



PLAN D'ACTION POUR LA MÉDITERRANÉE
MEDITERRANEAN ACTION PLAN



ATELIER SUR LES “OBSERVATOIRES” POUR L’ENVIRONNEMENT ET LE DEVELOPPEMENT
DANS LES PAYS MEDITERRANEENS

WORKSHOP ON ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT “OBSERVATORIES”
IN THE MEDITERRANEAN COUNTRIES

Tunis, 18-20 novembre/November 1999

Summary and Conclusions



I. CONTEXT AND GOALS OF THE TUNIS WORKSHOP

1. The Goals of the Tunis Workshop

The MAP/BLEU PLAN organised a workshop on "Environment and Development Observatories in the Mediterranean Countries" from the 18th to the 20th November 1999 in Tunis, in co-operation with the Tunisian authorities and with the support of the European Commission (Life programme). The workshop was held under the presidency and patronage of Mrs. Faiza KEFI, Tunisian Minister for the Environment and Land use Planning and President of the Mediterranean Commission for Sustainable Development (MCSD).

The workshop brought together representatives from 14 countries (Albania, Cyprus, Egypt, Spain, France, Greece, Italy, Lebanon, Malta, Morocco, Slovenia, Syria, Tunisia and Turkey) and several international organisations (MAP Co-ordinating Unit and Blue Plan and Specially Protected Areas RACs, European Environment Agency, CEDARE).

This workshop was held 5 years after the 1st workshop in Rabat on Observatories in the Mediterranean, and after varied Mediterranean work on indicators (Damascus, Beirut, Tunis, Rabat, Cairo, Split and Sophia Antipolis workshops), carried out between 1994 and 1999 within the MCSD and METAP contexts, and co-ordinated by Blue Plan.

The workshop had two main goals:

- Getting acquainted with the state of advancement of various national "Observatories" in the Mediterranean, sharing know-how in spheres of common interest from the various current experiences, and clarifying the observatories' role and methods;
- Moving forward in the Mediterranean co-operation between generalist environment and development "observatories" and agreeing on a working proposal to be carried out jointly for implementing the recommendations on indicators from the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention (Malta – 30th October 1999).

2. A Changing Context

Setting up an "Environment and Development Observatory" function meets a changing social and public demand.

When the MAP was set up in 1975, the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention (the Mediterranean riparian countries and the European Community) wished this plan to include a specific component for monitoring and assessing environment/development major issues, which are common to the Mediterranean (creation of the Blue Plan). With the support of the European Commission (Life programme), this regional environment and development observatory function has been strengthened since 1993, thus allowing to carry out significant work, mainly on indicators for sustainable development, with all the Mediterranean countries.

This initiative comes within the larger framework of expansion of public environmental policies in the various countries, especially since the 1992 Rio Summit. It echoes the recommendations of Agenda 21 and its Mediterranean corollary, MED 21, which (Cf. chapter 40), invite countries to:

- Strengthen their capabilities for monitoring and assessing progress towards sustainable development;
- Adopt suitable indicators for measuring socio-economic, environmental and spatial changes;
- Gather and structure relevant data;
- Produce useful information for decision-makers;
- Disseminate this information to the largest number of stakeholders.

For the various Mediterranean countries members of the European Union, the set-up of the European Environment Agency in 1993, has represented a turning point. It led those countries to strengthen their capabilities in that field and, for some of them, to set up important national observatories (as was the case in France and in Italy for example) whose usefulness is widely acknowledged nowadays.

In the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean countries, the set-up of generalist observatories started in 1994 with Morocco. The decision was taken whilst it was estimated that the annual cost of environmental damage in that country had reached 8 % of GDP and it was therefore appropriate to devise strategic information, able to assist decision-makers in moving development towards taking the environment into account. Tunisia then created its national observatory while other Southern and Eastern countries are making efforts for setting-up similar functions.

In the environment/development context characteristic of the Mediterranean, such observation/assessment functions can make up a powerful tool for applying the principle of integrating environment and development. Both for the present and future generations, the costs of not-taking the environment into account are in fact very high, and several sectoral policies need to be corrected, which calls for objective information on the difficulties to overcome.

However, setting up national observatories is all too often faced with institutional difficulties and with a political will which is insufficiently expressed and offensive. In that context, Mediterranean co-operation appears as a major priority, especially in contributing to an improved definition of the observatories' role and of the type of synergies to be developed between the regional and national levels. The interest of each country and of the whole Mediterranean region is at stake.

