



IOI participates in the 15th Ordinary Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean

Jointly organised by UNEP/MAP and the Spanish Ministry of the Environment, the Meeting was held in Almeria, Spain from 15-18 January. It brought together Ministers and Senior Officials responsible for the environment and development in 21 Mediterranean countries and the European Community as well as observer NGOs and other organizations, amongst which was the IOI, represented by Ms Antonella Vassallo

The 15th Meeting of the Parties to the Barcelona Convention was particularly significant in the history of the Convention and important decisions were adopted which will influence the 2008-2009 working period. One of the impacts of the Meeting was that on sustainable development issues, with the adoption of the Decision on the Implementation of the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development and the new protocol on Integrated Coastal Zone Management which was ratified by fourteen Contracting Parties to give the first-ever Legally-binding International Instrument on Coastal Zone Management. (Right) The Opening Session of COP15



“This is a pioneering Protocol and it constitutes an added value for the Barcelona Convention and the Mediterranean Action Plan. It is the first time that Integrated Coastal Zone Management is fully addressed by a legally-binding international instrument. We are confident that with such a strong support from the Contracting Parties the Protocol on Coastal Zone Management will enter into force soon”
Paul Mifsud, Coordinator, Mediterranean Action Plan, UNEP.

The “Almeria Declaration” introduced by the Spanish authorities was also adopted so that, among other issues, the Contracting Parties commit themselves to taking the necessary steps to combat climate change, protect biodiversity and guarantee sustainable development in the Mediterranean basin.

One of the issues raised, on which the IOI along with other NGOs, presented its policy stand was the recognition that CO₂ from industrial and energy related sources represents a danger for the environment and can be isolated from the atmosphere using modern technological means. The IOI and other NGOs proposed text in line with the IOI policy of the precautionary principle concerning the protection of the marine environment. Decision 7 of the declaration now binds the parties to agree:

“To prepare a risk assessment framework and adequately address liability issues for storage of carbon dioxide streams in Mediterranean sub-seabed geological formations as well as for any other mitigation measures with a potential impact on the marine environment to ensure that there is no significant risk to the marine environment...”

The NGOs, including IOI, viewed the proposal for carbon dioxide capture and storage only as the last option and only if there was sufficient evidence that it would not create more environmental problems in the framework of the precautionary principle.



Within COP15, on the 16th & 17th January, the ministerial sessions took place under the motto “The Challenge of Climate Change in the Mediterranean”, reflecting the Contracting Parties’ interest in taking on the necessary commitments to cope with problems deriving from Climate Change in the Mediterranean. The keynote address in this section, outlining the latest key IPCC findings in relation to projected climate changes and their potential impact for the Mediterranean region was delivered by Dr. Wong Poh Poh, a Coordinating Lead Author for the IPCC Assessment Report 4 (AR4) - the International Panel on Climate Change, along with Albert Arnold (Al) Gore Jr., was awarded the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize.

(Above) Dr Wong Poh Poh addressing the floor during the Meeting.

The Almeria Statement and other COP15 decisions may be viewed online on <http://www.unepmap.org>

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