

Workshop C: Gaps in the System

Conclusions and recommendations

(draft)

Scope of the Workshop

The members of this working group met over a period of two days to discuss issues related to gaps in the protected areas system in the Mediterranean. The group was composed of representatives from different Mediterranean countries and different organisations concerned with environment and development issues in the region. The aim of the workshop was to:

- ✍ Overview regional case studies and experiences relevant to the gaps in the system theme;
- ✍ Document success and failure stories and elaborate common trends relevant to this theme in the Mediterranean;
- ✍ Explore means for improving the management of protected areas at the Mediterranean level;
- ✍ Give perspectives on the different action plans and initiatives for protected areas management in the Mediterranean;
- ✍ Provide input to possible Mediterranean gaps in the protected areas system and opportunities based on the group discussions;
- ✍ Set a Mediterranean vision and strategy orientations for the gaps in the system concept based on the working group deliberations;
- ✍ Suggest a Mediterranean side event for the theme of Gaps in the System for Durban.

Mediterranean Highlights

The different presentations and experiences helped in setting the stage for defining a clear profile of the Mediterranean specificities. These exposed the different activities, initiatives, tools, opportunities and constraints within the region. The main highlights that were drawn out of the presentations and the deliberations include the following impressions:

- Marine protected areas, linked to fisheries sustainability is a specific priority, including the development of an adequate legal framework to support their establishment.
- Several protected areas are established around the Mediterranean, but many still lack active management, including a management plan, a budget and a team of adequately defined staff
- Active management of protected areas should allow for the registration of indicators as well as the application of evaluation tools
- The Mediterranean region is particularly important as it has a high level of endemism and characteristic species and habitats
- Absence of an adequate network for marine protected areas in the Mediterranean at present
- Protected areas in the high seas is a priority, and needs the setting of proper jurisdiction
- There are several tools that can help identify the gaps in the protected areas system in the Mediterranean, including, among others, Important Plant Areas and Important Bird Areas, which can provide a focus for action
- The legal basis for the identification of PA is a priority, and building on success stories in the region should be shared
- Populated areas of the Mediterranean need to be considered in relation to protected areas
- The number of initiatives in the region can be distracting, and there is a need for more coordination
- Protected areas and their role in sustainable development needs more emphasis
- Rigorous systems of assessment, that are biogeographically based, are required to guide the establishment of new protected areas. These should define clear criteria, such as that applied through Natura 2000 and the system developed in Spain, and need to build guidance based on field experience as well as develop and implement systems for the exchange of information between professionals
- There is lack of coverage of biogeographic regions in the Mediterranean (Near East, North Africa; European Commission).
- There is a North South divide which needs to be bridged through cooperation and collaboration

- Both the collection and application of information needs to be improved, especially in relation to the marine environment
- Opportunities for expansion are often difficult and new models need to be examined, such as the Land Stewardship model in Catalonia
- There are many different actors in the region; thus there is a need to build on and reinforce existing initiatives and projects. Coordination and cooperation is essential
- The management effectiveness of protected areas must be improved
- Management of the sites is the key challenge, both for terrestrial and marine ecosystems. This also calls for better governance structures
- The targets identified in the WSSD Plan of Implementation regarding establishing MPA systems should be used as a vehicle to support MPA establishment and management in the Mediterranean
- Need to reach out to other sectors is essential for the sustainable conservation of natural areas
- Need to establish PAs across borders and boundaries in the region
- The effectiveness of protected areas must be improved in all Mediterranean countries. This requires better on ground management and better governance structures, including legal frameworks

Opportunities, Challenges and Gaps

Out of the above highlights, there are main opportunities, challenges and gaps that could be underscored. These do not represent an exhaustive list relevant to Mediterranean specificities, but rather sum up the discussions relating to the 'Gaps in the System' workshop stream.

Opportunities

- The Mediterranean is characterised by a high diversity of species and ecosystems
- The Mediterranean Region is very important in the European context. It hosts 30% of the species and habitats of the Habitats Directive and has the highest number of endemic species of any region within Europe. It should be a priority for action. Need to think, work and act at a Mediterranean wide level
- Wide range of experiences, actors, initiatives and tools in the Mediterranean, which could be a corner stone for building and reinforcing a comprehensive protected areas system in the region

Challenges

- Promoting protected areas as an opportunity and a vehicle for sustainable development
- Integrating protected areas with sectorial policies
- Improving the interaction between actions and research (tenures, property rights, food habits...)
- Incorporating systems of diagnosis, monitoring and periodic evaluation in the management process
- Effectively involving local communities to sustain the management and conservation of natural areas
- Reaching out to new constituents, and not just talking to each other
- Improving the management effectiveness and building human capacity around the Mediterranean
- Mitigating the pressures of tourism and population growth on the marine and coastal environment
- Planning for the establishment of larger protected areas that are linked to their surrounding landscape or seascape, for better conservation of biodiversity through decreased fragmentation

Gaps

Inadequate collaboration and complementarity among the different initiatives, agencies and organizations working in the Mediterranean

Lack of adequate, updated and easily accessible information relevant to protected areas in the region

Lack of integration of natural areas into broader landscape planning

Lack of adequate legal framework relevant to marine protected areas

Presence of a North/South divide and absence of adequate collaboration and support initiatives

Ineffective management systems to move natural areas from paper to practice

Mediterranean Vision

This common vision was set after identifying the key elements that pose a challenge to the sustainable management and conservation of natural areas around the Mediterranean.

VISION

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

Mediterranean Orientations

In order to achieve the above common vision, the main important element seemed to be **“changing gaps into opportunities”**, and particularly in what relates to the following orientations, components or mitigation measures:

- Increasing representativeness of marine, island and coastal ecosystems;
- Developing appropriate legal and institutional frameworks to support the conservation and sustainable use of natural areas;
- Improving management plans, specifically oriented to the Mediterranean context;
- Increasing awareness among local groups and involving them as partners in the identification, creation and management of natural areas;
- Improving regional dialogue and developing partnerships to bridge the north/south divide;
- Integrating cultural heritage, landscape, and social aspects into PA management plans;
- Making available updated information relevant to management plans, monitoring and biodiversity assessment of natural areas around the Mediterranean;
- Integrating PA into economic development sectors

**We need to think,
work and act at a
Mediterranean wide
level**

Recommendations

Although the workshop deliberations did not set a specific priority action plan, the orientations defined above, and the recommendations that will follow, would lay down the foundation for future initiatives that intend to overcome the gaps in the protected area system around the Mediterranean. The recommendations here outlined would ensure that the Murcia conclusions are given a high profile in the Mediterranean and underpin steps that would have to be undertaken beyond the World Parks Congress in Durban. These recommendations are summarized as follows:

- Sharing the Murcia conclusions with the Secretariat of the Barcelona Convention, the only binding pan-Mediterranean convention
- Looking at new initiatives, and using our imagination and capacity in a positive sense to raise awareness and support
- Building on existing regional initiatives and improving coordination among the different Mediterranean actors. It was suggested that the IUCN Centre for Mediterranean Cooperation can play an important role in catalyzing this process
- Setting a pan Mediterranean network to unify the various regional initiatives
- Strengthening support and positive involvement within the region to bridge the North/South divide
- Extending the marine protected area coverage, and setting the adequate legal framework for a proper network in the region
- Creating a Clearing House Mechanism for natural areas in the Mediterranean (Barcelona Convention, RAC/SPA and IUCN Centre for Mediterranean Cooperation to play a key role)
- The IUCN Centre for Mediterranean Cooperation is to synthesize the recommendations and identify the lead actors in the region

The World Parks Congress in Durban is not the end point but the launching pad