

TOOLS FOR A MEDITERRANEAN COOPERATION

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Abstract

Environmental degradation which is the global disease of our time threatens also the Mediterranean. Acute problems are faced due to population increase and migration resulting in a soaring volume of wastewater being discharged directly into the receiving waters. This fact undermines the economic activity through loss of the fishing and tourism industries in the Mediterranean countries. So far, observations have shown that inadequate management is a major contribution to the degradation of the Mediterranean. During the last decade it has been realized that there is a need for a common action and progress in regional cooperation started through conventions and declarations signed by countries facing similar problems. In various programs and in the 'Blue Plan' whose horizon year is 2025, it has been pointed out that there is a need for a more determined North-South solidarity, more attention should be paid to the environment by establishing and strengthening institutions, the economic and social development can only be achieved by protecting the natural environment. In this framework, several programs aiming at remedial actions through cooperation in the basin were launched supported by international funding agencies.

Introduction

The global disease of our time is environmental degradation, which has reached alarming dimensions and threatens many regions of the world, especially the coastal areas. The Mediterranean region is no exception. It is also facing acute

problems as its population increases and growth concentrates in coastal settlements and in metropolises. Migration does not only take place from rural to urban areas at the moment, but also from relatively large cities to metropolises, so the tendency of migration is also changing in the region. The activity generated by such rapid changes in the demography of the region has led to a soaring volume of domestic and industrial waste being discharged directly into the receiving waters. Indeed, only 30 % of wastewater is treated in the region. This fact has had a major impact on the quality of life and reduced economic activity through loss of the fishing and tourism industries that play a crucial role in the development of Mediterranean countries.

Meanwhile the uncontrolled pollution generated by high water consumption due to overall population increase has caused the degradation of inland waters as well. This creates a major problem in countries where the volume of renewable water resources is limited. As a result water quantity becomes an issue as well as water quality.

Need for common action

Based on these observations it can be concluded that inadequate management of water is a major contributor to the degradation of the Mediterranean environment.

The scarcity of water resources and the potential for wastewater reuse give the issue an added importance. From a public health point of view, adequate wastewater treatment and disposal facilities are urgently needed to protect the population and the 100 million tourists who come to the region each year. Current estimates of investment requirements to meet the growing needs are high (1000 \$ per capita) and the management structures to evaluate the needs and priorities are often weak.

Fortunately the concern with wastewater management is widely shared in the Mediterranean Basin. Under a recent agreement, all countries around the Mediterranean, have agreed to install sewage treatment plants for cities with more than 100,000 inhabitants and either have treatment plants or outfalls for cities with more than 10.000 inhabitants. However an institutional and economic analysis of this program has not yet been undertaken. Nevertheless each country in the region faces a unique set of problems and have different management practices, laws and regulations., Wastewater management responsibilities fall within jurisdiction of a range of governmental departments and other entities and agencies, both public and private. Despite high priority attached to overall waste management issues and the intentions for regional cooperation, a common set of institutional and legal constraints hinder solutions. These are basically focused on:

- institutional plurality and fragmentation

- inadequate coordination
- legislative gaps and
- lack of regional harmony

In addition, the fact that there are more than 20 cities in the region whose population exceed 1 million and 180 cities with more than 100,000, undermines adequate management since the cities are faced with emerging problems and city management tools are not increasing proportionally. While central agencies take the decisions, the burden of implementation is entirely on local authorities. Current water resource management practices in many countries of the basin are not sustainable. Water price does not reflect the water cost, in many cases being lower. The main reason for this; is that water resources are not properly valued since water is considered to be a gift of nature, by many consumers.

Progress in regional cooperation

Many conventions and declarations have recognized the existence of common and similar problems and the need for collective management. A regional conference held in 1975 in Barcelona adopted an action plan for the Mediterranean, the MAP. Coordinated by United Nation Program for the Environment, the UNEP, the MAP has been given the mission of leading activities for research and supervision as well as 'socioeconomic studies. The Blue Plan, which is one of the major components of the MAP, is investigating the mutual impact between development and the environment through various scenarios. The Blue Plan is basically relied on the land-based pollution estimated for the horizon year of 2025. MEDPOL is an other component of the Blue Plan whose terms consist of maritime studies. Even the most optimistic scenarios of the Blue Plan have shown that a mobilization is required for the protection of the littoral.

In this context, the Blue Plan demonstrates that although the region will be exposed to increasing stress, there are ways of significantly reducing the effects of this stress and reversing even the most adverse trends.

The most significant of these methods are as follows:

- the search for new development models based on more extensive cooperation in the Mediterranean region and
- a more determined North-South solidarity
- paying more systematic attention to the environment, by establishing or strengthening appropriate institutions in the process of development particularly at the littoral level.
- bringing about a better understanding of the inter action between the environment and development in the Mediterranean.

This will result in the emergence of new approaches among national and regional, public and private decision makers, and among the general public throughout the Mediterranean. An instrument for regional environmental action, the Environmental Program for the Mediterranean, the EPM was launched in 1988 by two donors, the EIB (European Investment Bank) and the World Bank to reverse current trends in environmental degradation in the Mediterranean. Signatories to the EPM are 17 Mediterranean countries and the European Union. During the last decade, the EIB and the World Bank have provided approximately 6 billion US dollars for projects related to protection of the Mediterranean. To assist countries in devising cost-effective and politically feasible solutions to their environmental problems, the EIB and the World Bank also launched the METAP in 1990.

