

ACTION PLAN FOR THE PROTECTION AND  
DEVELOPMENT OF THE MARINE ENVIRONMENT  
AND THE COASTAL AREAS OF BAHRAIN, IRAN,  
IRAQ, KUWAIT, OMAN, QATAR, SAUDI ARABIA  
AND THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

KUWAIT, 15 - 23 APRIL 1978

REGIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR THE PROTECTION OF  
THE MARINE ENVIRONMENT

KUWAIT

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## INTRODUCTION

1. The Region has been recognized by the Governments concerned and by the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) as a “concentration area” in which UNEP, in close collaboration with the relevant components of the United Nations system, will attempt to fulfill its catalytic role in assisting States of the Region to develop and implement, in a consistent manner, an Action Plan commonly agreed upon.
  2. The protection and development of the marine environment and the coastal areas of the region for the benefit of present and future generations will be the central objective of the Action Plan. This Action Plan sets forth a framework for an environmentally sound and comprehensive approach to coastal area development, particularly appropriate for this rapidly developing Region.
  3. Recognizing the complexity of the problem and the numerous ongoing activities, the Action Plan has been based upon:
    - 3.1 findings of an interagency mission 1/ organized by UNEP in co-operation with UN/ESA which visited Bahrain, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates from 15 March to 25 May 1976;
    - 3.2 Consultative Meeting on Marine Sciences in the region convened by UNESCO in Paris, 11-14 November 1975;
    - 3.3 recommendations for a marine science project endorsed by the Conference of Ministers of Arab States Responsible for the Application of Science and Technology for Development, CASTARAB, convened by UNESCO in Rabat, 16-25 August 1976;
- 1/ UNEP, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN/ESA), Inter-Governmental Maritime Consultative Organization (IMCO), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)
- 3.4 Meeting of a Group of Experts on Coastal Area Development convened by UN/ESA in New York, November 1974;
  - 3.5 recommendations of the Kuwait Technical Meeting on Coastal Area Development and Protection of the Marine Environment co-sponsored by UNEP and UN/ESA in Kuwait, 6-9 December 1976;

- 3.6 a feasibility study for a co-ordinated applied marine science and basic marine science programme conducted by UNEP and UNESCO in co-operation with the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) and FAO;
  - 3.7 Regional Meeting of Legal Experts on the Protection of the Marine Environment held by UNEP in Bahrain, 24-28 January 1977;
  - 3.8 Experts Meeting on the Protection of the Marine Environment, Nairobi, 13-18 June 1977;
  - 3.9 additional suggestions and proposals received from the United Nations system.
4. The Action Plan aims to achieve the following:
- 4.1 assessment of the state of the environment including socio-economic development activities related to environmental quality and of the needs of the Region in order to assist Governments to cope properly with environmental problems, particularly those concerning the marine environment;
  - 4.2 development of guidelines for the management of those activities which have an impact on environmental quality or on the protection and use of renewable marine resources on a sustainable basis;
  - 4.3 development of legal instruments providing the legal basis for co-operative efforts to protect and develop the Region on a sustainable basis;
  - 4.4 supporting measures including national and regional institutional mechanisms and structure needed for the successful implementation of the Action Plan.
5. For this documents, it is assumed that the Region includes the marine area bounded in the south by the following rhumb-lines;

From Ras Dharbat Ali  
 Lat. 16° 39' N Long. 53° 3'30E; then

to a position in:  
 Lat. 16° 00' N Long. 53° 25'E; then

to a position in:  
 Lat. 17° 00' N Long. 56° 30'E; then

to a position in:

Lat. 20° 30' N Long. 60° 00'E; then

To Ras Al-Fasteh in:

Lat. 25° 04' N long. 61° 25'E;

The coastal area to be considered as part of the Region will be identified by the relevant Governments of the Region on an ad-hoc basis depending on the type of activities to be carried out within the framework of the Action Plan. Nevertheless, coastal areas not included in the Region as defined above, should not be a source of marine pollution.

6. All components of the Action Plan are interdependent and provide a framework for comprehensive action to contribute to both the protection and the continued development of the ecoregion. No component will be an end in itself. Each activity is intended to assist the Governments of the Region to improve the quality of the information on which environmental management policies are based.
7. The protection of the marine environment is considered as the first priority of the Action Plan, and it is intended that measures for marine and coastal environmental protection and development should lead to the promotion of human health and well-being as the ultimate goal of the Action Plan.
8. The Action Plan is intended to meet the environmental needs and enhance the environmental capabilities of the Region and is aimed primarily toward implementation by way of co-ordinated national and regional activities. To achieve this goal, an intensive training programme should be formulated in the early phases of the implementation of the Action Plan.
9. A general description of the various components of the Action Plan is given in the following paragraphs.

