

**MEDWETCOAST**

**Report of the fourth Regional Advisory Committee**

**Tirana, Albania, 20 – 23 September 2004**



# MEDWETCOAST Project

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## 1. Introduction and address

### 1.1. Opening addresses

**Mr. Zamir Dedej, project director, National Environment Agency of Albania**, welcomed the participants to Tirana and to this meeting and introduced the keynote speakers. He then invited the Minister of Environment, H.E. Mr. Ethem Ruka, to open the meeting.

**H.E. Mr. Ethem Ruka, Minister of the Environment of the Government of Albania**, officially opened the meeting. He reminded that this meeting is an important event to share experience and lessons across the countries and expressed confidence that this particular meeting will be a success in that regard. He informed that Albania is an active member of the Ramsar convention and does not spare efforts towards the conservation of wetlands. In that context, he pointed out that the Council of Minister has declared two such sites as Ramsar sites and that, with the support of partner organizations such as GEF, UNDP and others, a number of projects are being implemented that are contributing to the protection of wetlands (eg. Ohri lake, Prespa park). He further pointed out that, through the MedWetCoast project, the Ramsar methodology and strategy has been applied to Narta and Orikumi. The project, he continued, helps in various ways such as: intersectoral cooperation, awareness raising, management planning, and enhancement of capacity at the local level. He explained that environmental problems are treated within the context of the sustainable development of the area. He confirmed that there are plans to declare Narta and Orikumi as protected areas. Finally, he concluded by referring to the national strategy for wetlands that is in the making thanks to the project and that would contribute greatly to the effort to conserve wetlands, an important resource for the country.

Mr. Dedej thanked the Minister, also for taking the time to come to open the meeting, thereby confirming the importance that the Government attaches to this project.

**Ms. Enkhtsetseg Miyegombo, ARR UNDP Albania**, presented the regret of Ms. Anna Stjarnerklint, Representative, who was not able to come. She pointed out that MWC is one of the biggest projects of UNDP Albania and that, as such, it plays an important role to achieve Millenium Development Goals (MDG). She explained that, today, Albania is bringing MDG to local levels and policies. All 12 regions of Albania have prepared sub-regional MDGs reports. The Vlora region has recently started the preparation of MDG report with contribution from the MWC project. The MWC project plays an important role in increasing capacity, streamlining the results into national policies and programmes, expanding national protected areas, and contributing to the improvement of the national environmental policy process. She also emphasized that this project, and any GEF project, should also focus on enhancing alternative livelihood and community development. Lastly, she highlighted the importance of such regional meeting as a forum to exchange best practices, as well as to share and learn from each other.

**Mr. Marcel Alers, senior technical advisor at UNDP-GEF**, started by thanking the Albanian government for hosting the meeting and thanked all participants, friends and colleagues from the project for their participation. He explained that he is here to introduce the officer who has recently taken over the responsibility for the project, Mr. Tim Clears. He also expressed his thanks to Ms. Lamia Mansour who covered the interim period after the unfortunate and too soon death of our colleague, Mr. Hani Daraghma. He pointed out that the project started in 1999 and that it is now well over the mid term and almost near the end. As such, this is probably one of the final meetings of the Regional Advisory Committee (RAC). Therefore, he remarked, the whole issue of what has been done so far and how to ensure that things continue becomes urgent and needs attention over the next couple of days. UNDP-GEF is pleased to participate in that effort and hear the thoughts and inputs of the participating representatives.

**Mr. Christophe du Castel, charge de mission / project manager for the Fonds Francais pour l'Environnement Mondial (FFEM) / French Global Environmental Fund** thanked the Albanian authority and in particular the Minister for receiving the meeting. He explained that this is the first opportunity for him to visit Albania and that he is then very pleased to be here. Beyond the personal appreciation, he pointed out that this meeting is an important one for the project, as it is today moving towards the final phase, when assessments and a review of the results have to be carried out. This meeting is thus very important in order to define the modalities for sustaining the actions in place, at the national and local levels, in particular the arrangements for government agencies and other national/local institutions to take over and fully discharge of the tasks, once the funding has expired. He confirmed that he expects the meeting to define further some of these elements of sustainability and, as the project has few such opportunities to bring all project components together like this one now, calls for active and effective inputs of the participants.

**Ms. Sylvie Goyet, MedWetCoast regional coordinator**, first thanked the host government and the MWC Albania project for its effort in organizing and facilitating the participation of all colleagues, a challenge in particular when one appreciates the relative difficulty for some of the participants to secure a visa. She further confirmed that the meeting ought to focus particularly on the modalities for sustaining national and regional results which, she recalled, are about 'conservation and effective management of wetlands and coastal ecosystems in the six countries'. She also pointed out that the RAC is a forum for exchange and learning and invited the participants to take full advantage of that opportunity.

Mr. Dedej then invited the MWC project partners to address the meeting.

**Mr. Spyros Kouvelis, MedWet Coordinator and on behalf of Ramsar**, thanked the host government. He emphasized that the MWC project should be an opportunity for partners to streamline their efforts and called for increased linkages between MWC and the MedWet projects. He spelled out some of the actions that MedWet is leading in Albania, pointing out that there are still many things to do in the country.

**Mr. Denis Etienne, scientific director at the UNEP-MAP / RAC-SPA** thanked the host government and expressed his appreciation for being in Albania for this meeting. He explained that he just joined RAC-SPA a few days ago and that he would have to learn a lot during these 3 days. He confirmed that RAC-SPA would like to see that project continue so as to ensure that there is continued close cooperation among the countries. He put forth that, to that end, the best solutions would have to be found, both technical and financial.

**Mr. Pierre Bougeant, charge de mission at the Conservatoire du Littoral**, explained that he has had the opportunity to come to Albania 4 or 5 times and that he has always received a most friendly welcome. He stressed that, throughout, he has been impressed by the MWC Albania project for its ability to really associate all of the local partners and stakeholders and trust that this would make for a successful outcome of the project.

**Mr. Jean Jalbert, director general of the Station Biologique de la Tour du Valat**, joined the thanks and commended, like the previous speaker, the efforts of the MWC Albania project for involving all of the stakeholders. Also he pointed out that he has been particularly impressed by the progress of the MWC Albania project in the recent past and the number of activities deployed to achieve tangible and effective results. As he was given the opportunity to follow some of the technical aspects of that national project over the last few months, he expressed appreciation for the work that the Albanian team has undertaken. Finally, he explained that the Tour du Valat has been working in Albania on a number of projects, in particular the Karavasta project, and would hope to be able to continue to do so in the future.

## **1.2 Approval of the Agenda. Appointment of Meeting Reporter and Chairperson.**

The agenda was approved. It is attached as *Annex 1*.

Mr. Dedej was approved as chairperson for the meeting.

The MWC Regional Coordinator will assume the function of rapporteur and prepare the meeting report.

The final list of participants is attached as *Annex 2*.

## 2. Session I: progress in implementation of the national components

Mr. Dedej introduced the session, inviting the project managers to present the progress in the implementation of their national component since the previous RAC.

### Albania

Ms. Violetta Zuna started by referring to the Mid Term Review (MTR). She confirmed that recommendations of the MTR were integrated into the revised project logframe. She also informed that the February 2004 UNDP mission on Environmental Outcome Evaluation concluded with positive findings, particularly related to community involvement.

She then highlighted the results of the Tripartite Review that was held on 25 June 2004. The meeting recommended a 2-year extension of the project, further collaboration with other UNDP/UN supported projects as well as reflection on the strategy for the sustainability of the project results.

In terms of achievements over the reporting period, she presented a series of results and outcomes against the key components of the project.

#### Outcome 1 – national policies

A draft decision of the Council of Minister on declaring the project sites as protected areas has been developed and widely discussed. This is the result of a long process with the communities and local authorities. Also, as per the MDG7, the project strives to integrate the principles of sustainable development into protected area management and policies. With regards to the national wetland strategy, the experts and NGOs that will be involved in this process have been identified. Finally, she pointed out the good integration with the various sectoral and physical planning systems, mainly through the national steering committee and the local steering committee, and also the due consideration to coastal zone management planning.

#### Outcome 2 – root causes of biodiversity loss are removed and sites are protected

Work has mainly focused on the development of the management plans, also carrying out some priority actions, and producing land cover and habitat maps. Some management plan instruments have been used for the sustainable development of the protected areas (including hydro-biological monitoring system, feasibility studies). She emphasized that the process has ensured true involvement of local communities. She explained that, in addition to the diagnosis studies available, three additional studies were commissioned and have been finalized : a study and assessment of sustainable use of medicinal plants, a study and assessment of the chemical pollution of Narta and Orikumi lagoons, and a stakeholders analyses and governance aspect.

#### Outcome 3 – closing the ‘Mediterranean circle’

She mentioned the development of national and local training plans in cooperation with ATEN and their continuous update, the good experience with TdV experts, the continuous contribution to the website and participation in regional workshops, and the support to local NGOs and user groups in capacity building, development of management actions and public awareness activities.

She added a few words on the management planning process, a subject that will be addressed in the case study later during the day. She acknowledged the assistance from TdV and the good contribution from Gtz through Coplan’s introducing urban planning and socio-economic aspects in the management planning process. The work so far has involved a great number of round tables and training, consultation exercises and dialogue.

On the side of training and capacity building, she listed some of the training workshops that have been organised, also referring to the video film that was produced for awareness purposes with regards to the oil drilling operations in Narta and that is now widely displayed at schools.

The main priorities for 2005 for MWC Albania are as follows:

- endorsement and adoption of the management plans and initial implementation of the priority management actions;
- preparation of a national wetland policy and improvement of the legal and regulatory framework;
- establishment of a simple monitoring system for wetlands ecosystem to be implemented by local partners;

- continuous coordination and involvement of the local NGOs, stakeholders and user groups on public awareness activities and building and strengthening of the management capacities;
- training of all actors in protected area management;
- continuous cooperation with MWC countries and other Mediterranean partners.

### Discussion

Ms. Lina Yamout, project director, MWC Lebanon, suggested that Albania may consider instituting a national day for Protected Areas. She mentioned that in Lebanon, they have done this, with a number of activities scheduled every year and that this was a great success.

D. Etienne asked how the public and the stakeholders would be involved in the project, in particular after the completion of the management plan. V. Zuna informed that the project has two steering committees, one at the national and one at the local level, with a number of stakeholders represented. With regards to the management plan, the project is working with a team of experts and all of the steps are discussed with the communities and local groups. Z. Dedej also added that they are now working on establishing a management committee at the site. But such a committee can only be created, once the site has received the status of protected area, as stipulated in the law. He explained that, in Albania, there are but few examples so far of the establishment of such a committee. For the two MWC sites that are up for protected area status, there is a strong request from the local communities and the local authorities to get involved.

