

2007 VENICE STATEMENT

On the occasion of the International Conference **The Protection and Sustainable Development of the Mediterranean-Black Sea Ecosystem**, held in Venice at the Scuola Grande di S. Giovanni Evangelista on 24, 25 and 26 May 2007, promoted and organised by ICEF.

ICEF presents this document for the attention of all the participants. This is not a political document but merely a policy and scientific one based on the commitment and responsibility of its promoting body.

ICEF wishes to thank the Veneto Region for its important contribution and support without which this Conference would not have been possible. All the participants have appreciated the hospitality, assistance and services that the Region has so kindly offered.

ICEF wishes to thank the Mayor of Venice for his contribution to the Opening Session of the Conference.

ICEF wishes to thank the international organisations - UNEP/MAP, Commission on the Protection of the Black Sea against Pollution, the European Commission and their authoritative representatives, and other international bodies such as IUCN and the European and the Arab Forums of Judges for the Environment.

ICEF has also been honoured by the highly qualified presence of representatives from many governments, especially from the Ministries of the Environment and judges of the Constitutional and Supreme Courts of countries on the Mediterranean-Black Sea rim. This can be seen as a first step towards positive future co-operation.

Special thanks also go to the Italian Ministry for the Environment Land and Sea and other governmental and non-governmental organisations.

ICEF is planning to publish the Proceedings of the Conference.

ICEF wishes to bring to the attention of the participants some priorities, believing this to be useful in the development of future co-operation.

Considering

That **the overall situation of the area constituted by the connected Mediterranean-Black Sea ecosystems**, covering approximately 30 countries throughout 3 continents (Europe, Asia and Africa) with a population of more than half a billion people, **continues to dramatically worsen in relation to the environment**, with potentially negative economic and social effects on the population;

That attention should be focused on the aforementioned ecosystems themselves, whereby coherent policies that concentrate on adequately managing the human activities which impact on them, must be aimed for. We welcome the initiatives of the EU and other countries in developing such policies;

That the **Danube and other major rivers which flow into the Black Sea carry considerable amounts of pollutants** from the States they flow through, and collect, along the way, waste and dangerous substances from the activities of millions of inhabitants who live along their banks;

That **similar problems affect the Mediterranean**, a relatively closed sea, with limited exchange, together with the huge load of pollutants coming from rivers and water courses in European countries, the Middle Eastern and African countries;

That the alarm recently launched by the U.N. and the EU on **climate change** is extremely serious and that the **threat of desertification is advancing** from Saharan Africa, together **with floods, water scarcity and other extreme weather phenomena** that affect the two regions concerned;

That **biodiversity is seriously threatened** and many species of shellfish, fish, mammals and birds are in danger of extinction, also from the introduction of exotic (alien) species;

That **development in agriculture, forestry, industrial and mineral production techniques and in regional planning, transport, infrastructure, tourism and recreation** and, at a more general level, changes in the world economy are in many cases accelerating the transformation and even degradation of landscapes;

That this **threat is accompanied** by the potential – but real – **migration of millions of people** from poor countries who tend to cross the Mediterranean moving into Europe; this will cause an enormous social, economic and cultural impact;

That today **the widespread insecurity induced by terrorism and by new conflicts is adding to already complex environmental problems**

Conscious

That the **Mediterranean-Black Sea ecosystems deserve joint and specific consideration, including preventive measures and integrated, participative and shared management;**

That the **principles of responsibility, prevention, precaution, information, participation, access, are still inadequately implemented**, because sustainability is not yet considered by Governments as a basic concept of their policies, in contrast to their obligations at international and EU level;

That the **protection of the Mediterranean and the Black Sea is still not perceived as an urgent need for justice** at the ethical and political level and **the environment is not considered as an effective potential tool for ensuring peace, tolerance, fraternity, respect, concrete operational co-operation for the common development of the populations involved;**

That the **concrete and effective enforcement of national, Community and international environmental laws on the Mediterranean – Black Sea and coastal zones needs to be monitored continuously**, together with the development of policies, through new instruments for co-operation involving all the institutional, scientific and social actors, through a permanent platform for dialogue and a global partnership for development with the support of UNEP and

other bodies such as the European Union, whose Directives deserve great consideration, especially those on environmental impact assessments, on environmental damage and environmental crimes;

That it is urgently necessary that all States on the rim of the Mediterranean and Black Sea **ratify and enforce the international Treaties and Conventions** regarding environmental protection and sustainable development;

That, in particular, there is the need to establish in the **Mediterranean Region** a more definite legal framework on which cooperation among the bordering States can be based. In this context, some experts suggested the following proposals:

- all bordering States should be encouraged to establish an exclusive economic zone;
- wherever appropriate, protection of biodiversity should be ensured through the creation of marine protected areas based on the relevant Protocol to the Barcelona Convention;
- all bordering States and the European Union should become parties to the new or amended instruments of the Barcelona legal system and do their best to finalise the negotiations for a new Protocol on the integrated management of the coastal zone;

