

THE PROTOCOL ON INTEGRATED COASTAL ZONE MANAGEMENT IN THE MEDITERRANEAN: IMPLEMENTATION PERSPECTIVES

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The first United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, held in Stockholm in 1972, led to the creation of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), through Resolution 2997 of the United Nations General Assembly. During his first sessions, UNEP declared the oceans conservation as a priority field of actions, calling for the adoption of a regional approach. In this context, the Mediterranean Action Plan (MAP) was set up in 1975. Composed of regional activity centres, the MAP is based on a legal framework enforceable by the 22 Contracting Parties. The Barcelona Convention – keystone of this legal framework – has been implemented through six additional protocols so far, covering various issues (Dumping, Prevention and emergency, Pollution from land-based sources, Specially protected areas, Off shore activities, Hazardous wastes).

The protection of Mediterranean coastal zones became a major issue of the MAP in 1995 with the revision of the Barcelona Convention, which became the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean. Its geographical coverage extends to the “coastal areas as defined by each Contracting Party within its own territory”, opening the way for regional approaches to Mediterranean coastal zones management.

Elaborated from 2001 to 2007, the Protocol on Integrated Coastal Zone Management in the Mediterranean was adopted during the Conference of Plenipotentiaries held in Madrid on 20–21 January 2008. The seventh Protocol coming to complete the set of legal instruments of the Barcelona Convention, it aims at “establishing a common framework for the integrated management of the Mediterranean coastal zone”. Fourteen Contracting Parties signed the Protocol at the concluding session of the Plenipotentiaries Conference. It is now open for signature by all Contracting Parties from 21 January 2008 to 20 January 2009.

As the first international legally binding instrument specifically dedicated to ICZM, its entry into force will undoubtedly raise many questions. This paper shall provide an insight on key implementation issues as they can be envisioned at this early stage. It will present a diagnosis of its main strengths and weaknesses, from a legal and management perspective. It will identify foreseeable implementation obstacles as they relate e.g. to local governance contexts, potential opposition by some groups of stakeholders, financial constraints, and necessary institutional re-arrangements. The paper will conclude by providing some suggestions on conditions for success as well

as on implementation perspectives in the short to medium term.

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