Ms Magda Ghonem, community development consultant for MWC Egypt, asked whether opportunities for alternative livelihood had been created for the local communities. V. Zuna explained that some activities are already undertaken in that area and that more would be done within the framework of the implementation of the Management Plan. Z. Dedej further clarified that, first, immediate measures were taken but that, in the near future, measures for habitat rehabilitation and also fisheries would be undertaken.

### **Egypt**

Dr. Esam El Badry, MWC Egypt project manager, presented the *achievements* of the MWC Egypt component in 2004:

- the first draft of a national wetlands strategy was prepared. A classification system has been developed, recognising 17 different types of wetlands in Egypt. The next phase, i.e. holding workshops for validating and finalizing the document, are planned until the end of 2004. 50 experts will be gathering at the end of September for a first workshop to validate the draft, as per the guidelines of the Beirut regional seminar. By the end of the year, some 1000 experts would have been involved in the preparation of the strategy. The new minister was presented with the process and will be receiving the final draft.
- The implementation of the management plans started from January 2004. It includes: a) decentralisation of the decision making, through the establishment of three management boards chaired by the government with representation of various stakeholders, and b) partnering with local NGOs. He cited as example that in Burullus, NGOs are fully involved in the activity for cutting the reed, first through the MWC funds and now in partnerships with funding agencies.
- A monitoring program started in January 2004. Programs for the 3 sites were developed by a team of experts followed by 10 days of training for rangers. Equipment was secured and a lab set up for each of the three protected areas. The next phase is for the site teams to fully take over the monitoring activity in 2005.
- Capacity building and training: in the previous years, the focus had been on capacity for site diagnosis, GIS, and PA management. In 2004/2005, the focus will be on a) protected area rangers, and b) local NGOs.
- CEPA: a first draft strategy for each site has been prepared. It is currently being tested, and should be finalized by 2005 and then it will be sent to Ramsar for review.

E. El Badry confirmed that the plan is to complete the project at the end of 2005. But he remarked that there would likely still be a substantial amount of funds left by then. He explained that this is due to the fact that the project has been very careful with the spending and has done a lot of cost sharing. He stated that, mostly through personal contacts, the project was able to secure parallel funding from other ministries for some 28M Egyptian pounds (about 4M\$), in the form of, for example, construction done by the Ministry of Water and Irrigation, cooperation with the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries for dredging, and support from various other sectoral ministries which have contributed much investment to the project and are now tied to continue.

#### Discussion:

L. Yamout asked whether the 30 rangers were recruited by project funds and whether there is a special training center for rangers in Egypt. E. El Badry responded that the rangers are trainees and thus receive only a subsidy or transportation allowance for a monthly 300 Egyptian pounds (15 \$). He also reported that the Minister has promised to recruit 6 rangers per site by the end of the year. With regards to training, he informed that an international training center for rangers exists in Charm El Chek, built by the European Union.

S. Kouvelis queried whether the classification of wetlands for the Egypt national wetland strategy used the classification system developed by MedWet. E. El Badry explained that they first wanted to carry out a rough assessment but that they will then ensure that it tallies with the system of Ramsar. Asked whether the national strategy process did involve other ministries, E. El Badry responded that a great number of ministries had already been involved such as the Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Defense, and Ministry of the Interior. Finally S. Kouvelis informed of the WWF NGO capacity building effort, noting that it could be called upon for further support in NGO capacity building.

Mr. Charbel Rizk, project manager for MWC Lebanon, also explained that in Aamicq wetlands they had successfully introduced water buffaloes also to help reduce reed. E. El Badry mentioned that the lower part and the roots of the reed are depository of heavy metals and it might be dangerous for the animals. J. Jalbert pointed out that the Tour du Valat has been carrying applied research program on reed for the past 8 years, with good data, experience and solutions that they would be happy to share with the Egyptian colleague. About public awareness, J. Jalbert noted that the Egypt team had done some work with religious leaders and pointed out that this was an interesting initiative. E. El Badry confirmed that this initiative had been very successful.

## **Lebanon**

C. Rizk presented the progress of MWC Lebanon, pointing out that this had been a real team effort. Referring to the three project objectives, he spelled out the results:

### 1. At the legal and institutional level

He explained that a study on incentives had been launched. The identified incentives will be included in the law and be useful for private owners to adhere to it. The framework law will be changed into a natural heritage law and should be ready in about 3 months.

On the other hand, and with financial support from UNDP, preliminary work has been initiated towards the development of a national wetland policy. A national biodiversity committee has also been initiated that will encompass a national wetlands committee, with representation at the highest ministerial level of all concerned ministries.

Finally, a forthcoming EU Life 3<sup>rd</sup> country project, SISPAM, is to develop a stable institutional structure for the management of protected areas.

### 2. Removal of root causes

The final draft report of the site diagnosis is being reviewed and the MWC team has started to draft the management plans. The final drafts will be reviewed, most likely, by TdV.

At the same time, a number of actions are being implemented according to the 'ideal' orientations of the management plan such as:

- a) *conservation*: fences, grazing and hunting fully controlled at both sites, organic farming (the area has expanded to 17,000 m<sup>2</sup> in Tyr and, in Ammiq, 300,000 m<sup>2</sup> are being set up with technical assistance

from World Vision). In addition, the project is helping the Tyr municipality access EC funds to resolve the problems of the Tyr solid waste dump. He also reported that an otter has been discovered in Aamiq this summer!

- b) *rehabilitation and restoration*: a landscape plan is being developed for the wetland with the American University of Beirut.
- c) *bio-physical monitoring*: baseline data for fauna and flora are being set up by the site diagnosis team. On the other hand, collaboration with Medasset has resulted in a 45-day monitoring of sea turtles in Tyr Coast Nature Reserve (TCNR): nests increased from 7 in 2003 to 12 in 2004. In Aamiq, water quality monitoring is being set up and through solid cooperation with academia and universities, research and monitoring is taking place. Funds allocated by the GAC should allow for yearly monitoring of fauna, flora and other baseline indicators.
- d) *enhancement of livelihood*: training of women in Aamiq has been done on organic/agro-food to be sold in the community-owned shop. The effort is now put on the training of local eco-guides. A certification program for the guards is being worked on – they are not permanent employees but they come in when the people come. This will reduce the salary load for the guides. On the other hand, the project is in contact with tour operators to include the two sites on their regular tours and a tour operators workshop is in preparation. He also mentioned the work on organic farming, which, for the farmers, represent a major improvement over conventional farming, with profits up to 500%. Finally, two initiatives for bed and breakfast facility started in Tyr recently and they are fully booked.
- e) *Awareness raising*: the project took part in the national day for protected areas, participated in 2 exhibitions and developed 2 posters - 'values and functions of wetlands, ecotourism. A tape of environmental songs was arranged through funds from the Lebanese Canadian bank. He also cited the development of a screen saver about protected areas in Lebanon and numerous lectures and meetings.
- f) *Capacity building*: To ensure sustainability, he pointed out that training is being undertaken with both local and MOE staff attending. One of the training initiatives which he referred to is the training of trainers for sea turtles monitoring.
- g) *Infrastructure*: among the 'hard' measures, he cited interpretive signages, trails, bird hides, and a landscape plan.

### 3. Closing the circle

He mentioned that he has received full cooperation from RCU on several actions but that inter-country cooperation is still very low.

With regards to overall progress, he summarized as follows:

1. Legal and institutional framework in process
2. Site diagnosis at the final stages
3. Biophysical monitoring initiated and awaiting the finalization soon of the monitoring plan
4. Management plans are ready for review by the management plan coordinator
5. Activities are ongoing for conservation on site
6. Awareness at several levels to be elevated to the institutional level
7. Training plan: activities to be executed by mid 2005
8. Networking as much as possible
9. Substantial local and international partnerships has been built

For the end of 2004 and early 2005, the project plans to:

- Finalize the management plans by December 2004
- finalize and fully activate the monitoring programs by the end of 2004
- Implement activities within the budget by the end of 2004
- Finalize awareness materials
- Training plan executed by February 2005
- Wetland conservation mainstreamed at the institutional level

Finally, he cited some of the partnerships engaged by the project. And he reported on the disbursements rates: 40% at present, 85% planned for end of 2004. He concluded by pointing out that the project has already mobilized 3 times its budget

### Discussion

S. Kouvelis expressed full satisfaction with the progress of the project, in particular with regards to the achievements of the project against socio-economic and livelihood objectives.

## Morocco

Mr. Youssef Slaoui, project manager for MWC Morocco, first introduced the sites and the context for the project.

In terms of *key results* over the reporting period, he mentioned:

- the publication of a decree proposing the status of National Park to the Moulouya site and proposing this site as a Ramsar site;
- the recording of the Nador lagoon in the list of sites for the PAS-MED program;
- the establishment of the ‘cellule littoral’ which priority will be to develop a coastal law;
- the contract with Enda Maghreb for the site of Moulouya : he mentioned that a local unit is now in place with 3 persons and that a first workshop had been organised in September 2004.

In terms of practical actions, he reported on a number of *infrastructure/engineering works*: fencing, road improvement, and recreation area for Beni Snassene through contract with the Departement des Eaux et Forets. In cooperation with Enda Maghreb, initial activities have been deployed to control and address the visits of tourists.

Two studies have also been undertaken on the management of solid wastes which, when incorporated in the site management plans, would help address the problem.

In terms of *training*, he reported that, in collaboration with ATEN, a number of actions have been planned and initiated: ‘values and ecological/socio-economic functions of the sites’ (Nador, July 2004); ‘participative approaches’ (Berkane, April 2004); participation in MWC Tunisia training on the role of local authorities in the management of protected areas; study tour from Conservatoire du Littoral (June 2004)

Over the next reporting period, he explained that, after this year’s focus on field work, the challenge is now to bring up the lessons to the national level, helping develop the required national policies. The *following actions are being scheduled*:

- assessment of national government policies in place;
- workshop on the development of a national wetland strategy ;
- strategy for the management of water ;
- site infrastructure work: roads, dune path ways, etc.;
- solid waste clean up campaign;
- implementation of the management plans ;
- set up of a monitoring plan ;
- training and capacity building;
- publication and awareness raising ;
- increased collaboration with local NGOs and other environmental projects.

## Discussion :

D. Etienne remarked on the usefulness of carrying out some concrete visible actions, such as dune pathways, etc. to demonstrate to the local communities that things are happening.

