



Resolution 1794 (2011)¹

Preserving the environment in the Mediterranean

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Parliamentary Assembly regrets that, despite various initiatives at international level, the Mediterranean still faces very serious environmental problems, which are the result both of climate change and of factors such as overfishing, rampant coastal development, inadequate controls over waste and waste water disposal, the destruction of sensitive habitats and increased shipping.
2. Furthermore, while the region's rapid growth in recent decades has had positive effects on the local standard of living, this has, regrettably, largely been at the cost of its environmental balance.
3. According to some scientific studies, biodiversity is under increasing threat and some vulnerable species are already on the verge of extinction.
4. Climate change has affected water resources owing to increased evaporation and decreased rainfall. Water, therefore, is set to become a major political and economic issue, over which there are likely to be highly frequent conflicts in the Mediterranean region.
5. In this context, the Assembly refers to its [Resolution 1197 \(1999\)](#) on peace, democratic stability and sustainable development in the Mediterranean and Black Sea basins: the role of interparliamentary co-operation; its [Recommendation 1630 \(2003\)](#) on erosion of the Mediterranean coastline: implications for tourism; and its [Resolution 1693 \(2009\)](#) on water: a strategic challenge for the Mediterranean Basin.
6. The Assembly also refers to the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (ETS No. 104, "the Bern Convention"), whose aim is to preserve wild plant and animal species and their natural habitats and promote European co-operation in this field, the 1976 Barcelona Convention for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea against Pollution, which aims to reduce pollution in the Mediterranean region and protect and enhance the marine habitat in this area in order to contribute to its sustainable development, and the European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement (EUR-OPA), which is a forum for co-operation between European and southern Mediterranean countries in the field of major natural and technological hazards.
7. The Assembly also highlights the existing international treaties, particularly the Mediterranean Action Plan, brokered by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), and the Mediterranean Environmental Technical Assistance Programme (METAP).
8. In this context, the Assembly welcomes the measures taken by some states to set up national action plans for the environment and encourages countries which have not yet done so to follow this example.
9. The Assembly welcomes the action taken in the area of sustainable development by some southern Mediterranean countries, particularly Morocco, with a view to preserving fish stocks and the marine environment and developing renewable energy sources, and encourages all southern Mediterranean countries to take these kinds of measures.

1. Text adopted by the Standing Committee, acting on behalf of the Assembly, on 11 March 2011 (see [Doc. 12439](#), report of the Committee on the Environment, Agriculture and Local and Regional Affairs, rapporteur: Mr Falzon).



10. The Assembly welcomes the constructive co-operation with the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean on subjects of common interest such as environmental protection, disaster management and the role of local and regional authorities, and highlights the major role played by the Council of Europe in this context in the Mediterranean region.

11. The Assembly notes and regrets that, since its establishment in 2008 and owing to insufficient commitment on the part of the European Union, the Union for the Mediterranean, which brings together all the European Union member states and Mediterranean countries, has not yielded the expected results despite the various projects which had been planned.

12. The Assembly is disappointed at the low level of solidarity shown by the northern countries towards the southern countries. This is especially regrettable since the northern countries have contributed to a large extent to the environmental deterioration in the southern countries, caused in particular by the intensification of tourism in the Mediterranean region and intensive land farming around the Mediterranean for the benefit of northern markets.

13. The Assembly also points out that there is a large amount of shipping activity in the Mediterranean and that most ships carry cargo which can cause major environmental damage if lost.

14. In the light of the foregoing, the Assembly asks the member states and particularly the Mediterranean non-member states to:

- 14.1. implement strict policies designed to prevent and reduce environmental degradation in the Mediterranean;
- 14.2. enhance national and international environmental legislation and ensure that it is implemented;
- 14.3. take measures to promote the sustainable management of water resources;
- 14.4. commit appropriate financial resources, build institutional capacity and promote technology and skills transfer in order to address the environmental problems of the Mediterranean Basin;
- 14.5. take joint action at parliamentary level with the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean and the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly to preserve the Mediterranean environment more effectively;
- 14.6. work in close co-operation with the Union for the Mediterranean to improve its performance in the field of environmental protection and to compensate for some states' lack of political commitment;
- 14.7. introduce structural policies and, as far as possible, assist financially the Mediterranean towns and coastal regions in modernising their harbour installations and their waste water collection, treatment and recycling systems;
- 14.8. step up inspections of the fishing industry and help rebuild depleted fish stocks;
- 14.9. promote sustainable, healthy tourism respecting the natural heritage and, in this connection, promote the establishment of a system of taxes for the benefit of tourist countries;
- 14.10. encourage increased and long-term use of renewable energy sources around the Mediterranean and support the efforts already being made by some countries to improve their energy efficiency;
- 14.11. intensify co-operation and integration in the field of maritime surveillance so as to improve oil pollution control and apply the "polluter pays principle";
- 14.12. encourage transfrontier co-operation;
- 14.13. adopt an integrated ecosystem-based approach for the protection of the Mediterranean environment and combat pollution linked with urban development, agriculture and industry;
- 14.14. take measures to improve the quality of biennial reports, particularly as regards comparisons between the Parties to the Barcelona Convention;
- 14.15. sign and ratify, if they have not already done so, the international legal instruments relating to co-operation in the field of sustainable development in the Mediterranean Basin, some of which are referred to above;
- 14.16. endeavour to put in place protected areas and support sustainable agriculture, in conformity with the spirit of the Bern Convention.

15. The Assembly also invites the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe to:
 - 15.1. support the local and regional authorities around the Mediterranean and the countries whose rivers flow into the Mediterranean Sea in their efforts to manage the marine environment, in accordance with the principles of sustainable development, and to further promote this type of co-operation in the Mediterranean Basin;
 - 15.2. ask local and regional authorities concerned to promote Agenda 21 activities;
 - 15.3. promote the signature of environmental agreements and twinning agreements between the local authorities concerned and make environmental impact assessments mandatory for all regional projects;
 - 15.4. initiate co-operation programmes to foster sustainable development at local and regional level, using existing platforms such as the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean.