



Biodiversity in the Mediterranean region

Position Paper

November 2012



The Mediterranean Information Office for Environment, Culture and Sustainable Development (MIO-ECSDE) is a non-profit Federation of 126 Mediterranean NGOs for Environment and Development. MIO-ECSDE acts as a technical and political platform for the presentation of views and intervention of NGOs in the Mediterranean scene and plays an active role for the protection of the environment and the promotion of the sustainable development of the Mediterranean region and its countries.

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This position has been produced within the framework of the DG Environment programme for operating grants to European environmental NGOs.

The publication reflects the authors' views and does not commit the donors.

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CONTENTS

| | |
|---|---|
| Introduction | 3 |
| 1. The Mediterranean: A biodiversity hotspot under threat | 3 |
| 2. Direct and indirect drivers of biodiversity loss in the Mediterranean region | 3 |
| 3. The main legal instruments related to biodiversity in the Mediterranean region | 4 |
| 4. Proposed actions to address biodiversity loss in the Mediterranean region | 5 |
| 4.1. General Recommendations | 6 |
| 4.2. Recommendations on policy/governance issues | 6 |
| 4.3. Recommendations on awareness raising, education & communication | 8 |
| 4.4. Recommendations on research and monitoring | 9 |

Introduction

Biodiversity is a crucial natural asset and component of terrestrial and marine ecosystems directly or indirectly providing or contributing to the maintenance of important ecosystem services making it inextricably linked with human well-being.

The Mediterranean region is considered to be one of the world's hotspots where exceptional concentrations of biodiversity occur. However, the region's unique wealth is critically endangered, as biodiversity rapidly decreases due to human-induced pressures which result in the fragmentation, degradation and loss of habitat and extinction of species. As biodiversity loss continues, our understanding of its significance is ever-increasing, strengthening the realisation that urgent actions must be undertaken at all levels to tackle this critical issue in the Mediterranean Region.

The present Position Paper intends to present MIO-ECSDE's collective views on Biodiversity and to propose a set of actions that should urgently be taken, in order to respond to biodiversity threats and challenges in the Mediterranean region, including threats from climate change. It also aims to assist MIO-ECSDE members in their advocacy and policy formulation efforts at regional, national and local level regarding biodiversity issues.

This paper has been drafted on the occasion of the UN Decade of Biodiversity and the regrettably poor results in achieving the objectives previously set to preserve biodiversity at International, European and Mediterranean level. The aim of this paper is to step up action to tackle the global biodiversity crisis, and promote the new Strategic Plan for Biodiversity for the period 2011-2020 "*Living in harmony with Nature*", and the new EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020 "*Our life insurance, our natural capital*". It also aims to accelerate efforts to fulfil the scope and targets of the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (MSSD) and the Protocol Concerning Specially Protected Areas and Biological Diversity in the Mediterranean (SPA/BD Protocol) of the Barcelona Convention.

1. The Mediterranean: A biodiversity hotspot under threat

The Mediterranean basin is recognised as a biodiversity hotspot. The diversity of its flora is outstanding with 15000 to 25000 species, 60% of which are unique to the region. About one-third of the Mediterranean fauna is endemic (IUCN, 2008).

Although in many cases information is incomplete regarding biodiversity and related trends (in particular regarding marine biodiversity) in the Mediterranean region, there is enough data demonstrating the fact that biodiversity in the region is under severe risk.

According to the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species (2008) 19% of fauna species (amphibians, birds, cartilaginous fishes, endemic freshwater fishes, crabs and crayfish, mammals, dragonflies and reptiles) are threatened with extinction (5% Critically Endangered, 7% Endangered and 7% Vulnerable). In addition, at least 16 irreplaceable species are already extinct, including some endemics such as the *Hula Painted Frog* *Discoglossus nigriventer*, the Canary Islands Oystercatcher *Haematopus meadewaldoi* and the Sardinian *Pika Prolagus sardus*.