The purpose of the METAP is to accelerate the pace and deepen the impact on environmental activities in the Mediterranean Basin and thus to act as a catalyst for environmental investment. During its first three year cycle (METAP 1) the Program helped 11 countries to implement 61 activities. These covered a wide range, from mobilizing funding for biodiversity protection through training and policy workshops, to aiding in the preparation of self standing environment projects.

During METAP 1 it was recognized that the biggest problem facing many countries in the Mediterranean region is land-based pollution generated by untreated domestic wastewater and industrial pollution. At a ministerial conference in Casablanca to launch METAP II, Mediterranean environment ministers called for a more action oriented approach, particularly in the water sector. It was agreed that comprehensive water resource management is one of the top environmental priorities in the region: the other being urban environmental management. It was also agreed that the existing METAP networks, MEDCITIES and MEDWAN (Mediterranean Water Agencies Network) would be the primary instruments for a new initiative to address these priorities.

During the period May-September 1993 MEDCITIES has conducted a series of municipal environmental audits in seven cities in their network that were particularly articulated in expressing their need. Most of these audits identified water pollution as one of the priority areas for attention in the action plans.

MEDWAN is a less developed network than MEDCITIES. It is being developed jointly by the Institut Mediterranean de l'Eau (IME) and METAP from a network of regional experts organized previously by IME. In METAP 1 the expanding network focused mainly on conducting studies which reviewed the different modes of organization of wastewater management services in different countries of the region, and on identifying issues and options for increasing their

effectiveness. These provide an excellent base for the transfer of technology and successful practices between agencies in different countries.

Under METAP II, it is proposed that MEDWAN address the complex problems of water management through a series of activities which rely basically on cooperation and which will include:

- case studies carried out by network expert teams in collaboration with member agencies. The purpose of the case studies would be to develop specific water management actions to solve site-specific but common problems; to develop and test new procedures; to better understand the problems and their causes; and to develop options for their solution.
- workshops and seminars to review case study results and findings; to promote the exchange of experience, information and technology; and to build consensus on issues and strategies.
- training to strengthen institutional capacity and meet human resource needs identified by the case studies and network members. (IBRD,1993)

Conclusion

The programs whose substance and objectives are summarized above reflect growing awareness of the acute levels of environmental pollution in the Mediterranean and the need for urgent preventive action.

Bearing in mind that:

- the Mediterranean Sea represents a common resource
- the littoral shares a common ecology
- increasing stress on scarce water resources has become a common concern
- transboundary pollution is increasing

Viable development of the Mediterranean region is in the common interest of all the Mediterranean countries.

This can only be achieved by environmental awareness and public sensitization; political willingness and decisiveness, effective management and regional cooperation through agency networks. The fact that prevention is less costly than correction must be the guiding principle of the water sector.

The agency networks could therefore be utilized to the full as a vehicle of joint action so as to benefit from the experiences of other countries and avoid duplication. Therefore limited financial resources should be optimised by doing better with less.

In awareness of the natural beauty, historic heritage and abundance of resources in the Mediterranean which secure both livelihood and an outstanding environment, it is vital to ensure that future generations continue to enjoy the good fortune in being born in the Mediterranean.

Özet

Günümüzdeki en önemli küresel sorunlardan birini oluşturan çevre kirliliği Akdeniz havzasında da kendini göstermektedir. Bunun başlıca nedeni büyük kentlere ve kıyı alanlarına olan göç sonucu oluşan atık suyun yetersiz altyapı nedeniyle alıcı ortama arıtılmadan deşarj edilmesidir. Bu durum havzadaki hayati önem taşıyan balıkçılık ve turizm faaliyetleri ile yaşam kalitesini olumsuz yönde etkilemektedir. Bu gözlemler ışığında Akdeniz havzası ülkeleri bu konuya çözüm getirmek istemiş olsalar da kurumsal çokbaşlılık, yetersiz eşgüdüm, mevzuat boşluğu gibi nedenler uygulamaları zorlaştırmıştır. Aynı çevresel özellikleri paylaşan ülkeler son on yılda birçok anlaşma ve deklarasyon ile Akdeniz havzasındaki sorunların benzer olduğu ve bunların çözümü için ortak programlar çerçevesinde beraberce ve uyumlu olarak hareket etmek gerektiğini kabul etmişlerdir. Bu programlar içinde özellikle 2025 hedef yılının dikkate alınarak önlemlerin belirlendiği Mavi Plan' da Akdeniz'in kuzey-güney kıyısı ülkeleri arasında dayanışma sağlanması, kurum ve kuruluşların geliştirilmesi ve güçlendirilmesi, Akdeniz'deki ekonomik ve sosyal gelişmenin ancak çevresel değerlerin korunarak sağlanacağı ve bunun için kurumlararası yoğun işbirliğine gereksinim olduğu vurgulanmıştır. Belirlenen bu ana ilkeler doğrultusunda uluslararası finans kuruluşlarının da desteğiyle, beraber çalışma ve uzlaşma zemini yaratan pekçok ülkelerarası programın temeli atılmıştır.

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