## Palestine Authority

S. Goyet presented the excuse of the delegation from the Palestine Authority. She explained that, though the project there has completed and funding is exhausted, the RCU has endeavoured to facilitate the participation of Palestinian delegates to the regional activities, in particular to RAC meetings. Unfortunately, just a few days ago, the Palestinian delegate scheduled to come to Tirana regretted not to be able to confirm his venue, because of the situation in the Palestine.



She then presented a latest report received from UNDP Palestine and describing the substantial degradation of the Wadi Gaza site over the recent past. In the last three months, huge amounts of construction debris, garbage and soils were placed in the wetland area filling the majority of the wetland area, large portions of the wetland lake and portions of the flood zone. The larger portion of the area which used to be a wetland habitat for many birds and animals covered with reed beds, tamarisk and emergent reefs has been destroyed. The water course has been filled with debris, leaving a narrow channel of about 1,5 meter width to allow for the flow of wastewater to the sea. Not to mention the cost of removing the debris and rehabilitating the area, if at all possible, the report also points out to the possible danger for surrounding residents and bedouins living in the Wadi, in case of probable flood in the winter rainy season suggesting that even a moderate flood in the Wadi is expected to incur a lot of damage to the surrounding farms and low flood areas.

She explained that the UNDP Palestine office has taken the matter up with the Palestine Environment Quality Authority, asking it to intervene to stop the degradation first and then assess whether and how it can be rehabilitated while ensuring that the situation does not occur again in the future.

The meeting expressed concern, but also pointing out to the difficult political context of the area making any intervention quite delicate and unlikely to guarantee a long term solution.

P. Bougeant emphasized the courage of the colleagues in Palestine who have been working in very difficult conditions, also remarking that the Wadi was already in a bad shape at the start of the project. He cautioned that any support that the project could extend could only be symbolic, considering the political situation and the context.

## Tunisia

Mr. Mahmoud Chahoui, local coordinator for MWC Tunisia, presented the progress of the project in Tunisia on behalf of the MWC Tunisia project manager.

He commenced by pointing out that, earlier this year, a new logical framework was developed, which did not change the initial objectives nor the overall budget, but introduced impact indicators and reorganised the project components with an emphasis onto socio-economic and gender aspects.

Referring to the key objectives of the project, he spelled out some of the main results:

### 1. Setting up a sustainable framework for conservation

- the local management unit is being strengthened with the forthcoming recruitment of 2 engineers in October 04;
- a digital database in the form of an atlas of the sensitive areas in the Cap Bon is being prepared ;
- the management plans have been adopted in July 2004. For some of the priority elements, the process calls for the preparation of tender documents which are to be completed by mid November 2004.
- with regards to capacity building, one training took place in December 2003 on the role of local authorities in the management of natural habitats;
- a committee for the preparation of a national wetland strategy has been created. National workshops are scheduled and 2/3 experts would be recruited for the drafting of the document. MWC Tunisia would call upon the TdV for assistance in this regard;
- since November 2003, the project has participated in the consultation process on the review of the urban plans for the municipality of Korba and Tazerka. He remarked that urban plans in Tunisia act as legal instrument.

### 2. Implementation of field conservation actions

- engineering work on the sites has been undertaken, including the construction of a bird watching tower. A forestry expert has been recruited for the actions concerning the forest habitat (GEF funds);
- with regards to conservation and protection of habitats, a pipe has been installed linking the wastewater treatment plant and the Korba lagoon (FFEM funds) and some ecological change has already been noticed in the form of a re-population by birds. Also, an expertise study was conducted for the rehabilitation of dunes. Finally, scientific monitoring is ongoing for certain parameters. By October, a contract will be signed for biological monitoring of the wetland sites;

- on the FFEM funds, the solid waste dump will be moved and 4 small tractors purchased.
- Awareness raising activities

### 3. Sustainable management of the sites

- enlargement of the representativity of the local advisory committee in June 2004 to include NGOs and businesses;
- local dialogue process in late 2003 (MedWet initiative);
- two local management committees will be created : one for the wetland sites (12 lagoons) and one for the forest ecosystem. On the Zembra/Zembretta site, the management plan for the terrestrial part has been completed by the project and will be completed for the marine part, under a RAC-SPA project ;
- 4 framework contracts were concluded with municipalities in July 2004
- contractual cooperation with NGOs and scientific partners
- Agenda 21 process is being integrated in each of the site, as from April 2004

### 4. Regional cooperation

- participation in regional meetings;
- initial work to register Cap Bon lagoons in the Ramsar list ;
- field visit of Algerian colleagues in September 2004 ;
- Support from CdL and ATEN.

### Financial information

GEF cumulative disbursement: \$1,044,521 or 40,56% of total GEF budget.

FFEM : \$203,431 or 30,5% of total FFEM budget.

National cash component : DT571,855 (or \$15,894) or 38% of total budget.

He concluded by spelling out the activities scheduled for end of 2004 and 2005 against each of the project objectives.

### **Case study : MWC Albania : management plan process in Albania**

MWC Albania is currently mainly focusing its efforts on the completion of the management plans for the sites. After briefly presenting the sites and their characteristics, Mr. Taulant Bino, one of the two Management Plan coordinators for MWC Albania, introduced the main elements of the management plan that is currently in draft form.

The overall goal of the plan is to “provide guidelines for ensuring the integrated management of natural resources for a 5 year period”. He explained the management planning process with consultation exercises ongoing for all major stakeholders groups and economic sectors.

The Management Plan process initial phase includes:

- Analysis and synthesis of Site Diagnosis Reports
- Identification of gaps and the needed studies
- Preparation of ToRs for thematic experts
- Consultation of findings with MWC team
- Meeting with Local and Central Steering Committee, Local representatives

The Management Plan development phase includes:

- Selection of local moderators and thematic experts
- Several meetings with MP team
- Field visits
- Analysis of stakeholder groups - there he explained that the study undertaken aimed at: identifying key stakeholders, defining the characteristics of key stakeholders and their interest in the project, identifying conflicts of interests between stakeholders, assessing the capacity of stakeholders to participate in the MP process, and assessing the appropriate type of stakeholder participation.
- Preparation of preliminary reports
- Small-scale actions defined and implemented

In terms of results, he pointed out that, to date:

- Final thematic reports are under preparation
- Long-term and operational objectives have been defined
- Final draft of Management Plan is in progress
- Consultation is in progress
- Small-scale actions are in progress (live-stock water supply rehabilitation, planting, etc)

He concluded by highlighting the difficulties encountered, namely in the form of : lack of appropriate knowledge on socio-economic issues, lack of cost benefit analysis supporting the conservation of the sites, presence of unresolved economic conflicts, lack of skills, confidence, and knowledge, lack of an appropriate institutional frameworks, lack of communication bridges among authorities and informal users, inappropriate legal status of the project sites.

### Discussion

L. Yamout asked about the consultation process for the final document of the management plan. T. Bino explained that, already, the project has deployed a lot of activities for awareness raising and consultation with all stakeholders to keep them informed and involved in the process. This will be pursued.

M. Alers initiated a discussion on the management planning process, on the issue of its use and sustainability, in particular referring to the challenge of financial sustainability of the parks and protected areas. D. Etienne gave the example of the ‘parc marin de Soufrière’ in the Caribbean / West Indies, fully supported by economic instruments (mostly in the form of tourism fees).

## **3. Session II: Status report of the overall MedWetCoast project and of the Regional component in particular**

### **3.1 Status report of the overall MedWetCoast project (consolidated PIR)**

S. Goyet presented an overview of the project status as per the Project Implementation Report of June 2004.

She first introduced the overall status in implementation of the project:

ProDoc Signature Date	Albania: 31 August 1999 Egypt: 7 September 1999 Lebanon: 26 June 2001 Morocco: 29 September 1999 Palestine: Tunisia: 15 August 1999 RCU: 31 August 1999
Closing Date	Original: November 2004 Albania: (GEF) November 2006 Egypt: (GEF) December 2005 Lebanon: (FFEM) February 2006 (RC Feb05) Morocco: (GEF/FFEM) October 2004 (to be revisited in late 2004) Palestine: (GEF) September 2003 Tunisia: (GEF) September 2005 (FFEM) December 2005 RCU: December 2004/mid-2006

She pointed out to the uneven rate and focus of implementation and the different rates of disbursements, the improved delivery since last RAC (both FFEM and GEF components), the efforts to respond to the MTR recommendations with increased attention to national policy setting (wetland strategy but also coastal zone management), socio-economic aspects, and training/capacity building, and the exercise at the national level to revise the logframes and working operations, as appropriate.

She then presented the consolidated report of the impacts and results of the project as measured against the GEF strategic priorities:

Healthy bio-physical and environmental indicators recorded	Planned. Not yet measured. A number of critical incidences
Expanding protected areas	Planned and in process. Specific record of expansion of the surface area now legally protected?
Improving management effectiveness of protected areas	Site diagnosis studies Site Management Plans Urgent measures
Changes in sectoral policies, laws and regulations to improve biodiversity conservation and sustainable use	Limited contribution of the project
Changes in national policies for the environment,	In some countries, <u>environmental legislation</u> already in place at the start of the + MWC helped bring to the final stage and/or approval process a number of framework laws and regulations In addition, work on the preparation of <u>national wetland policies/strategies</u> has been initiated this reporting period (Albania, Egypt and Lebanon)
Improving practices of sustainable use of biodiversity resources	<u>Improved practices of resource use:</u> - Improved <u>water management</u> - Decrease in illegal cases of resource abstraction - <u>Alternative livelihood</u> activities encouraged

... and referring to the indicators at the objective level:

<b>National policy framework and strategies</b> in place for coastal zone management and wetlands	
Few policy instruments in place for wetland management. For coastal management, in some countries, there was already a good set of policy tools and instruments	Ongoing effort in 2004 to elaborate <u>national wetland strategies</u> in Egypt, Albania and Lebanon, further to the holding of the regional seminar (Feb.04).  Little changes brought by the project for <u>coastal zone management</u> in the reporting period, but for the strengthening of relevant institutions (APAL in Tunisia and Cellule Littoral in Morocco)
15 globally significant wetland and coastal sites in 5 countries and 1 authority in the Mediterranean region are <b>legally protected</b> through the establishment of <b>PA status</b> by the project	Project sites proclaimed as protected areas in <u>Albania</u> .  Continued effort in the other countries to enable the confirmation of legal protection over the sites (eg.  In <u>Lebanon</u> , support to the finalization of the Protected Area law and work with the private owners in Aamiq to confirm the protection status).  In <u>Tunisia</u> , through the zoning of the sites and official integration into the SDAZS, some, 13,800 ha concerned by the project are now under protection.  In <u>Morocco</u> , publication of the decree which foresees the granting of the status of Parc National to the site of Moulouya
<u>AT START OF PROJECT:</u> * <u>Albania</u> : Narta & Orikumi= no legal protection; Llogara= national part, Karakurun = nature reserve * <u>Lebanon</u> : Ammicq = private site, Tyr=nature reserve * <u>Egypt</u> : all sites designated as protected area by law (Zaranik, Burrulus=Ramsar site, Omayed= Biosphere reserve) * <u>Morocco</u> : no legal protection for any of the sites * <u>Palestine</u> : Wadi Gaza = protected area * <u>Tunisia</u> : none of the sites were designated as protected areas, except for Zembra/Zembretta: national parks = about 400 ha: - Haouaria = hunting reserve - Dar Chichou : Réserve Cinégétique - Korba was classified as Maritime Public Domain and in the process of being registered as RAMSAR site	

At the site level, she pointed out that management plans have been finalized in Egypt, Palestine, and Tunisia (except for islands), are in draft form in Lebanon and Albania and not yet started in Morocco; that management boards are being created on the basis of the established local steering committees; and that increased focus is being put on socio-economic/community development aspects as well as on public participation and awareness activities.

