediterranean Sea and basin are among those ecosystems most under pressure from human activities .

Durban from a Mediterranean perspective : 5 challenges

IUCN’s commitment in expanding new concepts will respond to every society and environment needs.

The Murcia meeting (26th-30th March 2003) initiated by IUCN Centre for Mediterranean Cooperation was an event symbolizing a common will to develop partnerships at the Mediterranean level and has represented **a major step** towards the definition of a Mediterranean vision for the management of protected areas. 120 representatives from 22 Mediterranean countries participated in the workshops and agreed on 5 main issues to be tackled at the regional level: Linkages, Governance, Gaps in the system , Training and Funding.

The participants of the Murcia conference agreed on the idea that the IUCN category V is the best adapted to the Mediterranean environmental reality and conservation needs. IUCN’s categorisation of protected areas provides a common definition of protected areas shared as a reference by many partners. Each category corresponds to particular conservation aim (area for scientific survey, wilderness protection, ecosystem conservation, etc) and has to be developed in zones requiring the corresponding management. **The category V responds to Mediterranean needs**, as it is characterised by a high level of human activity, and a low level of undisturbed areas. The specificity of the category V is that it requires better management of the surrounding environment and fosters linkages between areas.

“Linkages” is the first of the 5 challenges to be faced by IUCN in the Mediterranean.

- The 6 IUCN categories are:

Ia **Strict Nature Reserve:**

Protected area managed mainly for science

Ib **Wilderness area:**

Protected area managed mainly for wilderness protection

II **National Park:**

Protected area managed mainly for ecosystem protection and recreation

III **Natural monument:**

Protected area managed mainly for conservation of specific Natural features

IV **Habitat/ Specie management area:**

protected area managed mainly for conservation through management intervention

V **Protected landscape**

/seascape: protected area managed mainly for landscape/seascape conservation and recreation

VI **Managed resources**

protected area: protected area managed mainly for the sustainable use of natural ecosystems

- **Linkages versus fragmentation**

The Mediterranean is characterised by a complex mosaic of landscapes and ecosystems shaped by traditional land management practices that use a wide range of the region's ecological resources. The land fragmentation of the region makes its natural resources more sensitive. Ecological linkages are needed to fulfill flora and fauna life cycles, sustain populations, and communities.

The Mediterranean protected areas are mostly implemented in this fragmented system, and, whatever there number is, they will only be effective for the sustainability of the region if they are interconnected.

Furthermore, linkages of protected areas would be an **opportunity** to recreate lost links **between people and nature**, and between users and managers of protected areas .

The Iberian Lynx has been upgraded on the IUCN Red List from Endangered to Critically Endangered Species. Linkages and corridors between protected areas would contribute to its conservation. The species occurs in Mediterranean woodland and maquis thicket, favouring dense scrub for shelter and open pasture for hunting rabbits.

Habitat fragmentation by agricultural and industrial development has resulted in the population being confined to scattered groups in the southwestern quadrant of the Iberian Peninsula.

The establishment of linkages between protected areas would contribute to the conservation of the Iberian Lynx providing him with a habitat protected from snares set for rabbits, accidental deaths caused by speeding vehicles on the expanding road network, and illegal shooting.

- **Governance to encourage stakeholders to act and interact**

Once again, the human factor represents a key issue in protected areas management. It defines who creates and abolishes protected areas, who is responsible for their management, how are they funded, and who decides what is permissible and through which process. Governance implies interactions among structures, processes and traditions that determine how power is exercised, how decisions are taken, and how citizens or other stakeholders can interact. The objective of governance is to encourage the various sectors involved to give more feedback from their experiences through a free circulation of information. This consultative process generates local people's trust and participation which contributes to effective co-operation. Key issues for protected areas is that their management takes into account the broader context of landscape or ecosystem, making stakeholders work together beyond boundaries and questioning the existing allocation of responsibilities.

High Seas are a hot spot for conservation and sustainable development. The establishment of a network of Marine Protected Areas beyond national jurisdiction (High Seas) would be a key mechanism for promoting sustainable resource management and conservation of biodiversity and productivity.

Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) need to be integrated into the wider management of the open sea, as water distributes particles and pollutants much more efficiently than in the air or land, and because many marine species are migratory or have planktonic phases subject to long distance movements in the marine currents.

Three priority actions: the establishment of expert networks to build support for high seas conservation, the international recognition of the concept of High Seas MPAs, and the designation of the first High Seas MPAs as test areas. Immediate action is essential to protect seamounts and other vulnerable deep-sea ecosystems and to improve implementation of the existing legal framework for oceans governance.

- By level of economic development, most Non-EU Mediterranean countries have an average GDP per capita of USD 2, 100, compared to USD 20, 800 for the EU, i.e. almost 10 times superior to the GDP per capita of southern countries (EIU, IMF, World Bank, Moody's, FEMIP estimates).

- The Mediterranean Sea represents only 0,7% of the world oceans but contains 7,5% of the world marine fauna and 18% of the world's marine flora. 28% of the Mediterranean marine species are endemic and only found in this sea.

- The Barcelona Convention for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea is one of the first legal instruments that allow s the creation of protected areas on the high seas. France, Italy and Monaco have used this tool to create the Ligurian Cetaceans' sanctuary, a marine protected area that includes a portion in the high sea.