II. "OBSERVATORIES" ROLE AND METHODS

The work carried out at the workshop allowed meaningful progress to be made in clarifying and defining the desirable observatories' functions. Eleven experiences carried out at national or regional (Mediterranean, and European) levels were presented and discussed. Lessons drawn from those experiences led to the main conclusions set out below, which make up a kind of "guide" to what should be achieved in the Mediterranean, the pitfalls to avoid and the methodological directions to be taken into account.

1. National Situations concerning Observing, Assessing and Reporting on the Environment

A round-table discussion brought out the great diversity of national situations, with regard to contexts and level of institutional advancement in the countries, knowledge of the environment and conceptual approaches used.

A functional diagram was presented by the Blue Plan (attached). The different Mediterranean countries can make use of it for positioning their "observatory" structure or devise in relation to the activities of:

- Reporting on the environment,
- Producing and using indicators,
- Working with partners to gather data and information required for analysing environment/development issues,
- Structuring the gathered data in information systems, adapted for producing new information.

2. National Reports on the Environment

The Reporting activity is one of the key assignments of an "observatory". It is a driving and federating activity, which gives meaning to all other tasks and activities carried out by an "observatory". At the same time, it is a challenge to be taken up.

- In fact, in order to make a balance and a diagnosis of the environmental situation, reports on the environment should make good use of the whole available and useful information.
- The activity thus requires considerable prior and post-networking:
 - In order to gather the data required (statistical, scientific, geographic, and institutional data) for producing new information at various territorial levels and in accordance with the issues selected,
 - In order to collate the thematic expertise essential to analysing issues and interpreting data, and if appropriate, to compensate for gaps in the quantitative information.
- This networking activity requires from the observatory to develop a significant steering capability and to have a clear vision of the expected result from the report conception stage. Once this has been acquired, the observatory can call upon data producers and outside experts (scientists, experts working in administrations, consultants) for the preparation of the report.

An initial report of this type may not cover all the topics desired, nor aim at perfection from the outset; it shall nevertheless be drawn up on the basis of a phased implementation work-plan and on a defined methodology concerning:

- The content: environment and development issues to be covered, observation scales, structure of the report (PSR framework) ;
- The public targeted by the output, especially decision-makers, whilst also addressing vectors of public opinion (NGOs, the media).

It is helpful to involve the carriers of public opinion in the drafting and dissemination of reporting outputs.

3. Indicators for Sustainable Development

Devising and using indicators lies at the heart of "Observatory" operations; this activity consists of selecting and enhancing data in order to create useful information for assisting decision-making and for inciting initiatives to be taken.

This activity has a central role in structuring, organising and "merchandising" the observatory operations involving:

- Data: It forces choices to be made and allows priority data in terms of sustainable development to be identified. It can incite data producers to adapt their approaches and their collection and measurement systems;
- Analysis: Indicators allow past trends to be measured, possible changes to be imagined and non-sustainable phenomena to be better appraised;
- Assessment: Indicators help to set result-based goals and/or measure progress towards targets already set and distance to goals (performance indicators);
- Reporting: Indicators make reports on the environment more objective and enriched and thus constitute a favoured vehicle for communication. Their use guarantees comparability of reports over time.

The activity on indicators is also a process for mobilising the several observatory partners and consolidating their mutual relationships for the benefit of both sides. By enhancing the already produced data and by transforming them into new information, indicators can bring a technical contribution to sustainable development issues in the frame of sectoral partnerships (e.g. agriculture/environment).

In conclusion:

- Indicators make up one of the main observatory's activities and should be developed in every country;
- The activity on indicators is to be developed in a harmonised context, in accordance with the decisions of the Contracting Parties (adoption of the common core set of Mediterranean indicators in application of the MCSD recommendations).

4. Working with Partners for Gathering Environment and Development Data

Environment and Development Observatories should not replace data producers. On the contrary, they shall establish dynamic relationships with the main data producers. For doing so, it is important:

- To associate the main partners with the observatory activities FROM THE OUTSET; later, this association can be strengthened and widened to other partners by setting up Steering committees;
- To convince them of the usefulness of the added value which will be brought to that data;
- To make them aware of their responsibilities without trying to dispossess them or to replace them in part of their work (which can raise the issue of data quality control);
- Sometimes, to provide them with financial (or material) incentives to produce data;
- Not to under-estimate the time required for data gathering or the skills needed for dialoguing with producers. It may be useful to delegate these tasks to thematic specialists.

It should be stressed that the institutional strengthening of exchanges with data producers (agreements, legal framework) is essential, even if this can be by-passed at the outset by relying on informal networking.

