



Regional Activity Centre  
for Sustainable Consumption  
and Production



# **A BLUE ECONOMY FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN THE MEDITERRANEAN REGION**

## **INTRODUCTION**

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**CONFERENCE UNDER THE UN Environment/MAP,  
organised by Plan Bleu in cooperation  
with the Split PAP/RAC and the Barcelona SCP/RAC**

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Good morning everyone,

I am pleased to open this conference on the blue economy, which is one of Plan Bleu's priorities for the coming years. Our programme of activities also includes environmental observation based on compiling the most relevant data to illustrate development trajectories and their impacts on the Mediterranean environment and developing indicators that can provide simplified information to policymakers and the public.

Plan Bleu is also responsible for monitoring the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (MSSD), which was adopted at COP19 in Athens. The foresight work for which it is known will continue under the MED 2050 Programme, and as a Mediterranean observatory, it is poised to prepare the next report on the state of the environment and development within the next two years.

The project which led to this conference was funded by the MAVA foundation and combined the expertise of Plan Bleu and the Regional Activities Centre (PAP/RAC) in Split and the SCP/RAC (Sustainable consumption and production) in Barcelona.

The main activity of the PAP/RAC is the implementation of the Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) initiative and the SCP/RAC is specialised in the development and innovation of the production sector and civil society based on more sustainable consumption and production models.

We need to recognise the efforts made by these three MAP regional activity centres to pool their expertise.

The programme for this project conference was developed by my colleagues Christian Averous (former Division Head at the OECD), Vice President of Plan Bleu, and Jean-Pierre Giraud, Deputy Secretary General, to whom I am truly grateful.

The concept of a "green economy" now seems to be quite well known<sup>1</sup> with its focus on respecting nature and maintaining a **natural capital** balance that does not compromise the equitable supply of **ecosystem services** available to all and for future generations. However the idea of a "blue economy" is still relatively unknown to many players.

Its intentions could be summarised as "an economy based on stewardship of natural, technical and human capital in order to preserve marine and coastal ecosystems to ensure that goods and services are available for present and future generations."

In other words, a "blue" economy consists in ensuring that key economic sectors such as tourism, fishing, shipping, port activities, mining exploration, bioprospecting and energy production are able to change direction with a view to becoming sustainable.

Working on the blue economy is crucial due to the high population growth in the Mediterranean, with approximately 450 million people in 2010 compared to 275 million in 1970. These numbers are expected to reach 527 million by 2025. A large percentage of the population lives in coastal regions -

a total of 208 million people with population densities of 130 people per km<sup>2</sup>, which is twice the average calculated on a national basis.

The environmental effect of this coastal development is a growing concern. We know that 730 tonnes of abandoned waste are released every day and that the lack of waste management systems in many Mediterranean countries makes it impossible to effectively prevent waste from being dumped into the sea.

The Mediterranean is also marked by some of the highest maritime traffic in the world in its international waters with nearly 15% of merchant shipping in terms of number of ports of call.

Shipping traffic should increase by 18% over the next few years and transit traffic by 23%. Trade in crude oil and gas accounts for 60% of total traffic in the Mediterranean and 20 to 25% of global oil traffic. There are 300 oil tankers in Mediterranean waters at any given time.

Container traffic is increasing by 8% every year and NO<sub>x</sub> emissions from ships are rising by 3 to 4% per year.

Tourism accounts for 11.3% of the region's GDP and 11.5% of jobs. Its environmental impacts in terms of waste production (75% increase during the tourist season), water consumption and space use (urban development and infrastructure, size of vessels in ports) generate situations that raise questions about the governance of an industry that is essential to these countries.

Illegal fishing is widespread and despite some successes like the return of the bluefin tuna, we must not forget that 85% of fish resource stocks are overexploited.

This intimidating but incomplete picture provides the rough outlines for what could be the practical application of a blue economy, or "bluer" economic development, if you will.

The goal is to dissociate marine and coastal activities from their negative impacts on the environment and come up with public policy tools to achieve this.

These tools include some that already exist: the MSSD offers general direction, the Madrid Protocol on ICZM, Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) initiatives, and of course the Barcelona Convention, MAP protocols and European Directives<sup>1</sup> for EU countries.

Other levers exist to promote or implement the principles of a blue economy:

- Adapted environmental taxation: elimination or decrease in subsidies that negatively affect the environment, taxes on pollution or resource consumption, etc.
- Private investments targeted at technical or social innovations,

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<sup>1</sup> Habitats Directive and Marine Strategy Framework Directive



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- Better governance of targeted economic sectors negatively affected by administrative and political cultures that are not harmonised across the Mediterranean Basin,
- Monitoring of activities related to the blue economy and gradually filling economic or environmental information gaps,

Overall, developing a blue economy is a challenge that needs to be tackled by human communities whose progress and very survival depend on the Mediterranean ecosystem.

I would like to close this short introduction with something that Vincent Van Gogh wrote to his brother Theo in 1888:

“The Mediterranean has the colours of mackerel, changeable, I mean. You don’t always know if it is green or violet, you can’t even say that it’s blue because the next moment the changing light has taken on a tinge of rose or grey.”

I hope that we will all be able to see a blue Mediterranean!