- 200 million visitors in the Mediterranean region are a great potential requiring public awareness to develop sustainable tourism

■ Gaps in the system: cooperation to move from challenges to opportunities

One of the main difficulties in the Mediterranean to achieve a sustainable management of its protected areas and, more generally, a sustainable development of the region, lies in the increasing inequalities between Northern and Southern countries. While environmental degradation impacts both sides of the basin, the least economically developed countries are the most affected mainly due to a drier climate, and also to higher dependence on basic natural resources, higher population growth and poverty rates, and lower institutional and financial capacity to face these challenges.

From the conclusions of the Murcia conference, IUCN defined recommendations such as the need of an adequate national framework legislation for PAs, including the establishment of transboundary protected areas (that will be essential for the protection of High seas), the implementation of international conventions through national legislation, information and awareness to build public support for protected areas and synergies between different administrations and legal systems.

A better balance between the Mediterranean environment, economy, and societies would be possible by bridging the North and South of the basin. This connection will **contribute to tackle** the Mediterranean ecological and social fragmentation as well as cope with poverty alleviation.

Poverty alleviation is the first of the Millennium goals defined by the United Nations Millenium Summit (September 2000). Reducing poverty will be possible through actions on the 5 themes designated to tackle poverty: Education, Culture, Communication, Social development and Environment. Thus, IUCN participates in this process by promoting traditional land management and restoration of ecosystems, developing training and networks for a better exchange of information, and finally, by promoting the sustainable use of natural resources. Mediterranean protected areas will represent an **opportunity** to reach these objectives and alleviate **poverty**.

■ Information and Training: because protected areas management relies on people

Protected areas management requires information and training for people working in, visiting or living close to protected areas. Around 12, 000 staff in the Mediterranean region work in protected areas but with an unequal distribution from country to country. People living around protected areas also require training and information so as to understand the utility of the protected area and indirectly participate in its sustainable management.

Tourists accounting for nearly 200 million visitors per year in the Mediterranean region should receive information on protected areas. Mass tourism to some areas may cause environmental and socio-economic impacts on local destinations.

More sustainable tourism patterns are needed to reverse the decline of a Mediterranean unique natural and cultural heritage. While tourism can be considered as a potential threat (especially of coastal areas), the dissemination of information and training could make it contribute to the sustainable development of the region. In this way, by strengthening mobilization of the various stakeholders, protected areas could act as tools to revitalize rural economies in marginal areas.

■ Funding: an indispensable resource for protected areas functioning

In several countries in the region protected areas are not a national priority, and depend on international aid. Governmental sources of funding are usually difficult to increase or mobilize. The objective is to develop other possible sources of funding for protected areas management:

- Making management needs less expensive
 - stakeholder participation, in general, prevents conflicts and protection needs, and , at the same time shares management responsibilities, all of which makes protected areas management much more cost-effective.
 - Reinforcing networking between existing initiatives, by optimising co-ordination and avoiding duplication
- Developing new funding tools
 - protected areas can be linked to environmental services (landscape for tourism; carbon sinks; water catchment for agricultural purposes, genetic pool for pharmaceutical purposes, etc)
 - the private sector could be involved in facilitating or financing management practices
 - tourism could also be a source of financial resources .

From protected areas to sustainable development

The ecosystem approach: starting working on PAs as part of whole ecosystems

- Protected areas are supported by international conventions:

[The Convention for Biological Diversity](#)

[The Berne Convention](#)

[The Ramsar Convention](#)

[The Barcelona Convention](#)

[Special Protected Areas of Mediterranean Importance \(SPAMIs\)](#)

[The MedWet Initiative](#)

[The Emerald Network](#)

[Natura 2000](#)

[ACCOBAMS](#)

The ecosystem approach is the concept giving protected areas an opportunity to be considered as part of a whole ecosystem interacting with others ecosystems. Instead of being fragmented into boundaries (specific areas were generally defined for particular purposes: protection of one lake, one species), the ecosystems are recognised as functioning as whole entities and as needing to be managed as such.

The management of protected areas and the surrounding environment is developed through long term objectives. It respects ecosystem processes at the micro level, but sees them in the larger frame of landscapes and decades, working across a variety of scales and time dimensions. **Goods and services are not an end in itself but are on the contrary, a product of a healthy ecosystem that has to be managed in a sustainable way.**

IUCN's vision of Mediterranean opportunities to reach sustainability

IUCN's vision of protected areas is that all Mediterranean ecosystems are well represented, forming an efficiently managed network of protected areas that serves as a tool for sustainable livelihoods in the region.

The Vth World Park Congress will be the launching pad of IUCN's commitment in making Mediterranean challenges become opportunities for the sustainable development of the region. The strong will of the Mediterranean participants to build partnerships and cooperation with support of IUCN Centre for Mediterranean Cooperation marks the beginning of a common vision for the Mediterranean. IUCN, together with its members and partners will work on raising awareness among local groups, foster dialogue at the regional level and develop partnerships to bridge the north and south.

Work must be undertaken on projects and programmes that can implement the ecosystem approach and that link protected areas together through their multifunctionality, respecting cultural, historical and socio-economic values for the local population. We must comply with the motto: **"work with people and for people"**.

Thus, economical, ecological and equity benefits will be generated through successful management and beyond the boundaries of protected areas and countries .

"We need to view protected areas not as something we keep human beings out of, but make human beings proud of, and become responsible custodians of.", Achim Steiner, IUCN's Director General

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