5. Information Systems and Databases

Practical lessons drawn from various experiences show that no standard information systems can exist without taking into account contexts and changes in priorities over

time. The expression "information system" is made up of two terms, which implies the prior definition of the type of information involved (environmental fields, economic sectors..) before the system is devised.

Building useful information systems is a real challenge for an "observatory". Lessons drawn from experience also show that:

- Structuring data is not a technological issue,
- Emphasis must be placed on work organisation,
- The key issue is "where to start",
- Above all, it is necessary to have a clear vision of the objectives to be reached, of what will be done with the data once gathered and structured.

III. THE USEFULNESS OF "OBSERVATORIES" FOR ASSESSING AND FORMULATING PUBLIC ENVIRONMENT / DEVELOPMENT POLICIES

A common view of what an ideal observatory should be was drawn from a panel discussion.

1. The Ideal Observatory

Firstly, it would supply useful information to decision-makers, that is information able to:

- Show current changes and provide early warning signals in the case of malfunctions to be rectified or prevented (non-sustainable phenomena);
- Assist to strategic decisions: help to appraise possible options for problem solving, with estimates on costs and impacts; assistance to moving sectoral policies towards greater sustainability; help to changing developmental and environmental policies especially to ensure sustainable management of natural resources and ecosystems and to allow decision-making in good time;
- Contribute to setting quantified targets and to measuring progress and results of the "responses" implemented.

It would also supply information able to generate a positive effect on the civil society's behaviour, and lastly contribute to awakening the needed contradictory debate on the development / environment relationship and on the policies to be applied.

In order to fulfil these functions, the ideal observatory:

- Shall provide an added value. Its role is not to create data but to generate indicators, analyses, and reports which link the socio-economic and ecological systems with a systemic and prospective approach, and which assist to public decision-making;
- Shall produce credible information founded on validated scientific data;
- Shall be able to operate over time, which requires a solid institutional anchoring so as to guarantee the objectivity of the work carried out. This implies that the observatory shall not be shut-off in the narrow field of environment; it shall be vested with some independence and with precise and acknowledged role and status, with its own management and consultative bodies (management board or steering committee, scientific committee, user committee...)

- Shall work in partnership and comply with the subsidiarity principle. The observatory shall play a catalysing role, co-ordinate the assessment of the environment /development relationships, and distribute information to the user community. However, it should not take on any direct operational function. It shall benefit from a contractual partnership with the required operators (statistics institutes, sectoral institutions holding useful data) which should acknowledge the observatory's role and make the necessary data available to it.

2. What should be done today to move towards this direction in the Mediterranean area?

The set-up of observatories depends on a social and political demand. Some regions and countries (especially in the European Union) have already set up observatory structures, which are close to the ideal observatory. Their usefulness is acknowledged; their budgets are significant and growing. On the other hand, in some southern and eastern countries, the "observatory" functions are still at the project stage.

Then, what should the priorities for action be?

- First of all, being convinced of what is wanted in order to be convincing. Especially, answering the questions: what for, for whom, by whom and how.
- "To produce in order to exist" and to take the plunge, making choices if necessary. For example by producing documents on indicators, even very simple brochures on well-identified non-sustainability issues (linking socio-economics and environment), and reports on the environment which may be not comprehensive or perfect. And do some marketing.
- Find allies interested in the observatory's production and added value: sectoral allies (tourism and agriculture), statistics institutes, the media and environmental associations, international organisations (especially MAP/Blue Plan, donors that will have to apply eco-conditions, etc.).
- Institutionalise: think about and make proposals to the authorities on the legal status and the supervisory/steering system required.
- Rely on the guidance, advice and references available especially at the Mediterranean or European level, and take part in the co-operation programmes put forward and in the implementation of the Contracting Parties decisions.

IV. TOWARDS IMPLEMENTING THE RECOMMENDATIONS BY THE CONTRACTING PARTIES ON INDICATORS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Further to the MCSD work on indicators, the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention have adopted recommendations and proposals for action concerning "indicators for sustainable development in the Mediterranean".

These recommendations (attached) invite the different countries to gather, on a voluntary basis, the data required for calculating the 130 indicators selected for Mediterranean application and to effectively contribute to MAP's drawing up of the first Mediterranean report on sustainable development in 2002.

This report will be mainly based on the selected indicators. It will highlight the unity and the diversity of situations in the region, current efforts towards sustainable development, difficulties encountered, etc. It will point out the medium or long term

target results that have been clearly indicated by the States, besides some examples of good practise.