At the national level, she explained that, further to the holding of a regional seminar in February 2004 on national wetland strategy, a corresponding process has been initiated in Egypt, Lebanon, and Albania. In

Tunisia and Morocco, national seminars are planned for the second half of 2004/early 2005. She informed that, in most countries, the logframe was adjusted in late 2003/early 2004 to incorporate the recommendations of the Mid Term Review and changes in the local/national context since the start of the project. This update mainly concerned the activity level and focused on: increased attention to integration of socio-economic issues, result-based management, and the strengthening of institutional and policy framework.

Finally, at the regional level, she underscored that the RCU scheduled two regional meetings (RAC3 - Tunis, October 03 - and regional seminar for National Wetland strategy - Beirut, Feb04). It facilitated the participation of MWC experts in a number of regional training events, workshops and seminars such as TAIB training, IUCN training, regional ICZM Forum, Venezia Lagoon conference, training opportunities with Interreg MedRegions project, MedCoast. Increased attention was put onto communication tools and thematic networks were set up in the areas of a) training and capacity building, and b) socio-economics. She highlighted though that little one to one exchange took place across the national components.

### 3.2 Consolidated budget status

S. Goyet presented a series of graphs and figures schematically displaying the budget status of the overall project.

To June 2004, the disbursement rate of the components against the external budget is as follows<sup>1</sup>:

	<b>Albania</b>	<b>Egypt</b>	<b>Lebanon</b>	<b>Morocco</b>	<b>Tunisia</b>	<b>RCU</b>
PIR July 2002	30,4%	35,2%		10%	12,9%	35,2%
PIR July 2003	35,4%	38,8%	23%	17,1%	28,4%	67,4%
PIR July 2004	47,2%	47,3%	35,1%	23,7%	28,5%	83,4%

She showed that, if the historic trends of disbursement is continued, none of the national components, except likely for Lebanon, will reach full spending of the budget by the completion date or by end of 2006 – Albania and Egypt coming closer to the targets than Morocco and Tunisia.

She described the break down of RCU spending : 3% in 1999, 12% in 2000, 24% in 2001, 24% in 2002, 14% in 2003 (i.e. a cumulative 77% at end of 2003) and tentatively 12% in 2004 (i.e. a cumulative close to 90% at end of 2004), leaving some 11% for future years or about \$275,000.

### 3.3 Presentation of RCU activities

S. Goyet presented the activities of the RCU over the reporting period, October 2003 to September 2004.

Against the objectives of the regional component, she reported the following activities:

<p><b>1. Capacity building through technical assistance</b></p> <p>1.1 Support during project start-up</p> <p>1.2 Technical support during implementation</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• socio-economic initiative: a) technical support to requesting countries (cost-shared), b) preparation and publication of booklet of case studies and c) networking of practitioners and holding of workshop (tent. November 2004) – TdV</li> <li>• Inputs into national workshops, reports, strategies and initiatives;</li> <li>• Referral function upon technical requests from countries;</li> <li>• National workshops (in requesting countries) for <u>bio-physical monitoring</u> (not implemented yet)</li> <li>• facilitating direct support and contracting between MWC national projects and partners</li> </ul>
<p><b>2. Closing the Mediterranean circle through networking, publications and sharing of experience</b></p> <p>2.1 Organise exchange of technical knowledge and information through regional seminars</p>

<sup>1</sup> The discrepancies between these figures and those presented by the national components in section 2 come from the fact that a) figures reported by the countries could be dated September 2004 whereas figures in section 3.2 are based on the June 2004 PIR and b) some countries have reported totals that include disbursements + engagements whereas the PIR only reports disbursements.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regional seminar on national wetland strategies, Beirut Feb04 + follow up – TdV</li> <li>• Regional seminar on ICZM (not implemented yet)</li> </ul>
<b>2.2 Documentation and publication</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Guidelines on ‘integrated wetland management’ – TdV (end04)</li> <li>• sharing of technical documents (PAP-RAC guidelines, IOC UNESCO, Ramsar, specific project experience)</li> <li>• production of CD-Rom (with Arabic) - management planning (Jan04)</li> </ul>
<b>2.3 Exchange of experience on the management of sites / documenting</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Internet update and newsletter every two months</li> <li>• Management plan peer review exercise (not implemented yet)</li> </ul>
<b>3. Capacity building through training</b>
<b>3.1 Reinforce the national capacity to implement training courses</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support to and strengthening of capacity building network – ATEN</li> <li>• Facilitate participation of MWC experts in regional training: CoastWetChange – April04, Venizia; TAIB Mallorca - bio monitoring, Oct03 &amp; April04; MedCoast – ICZM, sept04; MedRegions training (Toscane-monitoring Nov03; Murcia – man plan, March04; Corsica – inventory, June04); IUCN-PA management, Dec03</li> </ul>
<b>4. Monitoring and regional management</b>
Participation in national and regional project monitoring and reporting cycle on an annual basis. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PIR July 2004</li> <li>• RAC4, Tirana Sept04</li> <li>• Retrofitting exercise – consolidation of LFA and indicators</li> <li>• Inputs into national TPR (Tunisia, Albania)</li> <li>• Organisation of regional steering committee meetings (Oct03, Jan04, May04, June04)</li> </ul>

In terms of RAC recommendations, she explained that the RCU has worked towards:

- Sustainability of regional functions (recommendation #5) through a) preparation of various drafts of an exit strategy and b) consultation with national and regional partners.
- Particular technical emphasis (recommendation #8) onto the areas of : community development, monitoring (of impacts), documenting of experience, planning for sustainability, engaging in partnerships, enhancing multi-sectoral, multistakeholder and ecosystem integration, and resource mobilization.
- Consultation with regional partners (recommendation #12) with a view to a) implement specific agreed activities: PAP-RAC, MedWet, MedCoast, contracts ATEN, TdV, and b) assess opportunities for anchoring MWC into the work / mandate of regional programmes and institutions - meetings with: MedWet Valencia team, lecture at MedCoast, meetings with MAP, Ramsar, MedWet, WWF, TdV.
- Creation of Regional Steering Committee with addition of UNEP MAP (recommendation #13)

Planned activities for the RCU over the remaining of 2004 include:

- participation in TPRs / one mission to each country
- completion of socio-eco booklet + workshop on socio-economic aspects and experience (Nov.04)
- publication of ‘integrated management of wetland’ booklet
- network of training focal points (Nov.04 workshop)

In terms of MTR recommendations:

- A draft Workplan was developed in November 2003, and a final one in January 2004
- For ‘better & more efficient exchanges of experiences / closing the circle’ it has implemented one seminar, finalized one publication. But there has been little exchange of experts, and little lessons documented
- A revised budget was prepared along activities and results
- For ‘communication tools’, the website was enhanced with a newsletter published every two months
- Interventions of TdV and ATEN have been coordinated by the RCU and formalized in sub-contracts
- Technical backstopping of the RCU was extended along recommended areas : wetland policy making, publication, socio-eco initiative, information exchange, encouraging national training activities
- Through the socio-economic initiative (TdV sub contract), the RCU has drawn a focus on economic impacts and aspects

- The networking on national training activities led by ATEN as well as the opportunities for MWC experts to take part in various training activities has helped address the need to promote greater N-S and S-S partnership
- A Regional Steering Committee was formed in October 2003 and already 4 meetings have been held in 2004
- As recommended by the MTR, expertise specifically requested by a particular country is now contracted directly by that country to the international partner like the direct contract between UNDP Tirana and the TdV
- Aerial photographs will be purchased in 2005, and
- Reflection on the sustainability of priority regional functions has been an ongoing process

### Discussion

M. Alers asked whether the new UNDP Atlas budgeting, an output-based procedure for recording budget and spending, is now operational in all countries. The countries confirmed that, indeed, the national components and the regional component are now all on this new system.

The Regional Coordinator confirmed that satellite photographs should be purchased in 2005, so as to compare with the ones of 2001.

Upon invitation from the Regional Coordinator, **representatives of the TdV, CdL and ATEN** made a short presentation highlighting the support and the inputs that they have been providing to the RCU since RAC3.

### **Station Biologique de la Tour du Valat (TdV)**

J. Jalbert presented the support that TdV has extended to the RCU over the reporting period through sub-contract. This includes:

- 1) hosting of the RCU and logistical support
- 2) technical support
  - preparation and contribution to the regional seminar on national wetland strategies
  - booklet on “integrated wetland management” drafted (to be published end 04 in the TdV/MedWet series), prepared with INRAM and various experts’ inputs as well as a number of case studies from MWC.
  - production of CD Rom on “training of trainers on management planning”
  - development of a network of experts in community development / socio-economic initiatives in the Med: workshop and case studies.
  - Intention to have such a gathering of lessons learning process for management planning process. Initially, was planned this year but has been postponed.
  - Regional seminars and training in MedWet/regions training

In addition, he mentioned that the TdV provides direct assistance to the national components upon request:

- Albania: assistance in management planning + socio-economic approaches (missions in January, August and October 2004); hydrology expertise
- Morocco (under discussion): seminar on the national wetland strategy + training on socio-economic values of Morocco wetlands
- Lebanon (under discussion): assistance to management planning process

### **Conservatoire du Littoral**

P. Bougeant confirmed its appreciation with the present set up and ways of operation of the regional component and explained that they have extended technical assistance to the countries that requested it. In particular, he mentioned that the CdL helped organize two seminars, one in Morocco and one in Tunisia, arranged 3 visits of Moroccan/Tunisian delegations on specific issues: physical planning, measures against erosion, etc.