2. Direct and indirect drivers of biodiversity loss in the Mediterranean region

According to the findings of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (2005), "changes in biodiversity due to human activities were more rapid in the past 50 years than at any time in human history, and the drivers of change that cause biodiversity loss and lead to changes in ecosystem services are either steady, show no evidence of declining over time, or are increasing in intensity". The Living Planet Report (WWF, 2010) and its findings, clearly demonstrate that the unprecedented drive for wealth and well-being of the past 40 years is putting unsustainable pressures on our planet. Specifically, one of the longest-running measures of the trends in the state of global biodiversity, the Living Planet Index (LPI)-which provides information on trends in the abundance of the world's vertebrates - shows a global decline of almost 30% between 1970 and 2007. The Ecological Footprint – which tracks the area of biologically productive land and water required to provide the renewable resources people use, and includes the space needed for infrastructure and vegetation to absorb waste carbon dioxide (CO₂) - shows also a consistent trend: one of continuous growth. Today, humanity's demand for biocapacity – the area actually available to produce renewable resources and absorb CO₂ –

outstrips global supply by 50 percent. Overall, humanity's Ecological Footprint shows a doubling of our demands on the natural world since the 1960s. According to the recent Mediterranean Ecological Footprint Trends report (Global Footprint Network, 2012) the region now uses approximately two and a half times more natural resources and ecological services than what its ecosystems can provide.

Human actions are fundamentally and to a significant extent irreversibly responsible for the changes caused to the diversity of life on Earth. The most important indirect drivers of biodiversity loss and ecosystem service changes in the Mediterranean region include overpopulation, urbanization, littoralisation and unsustainable modes of consumption, trade, tourism, etc., while the direct ones include marine, freshwater and terrestrial habitat fragmentation and destruction caused by overexploitation of natural resources, rapid and large scale land use changes, physical modification of water and its withdrawal from rivers, damage to sea floors due to dredging, drilling and trawling, various types of pollution including biological/microbial pollution, introduction of non indigenous species, and unsustainable use/removal of wild living resources (hunting, fishing, etc.).

Of particular significance for Mediterranean biodiversity are climate change impacts since the region is predicted to become one of the most severely affected regions. Climate change models indicate that the Mediterranean region will experience decreasing rainfall, increasing land and sea temperatures, as well as progressive desertification and coastal erosion which will have an impact on both the distribution and survival of species (Bates, et al 2008). The poleward shift of flora and fauna induced by temperature rise will pose particularly dramatic problems for the Mediterranean's many islands, whilst also threatening the future prospects for the continued cultivation of many traditional staple crops and trees. Their eventual and progressive adaptation and/or replacement by other strains or cultivars are key coping strategies which are only beginning to be addressed in some countries. In addition, climate change impacts on oceans such as increasing water temperature, acidification, and altering of nutrient availability exert additional pressures to marine species, some of which are already overexploited and are crucial for the livelihood of coastal communities in the Mediterranean.

3. The main legal instruments related to biodiversity in the Mediterranean region

Mediterranean countries have recognized the imperative need for biodiversity preservation and ecosystems balance, in order to avoid the severe consequences of biodiversity loss. This is clearly reflected in the fact that most countries within the Mediterranean region are contracting parties to major international/regional conventions, agreements and legislative frameworks that deal with or are closely related to biodiversity issues.

These legal instruments are presented in the table below.

Table 1. Main legal instruments aiming for the conservation of biodiversity in the Mediterranean region

| | |
|----------------------------|--|
| International Level | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the CBD Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety; - the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance; - the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora; - the Bonn Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals, including several Agreements (binding instruments) and Memoranda of Understanding (not binding) to conserve particular species relevant to the Mediterranean Region e.g. a special agreement under the Bonn Convention was made in 1996 for the Conservation of Small Cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and Contiguous Atlantic area (ACCOBAMS). |
| Mediterranean Level | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the Barcelona Convention for the Protection of The Mediterranean Sea Against Pollution (1976) and its relevant protocols such as the Protocol Concerning Specially Protected Areas and Biological Diversity (SPA/BD) in the Mediterranean (adopted in 1995); - the Protocol on Integrated Coastal Zone Management (entered into force in 2011). |
| European Level | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the Birds Directive 79/409/EEC and the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC establishing respectively Special Protection Areas (SPAs) for birds and Special Areas of Conservation (SACs). The Natura 2000 network, an EU wide network of nature protection areas includes both SPAs and SACs; - the Bern Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats; - the Marine Strategy Framework Directive 2008/56/EC; - the Water Framework Directive 2000/60/EC; - the European Landscape Convention; - The Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy. |

4. Proposed actions to address biodiversity loss in the Mediterranean region

In order to achieve greater progress towards biodiversity conservation and avert the accelerating, catastrophic loss of the variety of life forms in the Mediterranean region, there is an urgent need for a set of actions and responses closely linked with ambitious short and long-term post-2010 targets, aiming to tackle sufficiently and effectively the indirect and direct drivers of biodiversity loss in the Mediterranean region.