National environment and development observatories and the equivalent agencies are therefore invited to contribute to this work with MAP. To this end, the workshop participants, based on the Blue Plan proposal, retained the following lines for action:

- Preparation by the Blue Plan during the 1st quarter of 2000 of a glossary of indicators and of a 3-year project leading in 2002 to the Mediterranean report. Continuing calculating indicators at the regional level.
- Calculation by the countries, during 2000, of the selected indicators calculable at the national scale with, if possible, their breakdown at the coastal regions (Nuts 3) and coastal strip levels. Identifying meaningful local examples.
- Organising a regional workshop for mid 2001 on the work carried out and for structuring the environment/ development analysis for the coastal regions (one of the main headings of the future report), on the basis of indicators calculated at that scale and of the expertise carried out.

In order to successfully achieve this project, MAP- Blue Plan will disseminate the results of the Tunis workshop to all Mediterranean countries and ask for financial support from the European Commission with backing from various countries. MAP will associate EEA to this work.

ATTACHED DOCUMENTS

- List of participants
- Blue Plan's functional diagram for "Observatory" functions
- List of distributed documents
- Recommendations by the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention on indicators for sustainable development (Malta, 30/10/99)

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Liste des participants / List of participants

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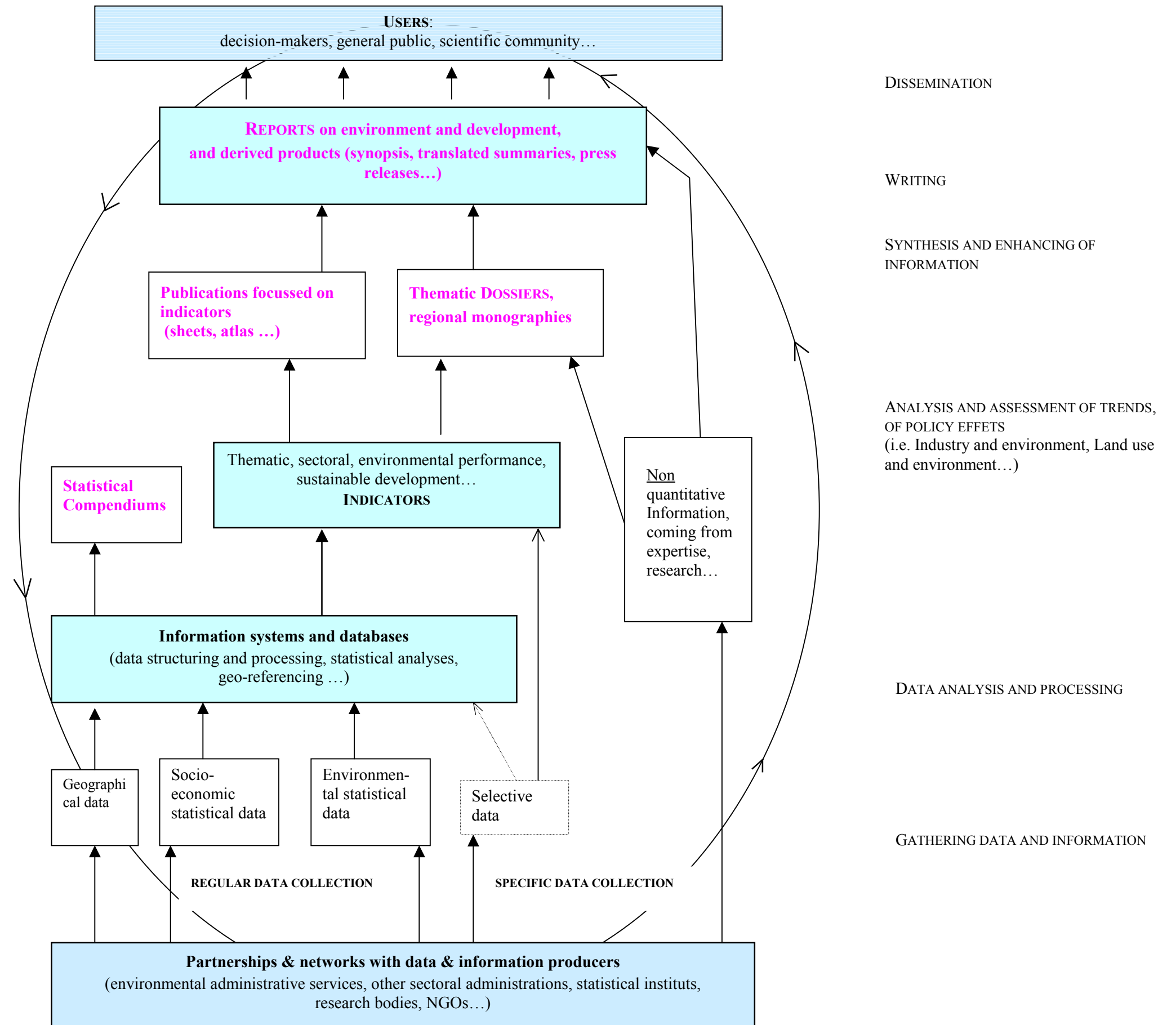
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RECOMMENDATIONS AGENDA 21