Finally he stated that the CdL has frequent contacts with all partners and also informed that Algeria has now established a ‘conservatoire du littoral’.

### **ATEN**

E. Thevenin first referred to the principles behind ATEN's intervention, i.e. 1) to accompany the persons and the structures through strengthening of skills and through a focus on self-reliance of the trainees and a focus on methods, and 2) to encourage the long term planning of capacity building effort through the preparation of national training plans and link with regional partners for training activities as well as the set up of the Training Focal Points network.

Referring to the recommendations of the MTR (i.e. to strengthen national partnerships, enhance the delivery of national training exercise and improve the exchange of information), he reported on the activities carried out over the reporting period:

- finalization of the Lebanon training plan (all MWC countries now have a training plan)
- facilitation of a network of training focal points with an annual workshop, regular contacts and, today, 14 national training activities inventoried for the reporting period
- strengthening of the information exchange with regular inputs into the training platform on the web site and formal contacts with the WWF-led NGO capacity building network and other regional partners network.

He proposed a series of actions for follow up:

- sustain the function of a training focal point within each of the national components to ensure a good level of national training activities in the country
- establish links with existing networks and programmes to enlarge the range of training opportunities for MWC experts
- strengthen the process of planning the training and capacity building exercises, in particular linking it with the needs and the requirements of the jobs, and the identification of skills required for the discharge of specific functions
- sustain the networking effort, in particular through regular meetings of the training focal points, and updating the training platform on the web site.

#### **4. Session III: perspectives for the RCU post end of 2004**

S. Goyet presented an overview of the situation for the RCU and the challenges in terms of sustaining some regional functions with little funding left versus a mid-term disbursement or even less for the national components. She confirmed that no new funding would be provided to the RCU by the project key funding partners and reminded of the request, from both national and regional partners, that the RCU continue to accompany the national components till completion.

She further qualified what is meant by 'accompany the national components'. This, she said, is understood as ensuring the following priority regional functions while the national components still carry on:

- *“Some formal mechanisms for information exchange* between countries including the website and web tools and the regional newsletter.
- *A technical referral function* and roster of experts to help meet specific national level technical expertise and capacity building needs, as implementation of the management plans unfolds and legislations are being developed by the various national components;
- *Collaboration with other networks and projects* active in the region and internationally, which could lead to the conduct of additional regional level information exchange and on-the-ground coordinated efforts in the future”

She also reminded that impacts of this project in terms of biodiversity improvement would have to take place and be demonstrated at the national or local level. As such, the sustainability of the whole project must first be worked on at the national level and the efforts should be to secure the long term realization of national results. This can happen through identification of options for financially sustaining the activities (government funds earmarking, economic instruments, project proposals for external funding, etc), through strengthening the site management plan process and developing adaptive management mechanisms for monitoring and revision of the plans, and through close liaison with the partner programmes and institutions, looking for synergies and collaboration.



Since RAC3 in October 2003, she explained that the regional steering committee has worked on refining the RCU exit strategy and opted to examine options for promptly anchoring the RCU functions into a/several regional institution(s) with a) a transfer of budget and of RCU set up and b) a long term commitment to carrying out the priority regional functions from own mandate and workplan. The focus has then been to assess which institution(s) would be interested and mandated to carry out the functions in the medium and long term.

In reviewing the options, the Regional Steering Committee has been mindful of the necessary change in the role of RCU, i.e. to evolve into one of accompanying more so than leading. It also recognized the desirability to increase the share of cost sharing from the national components in order to provide regional services and the principle of direct sourcing of support by national components for specific national requests. Finally it agreed that, in the medium term and to sustain the functions, it would be necessary to anchor some of the RCU tasks and functions into the workplan and mandate of the regional partners.

Drawing from the above, she then presented the recommendations of the Regional Steering Committee:

**The RCU to remain functional as per present set up and hosting but with reduced capacity and activity.**

**The RCU to focus its work onto:**

- 1. Assistance to finalize the project.**
- 2. Documenting the lessons learned, including a final evaluation.**
- 3. Support to sustaining national results and effort to set up mechanisms at regional level to anchor the regional functions into partner institutions, programmes or networks**

1. Assistance to finalize the project.

That would include such activities as inputs into TPR, reports, workshops, or strategies; referral function for required technical expertise; information exchange and website; travel and missions (2 x country/year); and RAC5

2. Documenting the lessons learned, including a final evaluation.

Building upon the thematic networks, that could include drawing lessons from the experience with a) management planning process, b) socio-economic aspects and c) training / capacity building. This could be compiled in the form of assessments part of or next to the final evaluation that would need to be undertaken towards the end of 2005.

3. Support to sustaining national results and effort to set up mechanisms at regional level to anchor the regional functions into partner institutions, programmes or networks

This could translate into small thematic workshops of experts and practitioners (eg. Socio economic experts, Training Focal Points meeting, etc.) but also consultation with partners, national and regional, to review the priority functions and assess best options for sustaining these in the long term.

## Discussion

### **Clarification from UNDP GEF**

M. Alers further commented on the issue and the proposed set up. He reminded of the history and background that led to this recommendation.. He explained that various options were considered, in particular one to transfer the regional functions to an existing institution which would host a regional coordination unit. Among those institutions that the Regional Steering Committee had considered was the MedWet Coordination Unit in Athens, RAC-SPA, and also PAP-RAC at some point. The functions could be distributed to more than one. For example, PAP-RAC having a mandate for coastal zone management, could absorb only those related functions, whereas those with a wetlands focus could go to the MedWet Coordination Unit. He explained that the committee finally decided not to go along with that line. He clarified that the associated costs and the disruption that would probably come about would lead to some uncertainty, all in the face of a very small budget remaining. The committee then agreed to leave the operational set up as it was, since it seemed to be functioning quite well, and, to disassociate the operational part, i.e. the functions, from the budget. It then also recommended that the RCU workplan in 2005 include a strong focus on the sustainability and transfer of the functions.

M. Alers reminded that the GEF, as a donor, has always seen the RCU as a facilitation and support mechanism towards the national components. The RCU is just a means to an end – what matters is the services that are provided. As such, the GEF is not interested in keeping the RCU alive as long as possible. He also confirmed that the GEF, in principle, does not wish to impose a solution that would take money from the national components to ensure that the RCU continues more and more. If the countries consider those regional functions useful and are prepared to pay for them, they are welcomed to do so. Else, the unit would close earlier. And he reaffirmed that the GEF has no preference. Finally, he added that, for the GEF, this is seen as one project. And that is why only one PIR is submitted. A complication would arise if the RCU that synthesises and puts this reporting together could not do it and it would have to be done by the national components.

### **Position of the national MWC components**

L. Yamout pointed out that the proposal seemed reasonable and agreed that the objective should not be to sustain the RCU per se. She clarified that what the countries really need is the technical backstopping of the RCU to finalise the project at the national level and that the countries are essentially mindful to see an RCU functioning in an effective way. She further added that there is no possibility for Lebanon to cost share some of the activities of the RCU and recommended to revisit the budget of the RCU with that in mind, or to source out funds from another party.

Y. Slaoui explained that Morocco is in favour of co-financing the RCU operations, but on the basis that all national components would contribute. He also added that he would not consider it sensible to undertake regional activities for only 3 countries, those which would financially contribute. On the basis of \$275,000 tentatively remaining and discounting the functioning of the RCU, he then suggested to prioritise the regional activities. Some of the regional functions could already be taken over by some regional organisations and this would free some funding. Finally, he pointed out that if a national component has a specific need for the RCU, it should be up to that component to cover the associated costs.

M. Chihaoui presented the position of Tunisia. It agrees on the continuation of the RCU as presently organised. He also reminded that Tunisia has insisted in the past that any co-financing must be on the basis of all countries contributing. He continued by proposing that the RCU workplan for the coming year or so must be approved by the countries, in particular if they are asked to co-finance its functioning or part of its activities.

E. El Badry for Egypt informed that, though personally he recognises the importance of the RCU, the discussions with representatives of the government (Minister, head of conservation department) confirmed that Egypt is not in a position to finance or give cost-sharing for the RCU.

Z. Dedej for Albania confirmed that in principle, Albania agrees to share the costs and contribute. He concurred that they would like to see a unit effective and functioning. He also pointed out that the RCU remaining budget should allow for a year to a year and a half, which seems adequate to accompany the completion of the national components.

### **Comments from the regional partners**

D. Etienne from RAC-SPA pointed out that the present RCU seems to be helpful to ensure that the project works properly. It would surely be important to continue as such until the end of that funding. He cautioned though that what is important is for the network and the exchanges of experience to be sustained and not be lost at the end of the RCU and at the end of the project. And he emphasized that this might be the case : as soon as the RCU stops, the national components will continue their work but they will do that on their own, in their country and there will not be anybody to help organize this kind of meeting nor try to exchange experiences and activities. He therefore noted that it is really important for regional organizations to maintain the network after the project has completed, whichever that organization is. He pointed out that, if RAC-SPA was that organization, it would not develop a network only for MWC countries, but for the whole of the Mediterranean. He concluded by cautioning that if the RCU ensure implementation of all the components and all of the functions until the end of the budget, everything will finish with the RCU finishing.

J. Jalbert for TdV recalled the assets at hand for the follow up of this project. He reminded that several of the regional partners are long-term organizations, with a regional mandate, and with a clear mission focused on the Mediterranean. TdV is committed to continue providing assistance in its field of expertise and able to take over some of the functions such as the website or the technical referral function. He pointed out though that what is an issue is the necessary documenting of the lessons learned and the need to keep the reporting as one project. He challenged that the issue was to best use the remaining funds to address this problem.

M. Alers concluded by highlighting a few additional points:

- for technical services, countries already seem to be directly contacting and contracting the expertise, when needed and valued. This expertise exists widely in the region and will continue to exist and be available to the countries in the future;
- in the coming years, the key is how to keep reporting to the GEF as one project, this being one of the obligations co-signed by the government for the use of GEF money and by UNDP as the GEF implementing agency which shares this responsibility ;
- the Regional Coordinator will send a detailed workplan with costing on the basis of the proposed lines of work, seeking inputs and feedback to organize her work for the next year or so.

## **5. Session IV : socio-economic aspects of the MedWetCoast project**

### **5.1 Introduction: Regional Coordinator – initiatives of the RCU**

S. Goyet presented the outline of the RCU socio-economic initiative which was launched in early 2004 in response to the recommendations of the MTR and the prioritization of the national components. The initiative aims at a) encouraging specific attention to socio-economic aspects, in particular in the development of the management plans and b) documenting the lessons learned and the experience in this area. The initiative calls for:

- a) technical support upon request from countries (eg. visit to Albania in framework of management plan process);
- b) booklet of case studies in community development/socio-economic aspects of the MWC project;
- c) meeting of practitioners (scheduled for end of November 2004/early December 2004).