The initial step should be the setting of ambitious but realistic and measurable short, medium and long-term targets. These targets should be based on current scientific evidence, taking into account related existing and emerging challenges and opportunities, while actively engaging all stakeholders.

The post-2010 overarching goal towards the protection of biodiversity in the Mediterranean should be coherent with commitments made by the Contracting Parties to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity at their 10th session (Nagoya, Japan 18-29 October 2010), while going beyond halting the loss of regional biodiversity by also including actions towards restoring its integrity and variety - thus ensuring the continued provision of goods and services related to it - and the considerable expansion of protected areas in the region.

The new Strategic Plan for Biodiversity, re-affirmed in the RIO+20 Summit, for the period 2011-2020 *“Living in harmony with Nature”*, including the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, may serve as a good basis for facilitating the mainstreaming of biodiversity into broader national and global agendas and by promoting actions at multiple entry points towards achieving the overall vision of the plan according to which *“By 2050, biodiversity is valued, conserved, restored and wisely used, maintaining ecosystem services, sustaining a healthy planet and delivering benefits essential for all people.”* In addition, the new EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020 *“Our life insurance, our natural capital”* has the potential to serve not only as a new concrete foundation for EU biodiversity policy but as a trigger to step up the EU’s contribution and action to tackle the global biodiversity crisis, including the entire Mediterranean.

Strategic Plan for Biodiversity for the period 2011-2020

The new Strategic Plan for Biodiversity for the period 2011-2020 *“Living in harmony with Nature”* includes the following goals:

- Strategic Goal A: Address the underlying causes of biodiversity loss by mainstreaming biodiversity across government and society.
- Strategic Goal B: Reduce the direct pressures on biodiversity and promote sustainable use.
- Strategic Goal C: To improve the status of biodiversity by safeguarding ecosystems, species and genetic diversity.
- Strategic Goal D: Enhance the benefits to all from biodiversity and ecosystem services.
- Strategic Goal E: Enhance implementation through participatory planning, knowledge management and capacity building.

EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020

The six mutually supportive and inter dependent targets around which the EU Biodiversity Strategy is built, in order to address the main drivers of biodiversity loss, focus on:

1. The full implementation of the EU nature legislation;
2. Better protection and restoration of ecosystems and the services they provide, and greater use of green infrastructure;
3. More sustainable agriculture and forestry;
4. Better management of EU fish stocks and more sustainable fisheries;
5. Tighter controls on Invasive Alien Species;
6. A greater EU contribution to averting global biodiversity loss.

Herewith are listed MIO-ECSDE’s general recommendations as well as those specific to the different fields of action:

4.1. General Recommendations

Increased efforts should be made towards the protection of terrestrial, freshwater and marine habitats and species by: tackling the major sources of pollution (solid waste, waste water, industrial emissions) including contamination and all forms of biological destruction by preventing the introduction of non-indigenous species; eliminating unsustainable fishing practices; stopping overharvesting of species; avoiding unsustainable agriculture, aquaculture and forestry practices, avoiding soil degradation activities, etc.

The current scope and effectiveness of existing legal instruments under the Barcelona Convention should be critically reviewed in this light and if necessary amended by the Contracting Parties to ensure effective protection.

In this respect, biodiversity protection concerns should be mainstreamed into all relevant national level sector policies and development plans.

In view of the looming threat of climate change, mitigation and adaptation responses should urgently be implemented. Healthy ecosystems can contribute in many ways to climate change mitigation, e.g. providing protection against natural hazards aggravated by climate change, limiting atmospheric greenhouse gas concentrations through terrestrial carbon storage, etc. In this context, Mediterranean peatlands and forests (above all those comprising mixed indigenous species, whose carbon storage potential much exceeds monostand plantations) should be recognized as important carbon sinks and increased efforts should be undertaken towards their protection and restoration.

The major potential contribution of soil carbon storage should be thoroughly reviewed and translated into a modification of current agricultural and land management practices. Full use should be made of research and project activities developed within existing institutions, international organizations and programmes. Wetlands and forests are also among the most useful systems for appropriate adaptation to climate change, reducing runoff, erosion and floods that will result from the expected increased frequency of extreme events (such as heavy rainfall, melting of mountain snow caps, etc.).

The prevention of fires and the promotion of sustainable grazing management are essential to achieve the effective conservation of forests, as well as prevent the exacerbation of soil degradation and erosion in the region.

