

THE COASTS

60% of urban wastewater is released untreated into the sea

The Mediterranean coastline represents priceless capital thanks to its valuable eco-systems, its cultural heritage, but also its maritime identity. The coastline, measuring 46 000 Km, the common property of the Mediterranean countries, is coveted by human activities which create huge pressure on the environment and conflicts of interest concerning its resources, leading to on-going environmental degradation as well as what is often the irreversible loss of biodiversity and resources.

- ✓ 33% of the population lives on 13% of the land
- ✓ Almost 40% of the coasts are built-up
- ✓ The population of the coastal towns (located on the coastline) will rise from 70 million in 2000 to 90 million in 2025 ; in 2025 the coastal zones will accommodate over 312 million national and international tourists (175 in 2000)
- ✓ 585 coastal towns, 750 marinas, 286 trading ports and 112 airports registered in the coastal zone in 2000
- ✓ 80% of all sea pollution comes from the land
- ✓ 500 species alien to the Mediterranean recorded
- ✓ 104 endangered species

The major risk is of seeing coastal saturation with 50% of the land being built-up by 2025, an increase in local and tourist population and a virtual doubling of electrical power stations on the coasts by 2025. The trend scenario also points to an increased risk of major accidental pollution given the average age of the fleet, the number of accidents already recorded (over 300 in 20 years) and the steep rise in shipping.

One of the first points in the **Blue Plan's alternative scenario** is to beef up coastal policy towards sustainable coastal management. The Barcelona Convention, adopted in 1975, has made it possible to reduce decline, but the tools and means will need to be increased if planned progress targets are to be met. A **strategic point was reached in January 2008** with the adoption by the Contracting Parties to the Convention of an international agreement on the Mediterranean coasts. This Protocol commits those countries which do not yet have specific laws and regulations on the sustainable management of the coastal zones to adopting coastal policies to ensure a fair balance between protection and development and better promoting their heritage.

The alternative scenario also focuses on treating the wastewater of all coastal towns and reducing industrial pollutants and waste. The implementation of these projects is hampered, however, by limited funding. For example, the cost of upgrading the sewage systems for the coastal towns in the South and East with more than 10 000 inhabitants has been estimated at 10 billion euros by 2025. The protection of sensitive zones must also be moved forward with the development of new generations of protected areas and an increase in their scope. One of the objectives plans to equip at least 10 % of coastal and marine habitats with types of protection in line with IUCN criteria (International Union for the Conservation of Nature).

The alternative scenario also involves steps to limit coastalisation and the building up of the coasts, particularly through:

- ✓ Putting a brake on on-going linear urbanisation, creating green belts and encouraging perpendicular road access to the sea, which could ensure the conservation and sustainable management of a further 4000 km of coastline by 2025
- ✓ Decongesting the coasts to some extent by redirecting some of the tourist flows inland, and altering transport share in favour of sea and rail
- ✓ Regulating tourist development using economic instruments which will allow the sector to contribute to maintaining the environment, defining accommodation capacity, seeking synergies with traditional activities (agriculture, fishing, public buildings and works...).

Examples from the French coastal protection agency and the Tunisian Agency for Coastal Protection and Planning

France was the first riparian state to set up a specific management instrument to purchase coastal nature areas, which it did back in 1975 with the “Conservatoire du littoral”. In 2003, there were some 36,000 hectares and 180 km of Mediterranean coastline under the Conservatoire’s protection (i.e. 11 %; 21 % in Corsica). Without its work, virtually no “natural” areas would have survived on the Provence seafront.

Since 1995 Tunisia has had its own specifically coastal institution: the « Agence de protection et d’aménagement du littoral » (APAL). The APAL manages over 700 temporary jobs around the coasts. In 2000, seventeen nature areas enjoyed sensitive zone status and a management plan, allowing some 190 km and 9,500 hectares of coast to be protected and enhanced.