

International Council for the  
Exploration of the Sea

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Fisheries Improvement Committee

"Report from the consultation on the protection of living resources  
and fisheries from pollution in the Mediterranean"

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by

Grim Berge x)

The consultation was held at FAO headquarter in Rome 19 -23 February 1974. It was attended by representatives of 14 Mediterranean countries, observers from two other countries and from 14 international organizations. The author acted as technical consultant for FAO and simultaneously as observer for ICES.

FAO-assistant Director-General, Mr. F.E. Popper, welcomed the participants on behalf of the Director General of FAO. In his address he pointed to the expanded fishing efforts, the limitation of exploitable resources and the necessity of stringent conservation measures. Although overfishing was the prime problem to fish resources, pollution as well had become a real threat to marine productivity of which FAO was deeply concerned. He informed that the Consultation was initiated by General Fisheries Council for the Mediterranean in 1972 which requested the Director-General of FAO to consult with member governments of the council on the possibility of preparing a convention for the protection of living resources and fisheries. He said that the scope of the consultation was primarily to establish agreed measures to protect living resources against pollution both from landbased sources and by dumping. The convention which eventually might arise from it could in the future be expressed to cover aspects of public health, recreation and tourism as well.

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The representatives of UN, IMCO, WHO, IOC and the observers for ICSU and ICES addressed the Consultation and described briefly the activities of their organizations in the field of marine pollution and conveyed their support for the objectives of the Consultations.

A summary review of the present situation in pollution of the Mediterranean was presented to the audience by the FAO-secretariat. The review was based on information obtained by GFCM through a questionnaire and subsequently analysed by a GFCM/ICSEM-group of experts.

It was noted that the most serious pollution problems were apparent in the North-Western basin, in the northern Adriatic Sea and along the coasts of Lebanon and Israel. Problems were mainly related to discharge of untreated domestic sewage, industrial waste containing high BOD loads and heavy metals, and an extensive oil pollution. It was also obvious that pesticides and PCBs played an important role in the pollution reaching the sea through rivers and seepage from land, and thus affecting the living marine resources.

The consultation agreed that intensive studies of major pollutants, and adequate monitoring of the resources and the environment were urgently required. Governments and international organizations should cooperate in encouraging this work. It was suggested that such programmes should be carried out within the frame of United Nations Global Environmental Monitoring System and be supported by UNEP.

FAO had prepared for the Consultation a document containing a series of principles suggested for inclusion in a convention for the protection of living resources and fisheries in the Mediterranean. Added to it were also two technical papers:

- 1) Annexes concerning substances, the dumping of which at sea should be prohibited or controlled, and criteria for issuing permits.
- 2) Criteria and principles for discharge of matter or energy into coastal waters.

A plan for cooperation in emergency cases were also drafted in a paper entitled: "International collaboration in pollution emergencies affecting living resources."

From the following discussion it emerged that the delegations had rather different views as to the scope of the convention, some delegations felt with FAO that it should be limited to the problem of living resources and fisheries, but the majority of delegations seemed to be in favour of a convention covering all aspects of marine pollution.

One delegation expressed that a series of conventions tailored to the various problems encountered within the different regions of the Mediterranean would be more efficient and practicable. Another delegation preferred at this stage to prepare a frame convention. A third delegation suggested that a commission be set up immediately to prepare a draft convention.

It was finally agreed that these questions should be deferred until later in the Consultation and that as the first step the meeting should consider the Principles drafted by FAO as a list of guidelines to be taken into account in a future drafting of one or more conventions.

The remaining time of the consultation was used for establishing agreed guidelines, and 11 guidelines were provisionally adopted. Due to limited time the Consultation was unable to consider the remaining principles of the FAO document, nor did they come to any evaluation of the technical papers added to it or the drafted emergency plan. At the close of the Consultation a recommendation was therefore adopted that consultations be continued in order to define the complete guidelines for drafting one or more treaties governing pollution of the Mediterranean. In this context the wish was expressed that all the competent specialized agencies of UN as well as other competent international bodies - in particular UNEP - should support the efforts of FAO for the protection of the marine environment in the Mediterranean.

Post script.

A second consultation was held in FAO - Rome 27-31 May 1974, where the rest of guidelines, in all 22 were adopted.

It was agreed that the scope of an eventual convention should not be limited to the protection of living resources and fisheries only, but that it was necessary to extend it to the protection of the marine environment and all its uses. It was further concluded that it should be appropriate to set up a single framework convention laying down general principles to be supplemented by a number of protocols and technical annexes to cover specific problems as the regulation of dumping, pollution from ships, land-based pollution, pollution related to seabed exploitation and the cooperation in case of pollution emergencies.

The delegations of 8 countries proposed that FAO should immediately take the necessary measures "to bring the results of the Consultation to fruition" and be entrusted with the task of preparing a draft framework convention in cooperation with other competent international organizations and taking into account possible comments from the riparian states of the Mediterranean. Four delegations, France, Italy, Monaco and Spain were not in a position to take a stand at the meeting to support the above proposal.

The guidelines together with an approved report from the two Consultations are published in a recent report from FAO: Protection of the Marine Environment against pollution in the Mediterranean. Report of the Consultation convened to study the protection of living resources and fisheries from pollution in the Mediterranean, Rome 19-23 February and 27-31 May 1974. FAO Fisheries Reports, No. 148, 1974.

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