In addition, there is also an apparent need to identify priority sites for biodiversity protection in the Mediterranean region and increase the number of protected habitats and the quality of protection in underrepresented Mediterranean areas and habitats of special ecological importance.

Reflecting the highlighted importance of biodiversity and the growing political commitment to halt its decline, increased governmental and EU funding needs to be earmarked for the establishment of a considerable number of new protected areas (core protected areas, buffers, corridors) in the region, while further biodiversity-related research, conservation, and uninterrupted management of established protected areas is needed, including systematic education and awareness raising activities. In addition, taking into consideration that protected areas management and monitoring are suffering the most from under-financing, funds should be made available to increase staff capacities; to carry out larger restoration projects (including land purchases) and green infrastructure projects, as well as to implement landscape scale measures to improve environmental quality in general in and around protected areas.

4.2. Recommendations on policy/governance issues

There is a growing recognition that effective policies and concrete measures for biodiversity conservation need to be urgently undertaken with focus on the reduction of socio-economic pressures on biodiversity, either directly or indirectly, through modification of their underlying driving forces.

4.2.1. Synergies among existing policies, strategies and other instruments relevant to the Mediterranean region/countries need to be developed/forged, as well as management and implementation tools, while ensuring, to the extent possible, the necessary coherence and greater alignment with the identified biodiversity related priorities.

In this sense, for example:

- the establishment of a network of marine conservation areas under EU's Natura 2000 Network aiming to halt the loss of biodiversity in the EU but also to enhance marine conservation and sustainable use

objectives should be further strengthened by the timely implementation of the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive, calling for close cooperation among all countries sharing a marine region to achieve a Good Environmental Status (GES) by 2020.

- the implementation of the MedPartnership’s activities through the Mediterranean Marine Protected Area network (MedMPAnet) aiming to enhance the effective conservation of regionally important coastal and marine biodiversity features in areas under countries’ national jurisdiction through the creation of an ecologically coherent MPA network in the Mediterranean region (as required by the SPA/BD Protocol), should be actively supported. In addition, the joint efforts of the EC and UNEP/MAP to create Specially Protected Areas of Mediterranean Importance (SPAMIs) in the open seas, including the deep seas should be supported.
- the EU “Guidelines for the establishment of the Natura 2000 Network in the marine environment” (2007) covering both the inshore and offshore marine environments should be considered in connection with on-going regional strategies set through the Barcelona Convention's SPA/BD Protocol and its Protocol on Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM), which entered into force in 2011.
- elements of the Natura 2000 Network should also be used as a source of inspiration for the systematic protection of terrestrial habitats and species in the South Mediterranean countries, eventually through an expansion of the SPA/BD Protocol to cover terrestrial biodiversity.
- the development and restoration of ecological corridors which provide connectivity among protected areas, as well as the establishment of transboundary protected areas/biosphere reserves should be actively promoted in the Mediterranean region.

4.2.2. Biodiversity protection concerns and measures should be reflected in all relevant sectoral policies and development plans to ensure mainstreaming and cross-sectoral integration.

Although some progress can be identified in this direction, for example at the EU level through the integration of biodiversity concerns into community policies and instruments such as the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), the Water Framework Directive (WFD), the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP), the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD), and at the wider Euro - Mediterranean level (UfM) through the implementation of de-pollution initiatives such as the “Horizon 2020” initiative and the preparation of a Strategy on Water in the Mediterranean, increased political will is needed to enhance synergies, translate agreements into practice and ensure policy implementation at national level.

4.2.3. New instruments/strategies should be put in place to reinforce biodiversity conservation, where relevant.

Although there are many legal tools and instruments already in place aiming at the conservation of biodiversity in different policy areas there are still “gaps” in the regulatory framework that need to be addressed.

For example, at EU level, it seems very important to immediately advance (under the current EU Cypriot Presidency) the discussion on the adoption of a Soil Framework Directive and achieve a compromise with the countries opposing its adoption. In order to achieve EU biodiversity targets it is vital to set out common principles for protecting soils across the EU. Non EU countries should also be encouraged to apply the same principles for a comprehensive regional approach to soil protection. The same applies for the establishment of the much needed dedicated legislative instrument on Invasive Alien Species (IAS) at EU level. The ecological, economic and social consequences of IAS in the EU are significant and at present, existing EU legislation (e.g. the Plant Health Directive, Wildlife Trade Regulation, the Habitats and Birds Directives, the Water Framework Directive and the Marine Strategy Framework Directive) do refer to IAS issues and/or partially cover different aspects of IAS thus making the need to cover policy gaps imperative. Another important legislative tool to promote the deployment of green infrastructure in the EU in urban and rural areas is a Green Infrastructure Strategy that should be developed and adopted as soon as possible.