## **I. ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**

10. Environmental assessment is one of the basic activities which will underlie and facilitate the implementation of the other components of the Action Plan.
11. The identification of the present quality of the marine environment and the factors currently influencing its quality and having an impact on human health will be given priority together with an assessment of future trends.
12. Due to the lack or inadequacy of available basic data on the marine environment, a co-ordinated basic and applied regional marine science programme and marine meteorological programme will be formulated as a basis for the Region. In formulating the operational details of these programmes, planned and ongoing national and regional programmes will be taken into account.

13. The following programmes are recognized as components of the co-ordinated regional environmental assessment programme:
  - 13.1 Survey of national capabilities of the Region in the field of marine sciences including marine meteorology covering:
    - (a) scientific and administrative institutions;
    - (b) information centres and data sources;
    - (c) research facilities and equipment;
    - (d) manpower;
    - (e) existing environmental laws and regulations;
    - (f) ongoing and planned activities;
    - (g) publications.
  - 13.2 assessment of the origin and magnitude of oil pollution in the Region comprising:
    - (a) baseline studies on sources, transport and distribution of oil and petroleum hydrocarbon pollution in the Region;
    - (b) physical, chemical and biological oceanography of the Region relevant to the transport, distribution and fate of oil as a pollutant;
    - (c) marine meteorology relevant to the transport and distribution of oil as a pollutant.
  - 13.3 assessment of the magnitude of pollutants affecting human health and marine ecosystems of the Region consisting of:
    - (a) survey of land-based sources of industrial and municipal wastes discharged directly or indirectly into the sea or reaching through the atmosphere;
    - (b) studies on the impact of industrial and municipal waste, including microbiological agents, on human health;
    - (c) research on effects of pollutants and other human activities, such as dredging and land reclamation on important marine species, communities and ecosystem;

- (d) baseline studies and monitoring of the levels of selected pollutants, in particular heavy metals, in marine organisms.
- 13.4 assessment of factors relevant to the ecology of the Region and to the exploitation of its living resources including:
  - (a) biology of commercially important species of crustaceans, molluscs and fish in the Region, including their stock assessment;
  - (b) plankton productivity and distribution in the Region;
  - (c) ecological studies of important natural habitats in the intertidal and subtidal zones, including creeks (khores) in the Region.
- 13.5 assessment of geological processes such as sedimentation contributing to, or modifying, the fate of pollutants in the Region, and their impact on human health, marine ecosystems and human activities, as well as effects of coastal engineering and mining.
- 14. The programmes listed in paragraph 13 are interdisciplinary and interrelated in nature. Therefore, while preparing the operational details of each programme, due attention should be paid to their close co-ordination in order to avoid duplication.
- 15. The priorities to be assigned to the activities listed in paragraph 13 will be determined by the Governments of the Region taking into account the present level of development in the Region and the pressing need to provide reliable and comparable data on which sound management decisions can rest.
- 16. The agreed programme will be executed primarily through existing national institutions within the framework of regional co-operation keeping in mind that for some projects a training programme should be formulated and that the assistance of experts from outside the Region might be required in the initial phase of some projects.
- 17. Operational details of each programme will be developed primarily by experts nominated by the Governments of the Region. The documents describing the operational details of the approved programmes as well as the national institutions participating in the programmes will be approved by the Governments before the implementation on the programmes.

## **II. ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT**

- 18. The countries of the Region have experienced unprecedented rates of growth during recent years, particularly in areas such as urbanization, industrialization,

- agriculture, transport, trade, and exploration and exploitation of the Region's resources. Continuous socio-economic development can be achieved on a sustainable basis if environmental considerations are taken into account.
19. To achieve the objectives of the development and environmental management component of the Action Plan the following preparatory activities should be undertaken:
    - 19.1 preparation and up-dating of a directory of Government-designated institutions available in the Region and active in fields related to the environmental management components of the Action Plan;
    - 19.2 assessment of present and future development activities and their major environmental impact in order to evaluate the degree of their influence on the environment and to find appropriate measures to either eliminate or reduce any damaging effects which they may have;
    - 19.3 identification of the most relevant ongoing national, regional or internationally supported development projects which have beneficial environmental effects such as the various fisheries projects of FAO, the environmental sanitation activities of the World Health Organization, and the assistance in industrial waste treatment provided through the United Nations Industrial Development Organization. The most significant of these projects should be strengthened and expanded to serve as demonstrations and training sites on a regional basis.
  20. Furthermore, in view of the priorities and needs of the region, the following co-operative programmes relevant to the management of regional environmental problems stemming from national development activities will be undertaken:
    - 20.1 formulation of regional contingency plans for accidents involving oil exploration, exploitation and transport, and strengthening the meteorological services contributing to the development of contingency plans and to their execution in co-ordination with existing or future marine regional meteorological programmes;
    - 20.2 assistance in development of national capabilities in engineering knowledge needed for regional environmental protection;
    - 20.3 strengthening the national public health services and their co-ordination whenever transboundary interests require it;
    - 20.4 rational exploitation and management of marine living resources, including aquaculture, on a sustainable basis, and the establishment of protected aquatic and terrestrial areas, such as marine parks, wetlands and others;