### **5.2 Presentation of TdV tool ‘Butor Star’ – ‘Wetland management: appreciating the decision making processes with involvement of various stakeholders’.**

J. Jalbert introduced the context for the development of the role playing game, referring to the LIFE-Nature European Programme (2001-2005) that involves six wetlands in France and with the objective to improve reedbed management for the conservation of a vulnerable heron, the Great Bittern (*Botaurus stellaris*). Several educational tools are being developed, including a role-playing game called ButorStar.

S. Goyet then gave a brief presentation of the role playing game itself. Reedbeds are multi-uses wetlands. Grazing, reed harvesting, waterfowl hunting, and nature conservation projects are each associated with specific management practices that interact at several scales, with potentially long-term consequences on human uses and conservation issues. The model permits to simulate the mid- and long-term impacts of reedbed management resulting from the decisions made by farmers, reed harvesters, hunters, and naturalists. The model relies on an archetypal wetland made of a virtual landscape divided in two estates hydrologically inter-dependent, one private, the other collective. Each estate is divided into height hydro-functional units. These units can be embanked by the players if they wish hydrological independence. Different water regimes are proposed, each one being adapted to a particular wetland use. Land-use and water management decisions are made by the players at the level of both the estate and the hydro-functional unit. These decisions are inputted in the model each year as the results of the negotiation process among the players. Their impact on wetland health and biodiversity (reed condition, density and diversity of birds) is simulated for different periods of time to assess the compatibility and sustainability of various practices over time. This role-playing game is designed to promote public and student awareness about the conservation value of the reedbed

habitat and its fauna, as well as to provide a companion modelling approach to support collective decision-making among stakeholders.

The participants expressed interest in the tool and a number of MWC national components asked for further information, wishing to adapt the tool to the national context and use it with the local stakeholders as part of the consultation and dialogue process. S. Goyet explained that the tool will be demonstrated to the MWC socio-economists that will be participating in the forthcoming socio-economic workshop (late November 2004).

### **Case study : MWC Egypt case study presentation: socio-economic initiative and participation of local communities as conservation partners**

E. El Badry on behalf of Dr. Magda Ghonem, national development advisor for MWC Egypt, presented the MWC socio-economic initiative. He spelled out the objectives of the initiative which are to create an interactive trust and a common vision between the project and the local communities, prevent practices which fundamentally contradict the conservation requirements, rationalize practices which negatively impact the environment, and support activities aimed at the development of local communities in a sustainable way.

He cited a number of activities that were carried out over the last reporting period in the sites.

In Omayed, the project worked on distributing olive seedlings, rehabilitating roman wells for irrigation, eradicating female illiteracy, raising environmental awareness and developing Bedouin women's handicrafts. New activities have also included: clean-up campaigns, a grazing management program, an alternative fodder supply project, a gas ovens supply project and a veterinary campaign.

In Zaranik, new activities included: the set up of a veterinary clinic, maintaining the filtering system of the salf pan, establishment of 2 NGOs, training course for NGO board members, a rehabilitation program for pastureland, an alternative fodder supply project, a gas ovens supply project, a veterinary campaign, an ecotourism plan, the production of a book on birds and a Bedouin women's handicraft project.

In Burullus, new activities included grants for fishermen cooperatives, environmental awareness for religious leaders, dialogue with the local communities and a reed cropping project

He then described in more details the reed harvesting project. He explained that reed had spread vastly in Lake Burullus, to the extent of covering approximately 17% of its surface area (around 7,000 hectares). This resulted in blocking the water flow, upsetting the ecosystem, decreasing fish resources and handicapping fishing activities. The project involves the removing of the reeds through cropping at least 25 cm below the water surface to ensure it does not grow back. On the basis of a bidding process, 8 NGOs were selected to execute the work, also with support from a GEF small grants. He reported on the results of the project: wide channels were created through reed beds; the water circulation was improved; fishing boats are now trafficking in larger areas; one noticed the reappearance of high-value salt-water fish; it created hundreds of job opportunities and new experience for the NGOs; the local community gained confidence and it generated an indirect environmental awareness

### **Discussion**

C. Rizk asked about the sustainability of the reed cutting initiative, as NGOs were paid by the project to cut the reed and it is questionable whether they will continue to do it without pay. It was responded that the way that the cutting is being done, the reed will not grow again, and the people know how to cut it and they are willing to do it themselves in the future, for in the future they will not have a problem of the scale as it is now. Also the project is currently negotiating with the government so that they take up that responsibility. E. El Badry further explained that the NGOs have now been shown how to cut the reed and also how to apply to external funds.

### **Case study : MWC Tunisia case study presentation: Local dialogue experience (MedWet initiative)**

M. Chihaoui presented the experience with the Local Dialogue process as implemented in the area of Korba in Tunisia in collaboration with and with the support of MedWet. He recalled of the objectives of the initiative which are to contribute to the local consultation and participatory process at the local level, establish platforms to carry out different activities at the local level with a view to strengthen food and environmental security as well as promote the exchange of experience and the identification and development of better practices, and raise awareness of the stakeholders.

He explained that, once the site had been selected, they carried out a preliminary quick socio-institutional diagnosis to identify the stakeholders, their roles and the system of decision making. Some information gathering and public awareness took place and the Dialogue process was developed. He reported that, in a first phase and working with the local communities, they used a participatory approach to analyze the problems. In a second phase, the Local Dialogue was tested in the field with the holding of a local workshop in Korba. There, the objectives were to reach a consensus among the stakeholders on the opportunity to organize a local dialogue on the theme ‘water/agriculture/environment’ and to draft an action plan in order to improve and sustain the local dialogue that had been initiated and follow up on the solutions that had been proposed. As a result, a series of problems and concerns were identified by the stakeholders and these were organized in terms of causal relationship and priority. The partners then identified a series of options and agreed on most appropriate ‘solutions’.

Looking back, he confirmed that the dialogue had been very useful for the local communities to better appreciate collectively the common problems and their causes, and understand the decision making process. He pointed out though that one of the major difficulties has been to follow up and that the project has so far been unable to respond to the expectations in terms of the solutions that were discussed and proposed in January 2004.

### Discussion

D. Etienne enquired whether such an activity does not indeed generate more frustration than improvement for the local stakeholders. If, for political reasons as explained, the large consultation process that took place does not bring about any outcome and remains a punctual initiative with little or no follow up, credibility and trust may be lost with these local stakeholders. He also asked why such a local dialogue was brought from outside and whether there did not exist any local system for dialogue such as there exists in other parts of Africa particularly where the traditional system of ‘chefferie’ can take the lead for such local dialogue.

C. Rizk also pointed out that, for each workshop conducted in Lebanon, there is a representative from the central government ministries in addition to local authorities and institutional agencies, thus allowing for greater opportunities for exchange and for finding solutions together. It was also pointed out that ‘local communities are not always right’.

S. Kouvelis explained that the process described by MWC Tunisia was carried out in the context of the Global Water Partnership ‘Food and Environment’. The objective there was to look at interaction between water, agriculture and the wetlands. He pointed out that, in Tunisia, 1) the local communities had difficulties in bridging the needs for water used for agriculture and water requirements for the wetlands; 2) they came up with a list of issues much broader than the focus of the dialogue, which the Local Dialogue initiative could not possibly address. He also remarked that the eagerness of the local actors to express and voice their concerns was very impressive and should be noted.

## **6. Session V: Retrofitting exercise / Revisiting the project’s logframe and indicators towards a measure of impacts**

M. Alers reminded of the objective and importance of the exercise that was initiated earlier on this year. Upon review of the June 2004 MWC PIR, he pointed out that some more work needs to be carried out in order to properly report on impacts of the project.

He also reminded that the GEF has been in existence for about 12 years on a 4-year funding/replenishment cycle. The replenishment negotiation is informed by an evaluation of the previous phase that takes stock of what has been done and propose future orientations of what the GEF should be. In 2001, an extensive

evaluation was started of the period 1998-2002, known as ‘the overall performance study’, that was to lead to the negotiations for GEF3 cycle, which started in mid 2002 (and to last until mid 2006). The major outcome of that evaluation was that, for the billions of \$ spent doing lots of projects and good work, it proved difficult to show any impact. Questions such as ‘are we progressing? are we conserving biodiversity (and other focal areas)? are people effectively changing their behaviour?’ were difficult if not impossible to address. It became clear that something had to change. The earlier argument that ‘it takes time’ before changes can be seen in the field could not be invoked over and over again. He informed that, a 3<sup>rd</sup> overall performance study is scheduled for later this year for a report by June 2005 in order to inform the 4<sup>th</sup> phase of the GEF. The implementing agencies (UNDP, WB and UNEP as principal ones) then realized that it was important to take this advice seriously and at the least to equip the projects with the indicators that allow proper monitoring of impacts. It was then agreed at UNDP that a few projects would be selected in the portfolio, those with sufficient time left, and that a process of ‘retrofitting’ would be carried out to go over the LFA and indicators and identify and agree upon few good impact indicators.

He clarified that the UNDP GEF is not interested in the lower levels of the LFA, but in the core objective and the major outcomes. The problem is that most of the projects are about outputs & activities and that indicators are usually at that level. He recalled that the GEF is interested in impacts, i.e. whether people change their behavior? whether biodiversity is actually conserved? whether people stop from further degrading resources?

For a project like MWC, he proposed that a key indicator at the objective level could be ‘what happened in these 15 key sites?, are these sites effectively protected /gazeted?, are they effectively managed?, are the plans adopted and implemented? (not merely produced) and what impacts do they generate? He suggested that the exercise has to be undertaken with the constituents and stakeholders of the project.

Finally, he pointed out the exercise should not be understood as a way to satisfy the donor only but that there is some real consequences that will be attached to this in the future. Not to mention the need for the project itself and its stakeholders to be able to measure whether it is making a difference and whether good progress is being achieved against the objective, the challenge is also that the ability to show impacts will affect the country’s position to get new funding and collaboration in the future.

### Discussion

Z. Dedej confirmed his interest and involvement in this exercise, being aware of the difficulty for the last GEF replenishment. He also suggested that GEF, as a mechanism, allocate funds for the incremental cost only and that consideration should also be given to allocating GEF funds to implementation phases. He cautioned that, if more effort is not directed towards implementation, it can lead to a loss of credibility with the local communities.

C. Rizk seconded Z. Dedej’s views with regards to GEF funding being made available for implementation. He also pointed out that biodiversity results are indeed very difficult to demonstrate in the medium term and that one must be very practical about the impacts upon biodiversity conservation. He also mentioned that, to carry out proper biodiversity monitoring, one needs a proper baseline done at the beginning of the project, which is lacking in this project.