On the wider Mediterranean level, a common strategy by governments of the region and competent international organisations (UN bodies, EU, etc.) to prevent and abate forest fires should be established. This recommendation has been proposed along with others more than 20 years ago within the framework of the Athens Declaration on forest fires (1987) and still remains very topical and urgent in view of the annual loss of Mediterranean forests and their biodiversity due to fires.

The EU Forest Action Plan (2007–2011) and its proposals for action, together with those outlined in the Declaration and the five Resolutions of the Fourth Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests (2003),

represent a good example which could inspire a system of joint sustainable forest management in the Mediterranean, also in line with the CBD Expanded Programme of Work on Forest Biological Diversity and other global forest-related commitments.

4.2.4. Adequate assistance in terms of financial and capacity building support should be provided to countries in the region for the implementation of biodiversity conservation measures.

Additional support should be provided to the developing countries of the region for revising NBSAPs to include the integration of biodiversity targets into sectoral planning and policies. It is important to ensure that greater emphasis be given to environmental mainstreaming and to policy and institutional changes rather than projects.

4.2.5. Every environmental policy in the Mediterranean countries should be developed in such a way to ensure the implementation of the Ecosystem Approach.

Since July 2008, the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention have been committed to progressively apply the Ecosystem Approach (ECAP) in order to improve the way human activities are managed for the protection of the marine environment. This should be considered as a starting point for a larger scale implementation of the ECAP towards the integrated management of land, water and living resources promoting conservation and sustainable use in an equitable way, whilst progressively incorporating measures relating to climate change mitigation and adaptation.

The primary value of ECAP is that it puts people and their natural resource use practices squarely at the centre of decision-making. Because of this, ECAP can be used to seek an appropriate balance between the conservation and use of biological diversity in areas where there are both multiple resource users and important natural values.

4.2.6. Communication, coordination and cooperation within the Mediterranean region on protected areas should be enhanced.

Regional and sub-regional cooperation and networking in the fields of protected areas management should be promoted and facilitated, especially in the North African and Middle East countries, where most programmes are entirely country driven and there is lack of effective mechanisms for sharing experiences and knowledge, while trans-boundary cooperation and coordination is minimal.

4.3. Recommendations on awareness raising, education & communication

One of the key issues that need to be effectively addressed in the Mediterranean is the lack of awareness of the wider public and stakeholders about the role of biodiversity in relation to the survival and well-being of the people of the region. Indeed, the EC report on the "Attitudes of Europeans towards biodiversity" (2010) confirms this that communication and outreach activities should become a high priority in the EU Mediterranean countries. The same also applies to the rest of the countries in the region.

In this respect, combination of the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (UNDESD) with the UN Decade of Biodiversity offers a unique opportunity and can be used to draw public attention to the value of biodiversity and the need to conserve it, as well as on the opportunities derived from its conservation and sustainable use. Biodiversity has been identified as one of the key areas of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) in the framework of the ongoing UN Decade (2005-2014) on ESD, where MIO-ECSDE through its Mediterranean Initiative on Education and Sustainability (MEdIES) programme is very active. An indicative example is the training material on "ESD for Man and Biosphere Reserves" and other designated areas in SE Europe and the Mediterranean" recently developed jointly by UNESCO and MIO-ECSDE/MEdIES.

4.3.1. The wider public should be fully informed about the real implications of biodiversity loss in their daily lives and should be encouraged to commit themselves towards the conservation of biodiversity through various activities.

In this context, MIO-ECSDE and its members will continue their long-standing efforts to enhance awareness raising on biodiversity issues through education (formal, informal and non formal), communication and capacity building actions.

4.3.2. Public participation and stakeholder involvement in setting nature conservation objectives and/or management planning should be enhanced.

Appropriate participatory mechanisms for public consultation and policy deliberation should be set up and/or enhanced, in order to ensure effective public participation, better compliance and consensus building in nature conservation management and planning.