OBSERVING, ASSESSING AND REPORTING ON ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

MAIN ACTIVITIES

- To strengthen capacities for the follow-up and assessment of progress towards sustainable development
- To disseminate broadly the information produced
- To produce useful information for decision-makers
- To adopt indicators for measuring changes across socio-economic, environmental and spatial dimensions
- To gather, assess and process relevant data



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Liste des communications et des documents distribués

SESSION 1. OUVERTURE

Observation, évaluation et reporting sur l’environnement et le développement en Méditerranée

PAM/PNUE. Arab HOBALLAH. *Introduction*. 9 p. (transparents)

Document complémentaire : *Conclusions du Colloque international sur “Les Observatoires pour l’Environnement et le Développement: un outil d’information et d’aide à la décision”, Rabat 7-10 décembre 1994*. 6 p. (Français / Anglais).

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ANNEX II

Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development

Recommendations and Proposals for action on the theme of: INDICATORS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

Proposals

The Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention, with the support of actors from civil society, are invited to set up on a voluntary basis a Mediterranean system of indicators for sustainable development for use by:

- Mediterranean riparian States;
 - Actors in multilateral co-operation in the region ;
 - Actors from civil society (local authorities, companies, associations, ...).
1. **Adoption of a common set of indicators:** A first set of 130 basic indicators (of which 55 are more easy to calculate in view of the relevance and availability of data for an adequate number of countries) would be submitted to the Contracting Parties. Each country would compile them, where possible and on a voluntary basis, for the purposes of work at the Mediterranean level. This list may be changed in accordance with tests carried out in the countries, and in accordance with guidance and requirements expressed by the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development.
 2. **Complementary indicators:** The indicators selected in the common core set cannot alone make up an adequate framework for an in-depth examination of various subjects and for work on sustainable development policies on special fields or territories. MAP, the States and local authorities will endeavour to propose, test and record complementary pressure, state and response indicators.
 3. **Harmonization and dissemination of indicators to facilitate work at the national level:** MAP will create a «glossary» which sets out definitions and the methods for drawing up indicators. MAP will also keep an up-to-date dossier illustrating all selected indicators, including a table of trends by country and at regional level from 1960 onwards with graphical illustrations, in addition to comments on difficulties in collection and possible interpretations. MAP will disseminate this work on the Internet.
 4. **Mediterranean report:** The Contracting Parties are invited to contribute effectively to the production and publication by MAP of a report on sustainable development in the Mediterranean. The first report shall be drawn up in the year 2002.
This report will be based in particular on indicators for sustainable development.

It will show the unity and diversity of situations in the region, current efforts towards sustainable development, difficulties encountered, good practices, etc.
It will be submitted by the MAP to the Contracting Parties and the MCSD.
 5. **National reports:** States are invited to supply MAP with the national reports prepared for the United Nations Commission for Sustainable Development, and to facilitate comparative studies on Mediterranean issues undertaken by Blue Plan (series of Mediterranean Country Profiles).
These national summaries will indicate result-based goals in the medium and long term, which are clearly stated and adopted by States, as well as examples of good practice.

6. **Capacity Building:** The Contracting Parties are invited: to mobilize national statistical institutions and instruct environment and development observatories, or equivalent agencies, to monitor and enhance indicators at the national level; and to develop them into preferential links at the Mediterranean level.
- They are invited to develop appropriate programmes, possibly with regional financial support, to build their capacities:
- to promote the use of indicators for sustainable development;
 - to harmonize environmental and socio-economic statistics; and
 - to ensure coordination with all the institutions concerned
7. **Follow up:** MAP will follow up this work through the activities centres, and particularly the Blue Plan. It will supplement the work with new activities to examine specific themes in greater depth in collaboration with other competent national and international organizations. The MCSD will follow the work and, where necessary, will call on the task managers, who may propose the holding of the appropriate meetings.