- 20.5 co-ordination of marine and land transport activities and the creation of a regional transport co-ordinated programme with special emphasis on port-generated pollution;
  - 20.6 development of principles and guidelines for coastal area development and management through workshops;
  - 20.7 co-ordination of national water management policies including community water supply and water quality control, whenever they may have impact on the marine environment of the Region;
  - 20.8 upkeep of records of oil pollution incidents in the Region with relevant information on the impact of such pollution on the marine environment.
21. As part of the activities and regional co-operative programmes 19 and 20 a vast training programme should be developed for personnel from the Region. Such a programme may be executed through training at existing national, regional or international institutions ready to offer their facilities.
22. Marine and coastal area environmental protection and enhancement cannot be achieved without the full support and co-operation of all those concerned. Therefore, adequate resources should be devoted to systematic and regular campaigns for public awareness of environmental issues in the Region.

### **III. LEGAL COMPONENT**

23. Regional legal agreements provide a fundamental basis for regional co-operation to protect the marine environment in the Region. Recognizing the importance of sound environmental development of the Region, the Governments agree to the need for early ratification of the Kuwait Regional Convention for Co-operation on the Protection of the Marine Environment from Pollution, and the Protocol concerning Regional Co-operation in Combating Pollution by Oil and other Harmful Substances in Cases of Emergency, which are adopted by the Kuwait Regional Conference of Plenipotentiaries on the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Areas.
24. It is recommended that UNEP should, in co-operation with the Governments and United Nations bodies concerned, convene intergovernmental groups to prepare additional protocols which will include:
- 24.1 scientific and technical co-operation;
  - 24.2 pollution resulting from exploration and exploitation of the continental shelf and the sea bed and its subsoil;

- 24.3 development, conservation, protection and harmonious utilization of the marine living resources of the Region;
  - 24.4 liability and compensation for damage resulting from pollution of the marine environment;
  - 24.5 Pollution from land-based sources.
25. Aware of the need to give special protection to the Region against pollution from ships through normal operations or dumping activities, an appeal is made to Governments of the Region to strengthen the measures for the protection of the Region through ratification and implementation of the relevant international conventions, particularly:
- 25.1 1954 International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution of the Sea by Oil, and its amendments;
  - 25.2 1972 Convention on Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping of Wastes and Other Matter;
  - 25.3 1973 International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships as modified by Protocol of 1978.

#### **IV. INSTITUTIONAL AND FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS**

26. In establishing institutional arrangements for carrying out the Action Plan, a mechanism should be established which uses, to the greatest possible extent, the national capabilities available in the Region and the capabilities of existing international organizations and co-ordinating bodies and which would deal with national institutions through the appropriate national authorities of the States concerned. Where necessary, national institutions should be strengthened so that they may participate actively and efficiently in the various programmes.
27. Subject to the approval of the Governments of the Region and in close co-operation with the international bodies concerned, UNEP should make such interim arrangements as may be required for the achievement of the objectives of the Action Plan, including the establishment of an interim secretariat, until the permanent Regional Organization for the Protection of the Marine Environment is established. In order to fulfill this task the interim secretariat should have adequate professional and supporting staff recruited mainly from the signatory States in consultation, as far as possible, with the Governments of the Region. The Interim secretariat shall be responsible for the overall co-ordination of the Action Plan and of matters arising out of the Convention and any protocol thereto. The interim secretariat should convene annual meetings of the States of the

Region and, as necessary, working groups of regional experts to review progress achieved pursuant to recommendations set forth in the Action Plan and to advise the Executive Director of UNEP on the development of additional activities.

28. In addition to the functions assigned to it by the States of the Region, the interim secretariat or the secretariat should establish and maintain liaison with competent bodies responsible for similar activities in the Region and in other regions of the world so that each region may benefit from the experience of others and data generated in all regions may be compatible and may contribute to an overall view of the marine environment.
29. The Governments of the Region agree to the necessity of establishing a Marine Emergency Mutual Aid Centre. The Centre should have primarily a co-ordinating role in exchange of information, training programmes and monitoring. The possibility of the Centre initiating operations to combat pollution by oil and other harmful substances may be considered at a later stage in accordance with Article III of the Protocol concerning Regional Co-operation in Combating Pollution by Oil and other Harmful Substances in Cases of Emergency.
30. Responsibilities should be transferred from the interim secretariat to the Regional Organization for the Protection of the Marine Environment as soon as this Organization is established.
31. It is proposed that the programme be financed by proportional contributions by the Governments to be assessed on the basis of a mutually agreed scale of contributions and supplemented especially in the initial stages by assistance that could be available from international bodies. The ultimate aim should be to make the programme self-supporting with the regional context, not only by developing institutional capabilities to perform the required tasks, but also by supporting training, provision of equipment and other forms of assistance from within the Region.