E. El Badry provided other examples pointing out that some indicators are not useful on a 4-5 year span, e.g. some seeds do not germinate unless there is good rain, migratory species.

D. Etienne suggested that one might wish to query why there is not much results for GEF projects. M. Alers clarified that the issue is not that one could not find impacts, but that one could not tell. This problem, he continued is not one proper to GEF only but one that is valid across the board with development assistance. The message is then to try and find a way to measure impacts, if not directly, at least indirectly. He agreed that the whole issue of measuring biodiversity impacts is flawed with difficulties: length of intervention, etc.

J. Jalbert also confirmed that this aspect of impact indicators is at the core of the current effort of the TdV as well. The TdV Board requests that kind of reporting as well. And he explained that it is not easy to a) see evidence of a change and b) assess if the project is responsible for this change. In addition, he confessed that the TdV has been trying for years to assess impacts of training activities but that, at the end, they have been unable to come up with any good assessment to measure the impact.

C. Rizk suggested that the GEF might consider partnering with other organizations such as Birdlife, WWF, etc. to carry out an overall assessment of biodiversity changes.

Y. Slaoui also reminded that the MWC project is working to change political behavior and that the project team is accountable for the measures taken during the life time of the project, in terms of political will and action on the ground.

M. Ghonem pointed out that one should also look at the identification of indicators that measure reduction in pressure upon the ecosystem and not only the state of biodiversity and this should be easier to do.

In conclusion, M. Alers confirmed that the UNDP-GEF will encourage more work onto this area in the near future and will revert to the project partners with further details at a later date.

## **7. Session VI: Preparing for the sustainability of the project's results and activities**

S. Goyet reminded of the sustainability elements that were discussed at RAC3, namely the need for a) lasting institutional arrangements at the site and national level providing for an integrated approach, b) financial arrangements (economic instruments, government commitments, etc) and c) public involvement in the form of community development, alternative resource use options, public participation in planning and decision making, and awareness raising.

The RAC3 working group on sustainability had also made a series of recommendation: integration of the project in the respective national planning and programming, and assurances given by the Government that there is a budget line in the public accounts to ensure protection and management of the MWC Sites after completion of the project. For sustainability of the regional functions, the working group had suggested that there be an effort to 'collectively identify mechanisms of transfer of the regional functions', one of the proposal being to have a representation per country on a rotating basis to maintain the regional networking function.

She then suggested that the MWC national component may wish to prepare a plan or strategy for sustainability of the results, with the understanding that such plan be integrated within any ongoing sustainable development strategy. Such plan would probably have to include efforts to streamline the project into national initiatives (national budget earmarking, integration into workplan of sectoral ministries) and the strengthening of enabling policy frameworks. At site level, one would pay attention to ensure that the management plans are integrated within provincial/local physical plans, that management boards are fully functional for the implementation of the plans, and that the plans are accompanied by a business plan that details how it will financially be carried out (economic instruments, etc.). To mobilize external funds from funding partners, the plan may articulate activities to prioritize the management plan objectives, to prepare project proposals and to hold round table meetings with donors.

At the regional level, the issue of sustainability of the regional functions would necessarily have to rely on anchorage of some of the project components into existing/ongoing project networks, programmes and institutions (WWF capacity building initiative, SAP-BIO, ITCAMP, METAP, MedWet, TdV, etc). In addition, maintaining communication exchange (website and newsletter), and maintaining thematic/technical networks(training focal points, socio-economists/community development specialists, management plan experts) may be useful to sustain a level of information exchange across the national components.

As requested, the Regional Coordinator will prepare a list of those different networks and programmes that could be drawn upon for linkages and support.

**Case study: MWC Morocco case study presentation: strengthening policy for coastal management through establishment of 'Cellule Littoral' within Environment Department + tool for physically planning the engineering work on the sites.**

Y. Slaoui first introduced the progress realised with the establishment of the ‘cellule littoral’ in February 2004 to support institutional and policy making for coastal zone management.

He recalled of the steps that led to its creation and the mission of international legal experts which reviewed the texts in existence and identified the institutions operating with the coastal zone. The report lays down a number of suggestions for strengthening existing regulatory instruments and improving the enforcement of the existing sectoral laws.

Since its establishment, the ‘cellule littoral’ has been active with the organisation of a number of meetings and a seminar to clarify the context for coastal zone management. An urban planner consultant was recruited to monitor the work and start preparing an initial skeleton of a coastal law by 15 October 2004.

Finally he underscored the aims of that unit, namely to unite the various sectoral appreciation of the coastal zone, be aware of and inventory the various projects affecting the coastal zone, insist on the strict enforcement of the law for environmental impact assessment (EIA), and, in the medium term, evolve into an inter-ministerial unit essentially tasked to revamp the initial draft law for the coastal zone.

In a second part, Y. Slaoui presented a series of pictures of the sites that have been used to schematically represent and plan the physical engineering work to be carried out on the sites (parking, access roads, fences, etc.).

### Discussion

M. Chihaoui asked about the legal status of this coastal zone unit and its influence. He also enquired about the choice of an urban planner as the leading expert behind the work of the unit. It was responded that this unit has only an administrative status and is established within the ‘Secretariat a l’Environnement’. But Y. Slaoui explained that the objective, in the medium term, is indeed to provide the unit with a legal status that enables it to exercise a minimum of influence. He pointed to the usefulness of bringing in an urban planner so as to give a better appreciation of that side of the coastal management. M. Chihaoui reminded that APAL in Tunisia was specifically established to manage and protect the coastal zone and he is concerned that an urban planner may not have a vision for conserving the environment. Y. Slaoui reported that the Moroccan unit has made immediate contact with the Tunisian APAL in order to hear the lessons and learn from their experience. D. Etienne also pointed out that an urban planner is not necessarily a bad thing but what is a concern is that there is no inter-ministerial dimension to the establishment of the unit. If it remains within the MoE, one can wonder about the effectiveness of this unit.

### **Case study: MWC Lebanon: planning for sustainability**

C. Rizk related the efforts of MWC Lebanon to address a) institutional and legal sustainability, b) conservation sustainability and c) financial sustainability.

At the legal/institutional level, he mentioned the Code of the Environment, the Framework law, the Government Appointed Committee (GAC), the biodiversity committee and inter-sectoral cooperation as tools to enhance sustainability from the point of view of legal and institutional context. He also pointed out that the national wetland policy is in the process of development, cross sectoral coordination for the implementation of a strategy will be undertaken by the national biodiversity committee which will be a permanent committee instated by legislation and the creation of a stable institutional structure for protected area management at the MoE through funding from the EC, all elements to contribute to “a stable and solid local, governmental and cross sectoral management and coordination structure covered by law and that ensures the involvement of all stakeholders in decision making for conservation”.

On the conservation side, he reported that the management plans have been drafted in a participatory approach and will be approved by MOE with the full commitment from the stakeholders. Funds will be allocated by the Ministry to contribute to the implementation of the management plans. To ensure sustainability, work is also carried out at the local level towards ownership of the management planning process by the local communities and their benefiting from it as well in the form of new sources of revenues and sustainable practices ensuring their livelihood in the long term. One other important aspect of



sustainability is to build capacity. The project ensures that capacity is built both at the local and central levels to ensure institutional memory.

With regards to financial matters, he explained about the preparation of business plans to accompany the management plans, aiming to reach for financial self-sustainability. These business plans will cover activities on site that will ensure income to the site through, mainly, user fees and he gave the example of the tourism kiosks whereby 35 % of the kiosk fee goes back to the reserve. He also reported on the commitment of the ministry to allocate yearly funds for the effective management of the protected area sites. The MoE contribution to Tyr Nature Reserve has been about \$43,000 in 2001, \$50,000 in 2002 and close to \$55,000 in 2003. Finally he referred to the efforts of the project for external funds mobilization and partnerships.

### Discussion

M. Alers asked about the income generation at the site and pointed out that, often, the problem with entry fees is that the funds go into the Ministry of Finance and are then not necessarily transferred onto the books of the Ministry of Environment and that the alternative is often to 'force' for a donation. C. Rizk explained that the kiosks fees are paid to the municipality which in turn gives a share to the reserve. Z. Dedej also mentioned that, in Albania, environmental remittances are returned to the Ministry of Finance and then 'disappear' (eg. tax on packaging, etc). C. Rizk explained that, in Lebanon, they have managed to create an environmental fund within the MoE and the proceeds then are retained by the MoE. E. El Badry also gave the example of Egypt: a recent law now requires that the proceeds from protected areas go to the MoE and not to the Ministry of Finance. D. Etienne recalled that this is general problem. He informed of the situation with the Saint Lucia marine park, managed by an NGO, and which manages to be financially self-sustainable.

Finally, M. Alers mentioned that UNDP GEF has initiated the preparation of a new project focusing on the financial sustainability of protected areas but pointed out that a fully sustainable system has yet to be seen.

## **8. Session VII: Regional partner networks**

S. Goyet conveyed the regret from IUCN and WWF for not being able to take part in the meeting. A note received from WWF has been inserted in the background documentation and she invited the participants to refer to it.

Z. Dedej informed that IUCN has opened an office in Belgrade for the Balkans.

### **Case study: ECAT Tirana: presentation of "Capacity building project for inventory of Albanian Wetlands" (EU LIFE Third Countries, partnership with EKBY) – 300,000 Euro**

Mr. Ferdinand Bego, ALWET Technical Focal Point (and MWC Management Plan Coordinator) presented the initiative known as ALWET – Capacity Building on Conservation of Albanian Wetland Ecosystems – carried out by ECAT Tirana as part of its mandate for wetlands conservation in Albania

He explained that ECAT Tirana was established as a centre of assistance to the MoE in 1995, through logistic and financial support of the EC /DG for the Environment, the German Government and the Albanian Government. It has so far implemented several important environmental projects, identified as national priorities in the government environmental program. In particular, it participated in the implementation of MedWet2.

Within the framework of the Albania Wetland Inventory project (AWI), it produced wetland archives stored in the MedWet Database, a digital map depicting the spatial distribution of wetlands, wetland identification through Landsat – 7 satellite images and data sheets for the catchments areas and 42 wetland sites. The recommendations of that project were to continue wetland inventory in terms of correcting and updating information at the catchment and site levels and adding information at the habitat level. It was also recommended to create a national archive on wetlands, monitor changes in the ecological character of Albanian wetlands, and provide training on wetland inventory, data management and GIS. Finally, it was suggested to establish formal linkage between the wetland archives produced and stored in the MedWet

Database and other environmental archives such as forestry, soil and land cover, CORINE biotopes, Emerald network, Protected Areas and ECONET, in order to contribute to the creation of a national archive for the Albanian natural environment under the coordination of the Ministry of Environment.