That the efforts of the UNEP/MAP, the Commission on the Protection of the Black Sea Against Pollution, the European Union and the Council of Europe as well as those of the UNDP/GEF-Global Environment Facility, the ICPDR-International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River, the Regional Environmental Centre for Central and Eastern Europe (REC) and the Regional Marine Pollution Emergency Response Centre for the Mediterranean Sea (REMPEC), *inter alia*, must be appreciated for the proactive and important role played in protecting the ecosystems and in taking into consideration protection, management and planning;

That the accession of the European Union to the Bucharest Convention, because Romania and Bulgaria became members of the EU, is to be supported and encouraged;

That efforts to protect the Mediterranean-Black Sea ecosystem and to bridge the gap between the ecosystems and the political level can be facilitated also by **taking a sub-regional approach**;

That the Forum of Judges for the Environment deserve to be supported, as one of the new networks aimed at enhancing co-operation with other institutions in order to ensure wide-spread and consistent application and enforcement of environmental laws, including those directly and indirectly relating to the sea;

That the problem of access to justice has become a priority at a global level, and this is fundamental for the protection of the environment. ICEF supports the plea made, *inter alia*, by the *International Forum of Women for an International Court of the Environment* because this is the underlying reason for ICEF's Project, and it appreciates all encouragement and input which has been given towards this important objective, hoping that there will be a general consensus on this matter within the International Community in the near future.

The following priorities have been identified

1. Information, participation and access to justice
2. Land-based pollution source
3. Sea-based pollution source
4. Sustainable transport
5. Air pollution influencing the marine environment
6. Saline intrusion
7. Introduction of alien species
8. Desertification
9. Biodiversity (see Annex)
10. Special protected areas, international marine parks, sanctuaries for cetaceans
11. Cultural heritage
12. Archaeological and heritage sites
13. Landscapes
14. Sustainable tourism
15. Sustainable fisheries, introducing the ecosystem approach, and agriculture
16. Energy
17. Oil industry
18. Environmental disasters
19. Liability for environmental damage
20. Controls and an integrated environmental police force
21. Co-operation with regional and no-regional partners, as well as co-operation at sub-State level
22. Soil erosion and floods
23. Important role of universities and scientific research

In conclusion, it is to be hoped that a greater consensus will be reached on the protection of Venice, part of the common heritage of mankind, and its Lagoon which need concrete and immediate measures to be safeguarded.

It is also hoped that the next Conference on the protection of the Mediterranean and Black Sea will be held in one of the countries bordering the Black Sea, possibly in Istanbul, as suggested by some of the delegates present here.

Venice, 26 May 2007

ICEF-International Court of the Environment Foundation

International Conference
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ANNEX on Biodiversity**

- Considering* that the number of marine reserves within the Mediterranean-Black Sea ecosystems has increased, but that it is necessary and urgent for the Governments to make greater efforts towards the protection of biodiversity which has not as yet received the attention necessary for its fundamental natural, scientific, cultural, social and economic role;
- Considering* the sea and coastal zones have not been fully scientifically researched and studied in depth, that there is an erroneous perception that it is an inexhaustible source of food and resources.
The threats to species and to habitats are well known to the scientific world but are not adequately addressed towards widespread public awareness;
- Underlining* that the attitude of local populations to the establishment of marine protected areas along the coasts is becoming more consensual because of the positive results on social, economic and tourist matters that are being better evaluated;
- Considering with approval* that there is a growing involvement of NGOs in favour of marine protected areas, in terms of advice, training and co-operation in their area of responsibility;
- Stressing* the necessity for further initiatives and funded projects in the sectors of research and training for marine biodiversity, not only along the coasts but also in inland areas; not only in the territorial sea but also in international waters;
- Requests* the coastal States to strengthen their monitoring activities in order to carry out, within a short time, a global assessment of the marine biodiversity: it is necessary to make an inventory of all species and habitats, in their biological varieties and different degrees of integration, in their dynamism and reciprocal integrations in order to obtain an ecological cartography of the entire network of protected areas which are beyond bureaucratic national boundaries;

- Requests* the coastal States to systematically control biodiversity in a continual and exhaustive manner, working towards the most efficient reciprocal scientific and operational co-operation, adopting special plans and programs and common criteria;
- Requests* the coastal States to introduce and strengthen administrative, civil and criminal sanctions for all potentially harmful activities (introducing absolute bans on fishing in some areas, bans on the catching and collecting animals and plants, bans on non-compatible lay-over and anchorage; bans on dumping sludge and waste, bans on introducing alien species, bans on the unauthorised exploiting of the seabed, bans on trading in species in marine protected areas, etc.);
- Requests* strongly that the States take measures to control risks and serious offences and prevent/reinstate environmental damage: to control the dumping of waste and other human activities along the coasts, studying the necessity of new Protocols in this regard;
- Asks* that the States protect, in particular, marine caves, some special beaches, some species like cetacean, dolphins, marine turtles, monk seals, cartilaginous fish and shellfish, etc.;
- Makes* a special appeal to the States for the creation of marine reserves in international waters, according to a similar model to the already created International Sanctuary of Marine Mammals in the Tyrrhenian Sea, based on the co-operation among France, the Principality of Monaco and Italy;
- Requests* the States to increase the number of coastal wetlands, estuaries and sites of European Community significance situated in the sea.