

ATHENS NGO STATEMENT

We, representatives of the Environmental Non-Governmental Organizations, grouped under the major Networks¹, constituting an important part of the Civil Society of the EuroMediterranean, have adopted at our meeting in Athens on 7 July 2002, the following statement for submission to the 2nd EuroMediterranean Conference on the Environment, meeting in Athens (8-10 July 2002).

We, the EuroMediterranean Environmental Community

- Recall our Athens 1991 Mediterranean NGO Conference "Environment and Sustainable Development in a Safe Mediterranean" held in preparation of Rio, where we decided to work jointly within the international and national bodies and mechanisms for sustainable development in a peaceful Mediterranean
- Recall the EuroMediterranean environmental fora in Barcelona (1995), Helsinki (1997), Stuttgart (1999), Marseilles (2000) and Valencia (2002)
- Highlight the negative environmental trends published by the EEA and MAP on the State and Pressures of the Marine and Coastal Mediterranean Environment, which threaten the long term future of the region
- Welcome the proposal to **the 2nd EuroMediterranean Ministerial Conference on the Environment** "to adopt a strategic framework for the environmental integration process in the perspective of sustainable development"

A Sustainable Development Objective for the EuroMediterranean Partnership.

1. We recall the decisions of the 5th Conference of EuroMediterranean Foreign Ministers held in Valencia, April 22-23, 2002 and we urge the EuroMediterranean Environment Ministers to take the necessary steps to make Sustainable Development the guiding objective of the Partnership.

The Short and Medium-term Priority Environmental Action Programme (SMAP).

2. We congratulate the European Commission for preparing a comprehensive Report on the First 5 Years of SMAP Implementation and on consulting civil society representatives during the drafting process of the report.
3. However, we do not believe that the SMAP instrument alone is capable of integrating environmental concerns in the sectoral policies of the EMP, nor of providing a framework for achieving sustainable development in the Mediterranean basin. SMAP has neither the scope, the proper political mandate nor the financial backing to address these fundamental challenges. Therefore stronger political support, restructuring and adequate financial means would be desirable to render it more effective.
4. Having reviewed implementation of the SMAP, we urge Ministers to
 - strengthen the existing links of SMAP with environmental protection in Mediterranean agriculture (particularly soil protection) and tourism

¹ Arab Network for Environment and Development (RAED), Environment and Development Action in the Third World (ENDA), European Environmental Bureau (EEB), Friends of the Earth (FoE/MedNet Programme), Mediterranean NGO Network for Ecology and Sustainable Development (MED Forum), Mediterranean Information Office for Environment, Culture and Sustainable Development (MIO-ECSDE), World Wide Fund for Nature- Mediterranean Programme Office (WWF/MEDPO)

- provide funding to strengthen the programmes and capacities and initiatives of Mediterranean NGOs, reinforce the dialogue and synergies between NGOs and EMP institutions and fora, as well as dialogue between NGOs
- promote the involvement of the environmental NGOs through direct contact with SMAP officials and ensure that SMAP correspondents facilitate the involvement of national environmental NGOs in relevant activities while making their annual and interim SMAP activity reports available to interested NGOs and other Correspondents in advance of Correspondents' meetings.

Environmental Integration within the EuroMediterranean Partnership.

5. We welcome the proposal to EuroMediterranean Environment Ministers to develop a framework for a EuroMediterranean Strategy for Environmental Integration. This strategy requires ministerial commitment and the active involvement of all levels of administration, Parliamentarians and Civil Society. The implementation of the strategy needs to be led by the highest level decision-making body of the EMP. EuroMediterranean Environmental and Foreign Ministers are therefore urged to take full and active responsibility for its implementation throughout the EMP.
 - 5.1 In order to ensure the efficient and timely implementation of this strategy by Barcelona VII, Ministers are urged to ensure that
 - Policy coherence and integration of the precautionary principle and sustainable use of natural resources be at the heart of the strategy. This would include having as a principal objective the decoupling of natural resource use from economic development.
 - The strategy should be based on a comprehensive vision and include clear objectives, qualitative and, whenever possible, quantitative targets with timetables, including sustainable patterns of consumption and production.
 - sufficient resources be immediately made available for the collection and comparability of statistical data on the environmental impacts of the economic sectors of the EMP, so that indicators of performance on environmental integration can be adequately gauged within the review mechanisms foreseen.
 - civil society be actively involved in the NIP processes and the Association Councils.
 - 5.2. EuroMediterranean Environment ministers in co-operation with Foreign Ministers should annually monitor and evaluate progress in the implementation of the framework environmental integration strategy.
 - 5.3. Mechanisms for civil society participation in the monitoring and evaluation of the environmental integration process should be established and transparency guaranteed throughout. In this regard we propose the establishment of a structured consultative process with civil society organisations.
6. We stress that the proposed EuroMediterranean Free Trade Area should on no account impede the progress of the Mediterranean people towards sustainable development. We therefore demand the immediate launch of the Sustainability Impact Assessment of the EuroMediterranean Free Trade Area referred to in the Action Plan adopted by the Valencia Ministerial Conference. We urge the timely completion of the study with active involvement of the civil society in every stage of this assessment.

7. Environment Ministers are called on to identify barriers to environmental integration and address these where appropriate through the strengthening of the relevant mechanisms in partner countries. Programmes for increasing the capacity of partner countries to enforce high environmental standards need to be put in place, in accordance with national regulations and obligations undertaken under various international environmental agreements.

Synergies with Other Organisations, Programmes and Donors

8. We attach particular importance to strengthening ties between the EuroMediterranean Partnership and the Mediterranean Action Plan and welcome the initiatives recently taken to strengthen cooperation between MAP and the EMP. In this regard, we call for full recognition and ministerial support for the work of the Mediterranean Commission for Sustainable Development (MCSD) as an exemplary model for regional co-operation in the field of sustainable development. We also call for further collaboration and support to regional multi-stakeholder initiatives and structures such as the GWP-Med.

Climate Change

- 9.1 We warn that the Mediterranean region will be adversely affected by climate change and therefore urge Ministers to take the necessary steps to launch a regional climate change strategy to be adopted as soon as feasible and no later than by the Barcelona VII Ministerial conference.
- 9.2 We strongly encourage EMP countries which have not yet ratified the Kyoto Protocol to do so by the end of 2002.

Sustainable Development Strategy in the Mediterranean

- 10 We welcome the Mediterranean Commission for Sustainable Development's initiative to prepare a framework Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development by 2003, and call on EuroMediterranean Environment Ministers to clearly state and set out in detail how they will contribute to the successful outcome of this process in which they have a major responsibility.

Towards the World Summit on Sustainable Development

- 11 We note with satisfaction the reference in the draft implementation plan to Agenda Med 21 and believe that the global importance of the Mediterranean eco-region should be further stressed in the WSSD side events. These offer an ideal place for the development and support of multi-stakeholder Type II Initiatives closely linked with provisions cited both in the Implementation Plan of Agenda 21 as well as in the regional guidance documents and the commitments under the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).
- 12.1 We call on the EuroMediterranean Environment Ministers to support the five areas for priority action proposed by the UN Secretary-General in May 2002. (water, energy, health, agriculture, biodiversity).
- 12.2 To this end the EuroMediterranean Partner countries should actively contribute to reaching various targets, in particular those for Water and Sanitation for 2015, Education for All and Education for Sustainable Development as well as for the eradication of poverty in our region. Therefore, we fully endorse the proposed EuroMediterranean Water and Poverty Facility and request the largest possible participation of countries, cities and relevant stakeholders.