ECAT then naturally oved from AWI to the ALWET project. F. Bego described in details the objectives of the project which are to:

- 1 - Assess the current status: through questionnaire, existing capacity for wetland inventory and electronic data management & GIS as well as stakeholders analyses would be identified. The exercise also involved the preparation of a corresponding training plan;
- 2 - Establish basic infrastructure for the maintenance of national wetland inventory archives;
- 3 - Build capacity in using the MedWet Inventory methodology and in electronic data management, through training;
- 4 – Carry out pilot applications which would include: purchase of aerial photos, field work, photo interpretation, map production with GIS and data storage in the MWD and its new modules. The proposed sites are: Lakes of Dumre, micro Prespa lake, and Butrinti area.
- 5 - disseminate knowledge and environmental awareness

### **Case study: MedWet: status of Life Third Country North African Network project**

S. Kouvelis presented the North African Network project, active in the three countries of Morocco, Tunisia and Algeria. The project is running from Januray 2004 to December 2006 with a 638,000 Euro from the EU and an additional 542,000 Euro in-kind from the countries and 112,000 in kind from the MedWet Coordination Unit.

He spelled out the activities of the project:

- 1.1.1 Reinforce the Operation of the Focal Units
- 1.2.2 Dissemination of project results and methodologies
- 1.2.2 Management, Coordination and Reporting to the EU
- 2.1.1 Review / Preparation of Management Plans
- 2.1.2 Training on Inventories and Organisation of monitoring in the project sites
- 2.2.1 Reinforce Eco-tourism potential in the project sites
- 2.2.2 Support fisheries activities and structures in Merja Zerga (Morocco)
- 2.2.3 Income creating opportunities for women

Further he related of the challenges to build capacity and to keep it and use it and pointed out that expectations for sustainability should be up to pragmatic level.

## **9. Conclusions**

Based upon the discussions of the previous two days, the Regional Coordinator presented draft recommendations/conclusions to the meeting for its consideration. These were reviewed and discussed.

### **As final recommendations/conclusions, the meeting :**

#### Overall project implementation

1. Acknowledges the **progress in implementing the project** and the particular effort at the national level in the areas of: national policy and institutional strengthening, socio-economic aspects, capacity building/training, and field actions;
2. Recognizes the **improved delivery** of the national components but calls on increased effort to sustain and accelerate the rate of delivery;
3. Appreciates the efforts under the **socio-economic initiative** on the national level and of the RCU and calls on the national components to contribute as much as possible;

#### RCU

4. Takes note of the **proposed functioning and work strategy of the RCU over 2005**, i.e. a reduced RCU in its present set up in operation until the funding lasts and focusing on a) support to

finalization of the national components, b) documenting lessons learned and experience (incl. a final evaluation) and c) support to sustaining national results and set up mechanisms for sustaining regional functions. It calls on the RCU to prepare a **detailed and costed workplan for 2005** and sharing it with the national components for inputs into the **prioritisation** of the activities;

5. Agrees that any **supplemental regional activity** requested by all components would need to be fully co-financed by the national components, including the regional facilitation cost.
6. recommends that any service specifically requested from the RCU by one of the national components, outside of its agreed workplan, will be financed by that national component
7. Notes that, today, three countries are favourable to a **cost-sharing principle** for sustaining further into the future the regional functions but on the basis of unanimous cost-sharing from all components - as there is a general wish to see the RCU accompany the national components to the completion of their activities and as there is clear understanding of the overall unity of the project, it is likely that the situation could evolve in the future;
8. Invites the RCU to engage into practical **consultation with the regional partners/programmes** in order to a) explore arrangements for collaboration on the implementation of specific agreed activities and b) identify opportunities for anchoring the project into the work and mandate of the regional programmes and institutions, for sustaining regional functions, if any, in the future;

#### LFA and indicators

9. Acknowledges the need to identify relevant **indicators** to show the **impacts** of the project. Recommends that, within the coming months and with assistance from the UNDP GEF and the RCU, the national projects (to think with Tim), as appropriate, revisit their LFA and identify appropriate and valid indicators to monitor the impact of the project in reaching its biodiversity conservation objectives;
10. Calls on national components to put particular emphasis over the coming year on **planning for sustainability** of the national results;
11. Welcomes the positive interventions and support from the **regional partners**, TdV, CdL, ATEN, MedWet, MAP and the RACs, (and WWF, IUCN in absentia ...).
12. Agrees to hold next **RAC5** in September/October 2005, tentatively in **Egypt**, subject to confirmation.

## Annex 1

**MedWetCoast**  
**4th Regional Advisory Committee meeting**  
**Agenda**

**Monday, September 20<sup>th</sup> 2004**

- |               |  |
|---------------|--|
| 9.00 - 9.30   | Registration   |
| 9.30 –9.45    | Opening of the meeting and welcome by Albanian Government Minister of Environment and by UNDP RR/DRR   |
| 9.45 – 10.20  | Opening addresses by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Host Government</li> <li>- representative(s)</li> <li>- AFD/FFEM</li> <li>- MedWetCoast Regional Coordinator</li> </ul>   |
| 10.20–10.30   | Approval of the Agenda. Appointment of Meeting Reporter and Chairperson.   |
| 10.30 - 10.50 | <i>Coffee break</i>  |
| 10.50-13.00   | <b><u>Session I: progress in implementation of the national components</u></b> (lead: Project Managers)<br>Activity and Status Report of the MedWetCoast national projects: <b>Albania, Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine Authority, Tunisia</b> (15-minute presentation by the respective project managers on the basis of national APR/PIR, latest developments in implementation of the project and perspectives + 5-minute Questions & Answers).  |
| 13.00 – 14.00 | <i>Lunch break</i>   |
| 14.00 - 14.20 | MWC Albania case study presentation: management plan process in Albania  |
| 14.20 – 15.20 | <b><u>Session II: Status report of the overall MedWetCoast project and of the Regional component in particular</u></b> (lead: Regional Coordinator) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Consolidated PIR / status of implementation of the whole project since last RAC3 of October 2003</li> <li>- Activities of the Regional Coordination Unit over the reporting period (with reports from partners: TdV, ATEN and CdL)</li> <li>- Financial overview (overall project and RCU)</li> </ul> |
| 15.20 – 16.00 | <b><u>Session III: perspectives for the RCU post end of 2004</u></b> (facilitation: Regional Coordinator) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Recommendations of the Reg. SCM for the RCU (3<sup>rd</sup> May and 21<sup>st</sup> June 2004)</li> <li>- Presentation of the RCU ‘exit strategy’</li> <li>- Discussion</li> </ul>  |
| 16.00 – 16.30 | <i>Coffee Break</i>  |
| 16.30 – 17.15 | <b>(session III continued)</b><br>Discussion and recommendations of the meeting towards sustaining the RCU   |

19.00 Welcome dinner hosted by the Albanian Government

## Tuesday, September 21<sup>st</sup> 2004

9.00 – 10.15 **Session IV : socio-economic aspects of the MedWetCoast project**

9.00 – 9.40 Introduction: Regional Coordinator – initiatives of the RCU

MWC Egypt case study presentation: socio-economic initiative and participation of local communities as conservation partners

MWC Tunisia case study presentation: Local dialogue experience (MedWet initiative)

9.40 – 10.15 Presentation of TdV tool 'Butor Star' – 'Wetland management: appreciating the decision making processes with involvement of various stakeholders'.

10.15 - 10.30 *Coffee break*

10.30 – 13.00 **Session V: Retrofitting exercise / Revisiting the project's logframe and indicators towards a measure of impacts** (facilitation: GEF representative)

Review of proposed logframe and indicators prepared in April 2004 for the project in the framework of the retrofitting exercise and discussion towards selection of suitable indicators.

Preparation of revised table of indicators (to serve as reporting template over next reporting period)

13.00 – 14.00 *Lunch break*

14.00 – 15.00 **Session VI: Preparing for the sustainability of the project's results and activities** (lead: Regional Coordinator)

Introduction by Regional Coordinator

Discussion to include:

- reference to sustainability study of June 2002,
  - Round Table meetings and efforts to mobilize funds,
  - preparation of project proposals,
  - enabling policy frameworks in place,
  - streamlining the project into national initiatives
  - anchorage of the project networks into existing/ongoing efforts (WWF capacity building, SAP-BIO, ITCAMP, METAP, MedWet projects, etc)
- ⇒ preparation of national sustainability plans

MWC Morocco case study presentation: strengthening policy for coastal management through establishment of 'Cellule Littoral' within Environment Department

MWC Lebanon: planning for sustainability

15.00 – 16.00 **Session VII: Regional partner networks**

Presentation by participating regional partners (MedWet, MAP, etc.) and discussion on ways to link the MedWetCoast project with established or planned regional networks and projects.

ECAT Tirana: presentation of "Capacity building project for inventory of Albanian Wetlands" (EU LIFE Third Countries, partnership with EKBY)

MedWet: status of Life Third Country North African Network project

- 16.00 – 16.20            *Coffee break*
- 16.20- 17.30        **Recommendations** of the Meeting: presentation of draft recommendations and discussion
- 17.30 – 18.30            (closed session) Meeting of the MWC Project Managers and RCU

## Wednesday, September 22<sup>nd</sup> 2004

**Field Trip** (The trip is part of the programme of this meeting and, unless we hear from you otherwise, we shall assume that all international participants staying over the whole of Wednesday 22 September will take part in the field trip – kindly contact MWC Albania if not).

- 7.00                      Departure from the hotel
- 11.00                     Visit at Salinas in Narta
- 12.00 - 12.30           Stop and have a break on the hill at Narta area (observation of ecosystem parts: Narta lagoon, Zverneci Island, sandy dunes, forest, and sea)
- 14.00 – 15.00           Lunch at Llogara Mountain (observation of the Orikumi lagoon on the way)
- 15.00 – 18.00           Back to the hotel

PS1. The **national projects are also invited** to bring with them relevant **documents and material** (video, poster, etc.) that “visualize direct action on the ground”. These awareness/public participation materials will be displayed in the conference hall.

PS2. There will be a **Steering Group meeting for the regional project component** on **Sunday 18 September from 2 to 5 pm** (location: hotel). The participants (AFD-FFEM, UNDP-GEF, UNOPS, UNEP MAP, MedWet, and RCU as secretariat) will be further informed and advised.

## Annex 2

Participants of the 4th Regional Advisory Committee meeting  
(Tirana, 20-22 September 2004)

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