To this end, MIO-ECSDE will continue what it has been doing since 1991 in terms of promoting participatory processes among NGOs and other stakeholders, which have contributed considerably to consensus building, mutual trust and solidarity in the Mediterranean and to the improvement of North-South, South-South and East-West cooperation. In addition, MIO-ECSDE will continue its activities and efforts in promoting the principles of the Aarhus Convention, which apply to nature conservation management and planning.

4.4. Recommendations on research and monitoring

Scientific information on biodiversity, its value, functioning, status and trends, and the consequences of its loss is constantly being improved but there still are major gaps and deficiencies in the existing knowledge. The UNEP/MAP Barcelona Convention Initial Integrated Assessment was completed in 2011. It contains information on the overall nature of ecosystems in the Mediterranean, including physical and ecological characteristics, pressures that affect the state of the marine environment, conditions or state of the coastal and marine ecosystems, and expected response of ecosystems if trends continue. The goals of the Initial Integrated Assessment were to define the major basin-wide priority issues and to determine where adequate information to support management already exists or is being gathered.

4.4.1. Research in the Mediterranean region needs to focus on the assessment of the status and the underlying trends of threatened ecosystems which underpin conservation planning at regional and national level.

This will lead to the strengthening of the science - policy interface and the identification of emerging issues and will contribute substantially to effectively addressing biodiversity threats and driving forces.

4.4.2. Reliable, well-validated, easy to apply and robust tools (since Mediterranean countries have limited human and financial resources) to measure the different components of biodiversity should be developed to achieve efficient assessment and monitoring.

It must be emphasized that the lack of scientific data or the existence of fragmented knowledge should not be used as an argument for inaction when it comes to the conservation, protection or management of habitats and species. As many Mediterranean countries cannot afford to carry out comprehensive research for all habitats and species, a different, pragmatic and effective approach is needed and should be thoroughly explored and addressed.

In 2008 the EU published “The biodiversity action plan: Halting the loss of biodiversity by 2010 – and beyond” aiming to assist Member States in halting the loss of biodiversity. This action plan highlights the main biodiversity-related knowledge gaps and research needs, and proposes a set of very useful recommendations which can be revisited and implemented for both EU and non-EU Mediterranean countries.

4.4.3. Research approaches should be broadened to ensure the integration of social sciences and economics with biodiversity research.

As in many other cases, the understanding of the link between socio-economic and cultural drivers and biodiversity pressures and impacts is incomplete and the related information is very scattered. An effort to connect marine biodiversity and ecosystem services with their economic value in order to highlight their importance for the sustainable development of the Mediterranean riparian countries was made by UNEP/MAP's Blue Plan in its report on “The economic value of sustainable benefits from the Mediterranean Marine Ecosystems”. Interesting data for the region are included also in “The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity” report (TEEB, 2008) and the “Ecosystem Accounting for the Cost of Biodiversity Losses: Framework and Case Study for Coastal Mediterranean Wetlands” report (EEA, 2010). Such research needs to be enhanced and deepened.



MIO-ECSDE Profile

The **Mediterranean Information Office for Environment, Culture and Sustainable Development**, is a Federation of Mediterranean Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) for Environment and Development. MIO-ECSDE acts as a technical and political platform for the presentation of views and intervention of NGOs in the Mediterranean scene. In co-operation with governments, international organisations and other socio-economic partners, MIO-ECSDE plays an active role for the protection of the environment and the promotion of the sustainable development of the Mediterranean region and its countries.

ITS MAIN OBJECTIVES ARE ...

To protect the **Natural Environment** (flora and fauna, biotopes, forests, coasts, natural resources, climate) and the **Cultural Heritage** (archaeological monuments traditional settlements, cities, etc.) of the Mediterranean region. The ultimate goal of MIO-ECSDE is to promote **Sustainable Development** in a peaceful Mediterranean.

Major tools and methods used by MIO-ECSDE in order to achieve its objectives are the following:

- Promotion of the understanding and collaboration among the people of the Mediterranean, especially through their NGOs, between NGOs and Governments, Parliaments, Local Authorities, international organisations and socio-economic actors of the Mediterranean region at all levels.
- Assistance for the establishment, strengthening, co-operation and co-ordination of Mediterranean NGOs and facilitation of their efforts by ensuring the flow of appropriate information among relevant bodies.
- Promotion of education, research and study on Mediterranean issues, by stimulating collaboration between NGOs and scientific and/or academic institutions.
- Raising of public awareness on crucial Mediterranean environmental and social issues, through campaigns, publications, exhibitions, presentations, etc.

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