

## MINIMIZING POLLUTANTS FROM LANDBASED SOURCES

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### The Global Programme of Action, GPA

Delegates from 109 countries met in Washington D.C. in October - November 1995 in an Intergovernmental Conference, organized by UNEP and hosted by the USA. The governments adopted the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities (GPA). The Governments also welcomed an offer from UNEP to coordinate the implementation of the GPA as secretariat for the Programme. The task of the Secretariat is to promote and facilitate the implementation of the Programme at a national, sub-regional, regional and global level. Implementation of the GPA is of highest priorities as challenges for this and the next decades. This will be an essential step forward in the protection of the marine environment and its associated river basins and coastal watersheds.

The effective implementation of the GPA to reduce the pollution from land-based activities, is possible only with close cooperation and partnership with relevant UN Agencies, competent international governmental and non- governmental organizations, funding agencies and private sector. One of the corner stones is strenghtening national capabilities for protection of aquatic environment as a whole, and to promote regional and sub-regional cooperation in the implementation of the Programme. It is crucial that elements of the regional strategies will be identified by the governments concerned, with special reference to recommended approaches by pollution source categories. These categories will include pollution sources such as: domestic wastewater, industrial pollutants, agricultural pollutants and global food needs rise, atmospheric fallout etc.

Consideration of the requirements for development and implementation of national action programmes to reduce pollution, should include consideration also of the assistance required and available through the organizations supporting the implementation of the GPA. On the basis of national requirements the regional strategy and action programme should be designed and agreed for each region.

### Clearing House

A Clearing House-Mechanism has been established to promote and facilitate direct contacts between potential recipients and potential donors, to mobilize experience and expertise and to provide decision makers at a national and regional level, access to current sources of

information and scientific and technological expertise on land-based activities. The Clearing House consists of a data directory and information delivery mechanism e.g. for each pollution source category identified in the GPA. The Clearing House will be built on effective network of international organizations such as UNEP, FAO, IAEA, IOC, IMO, etc.

The GPA identifies nine main pollution source categories including e.g: sewage, persistent organic pollutants, radioactive substances, heavy metals, oil, litter and nutrients. Agriculture activities, aquaculture and sediment mobilization, as well as even tourism are included in the activities to be considered in the framework of the GPA. Also physical alterations and destruction of habitats should be considered as a consequence of the increase of populations and economic activities in river basins and coastal areas.

#### Implementation of the GPA

UNEP is the leading agency for coordinating and facilitating the implementation of the Programme. It is also assisting regions to get a real picture of the pollution load from the land-based activities in the region. While recognizing that states have a primary role in the implementation of this programme, UNEP through its Secretariat role, in close partnership with other organizations, is also assisting regions in preparation of reviews of the land-based sources and activities and their impact on the quality and uses of marine, coastal and associated freshwater environment. On the basis of these first step reviews a compilation will be prepared as an assessment of the impact of land-based activities on global level. The aim of preparation of the assessments, is to assist countries and regions to agree upon appropriate priority action programmes.

#### UN Decisions

The General Assembly of the United Nations adopted a Resolution in December 1996 on the institutional arrangements for the implementation of the GPA. This Resolution requests states to take action in the governing bodies of relevant Intergovernmental organizations and programmes in order to ensure an active role of different organizations and partnership in implementation of the GPA.

The 19th UNEP Governing Council adopted in January 1997 a Resolution inviting the Sub-Committee on Oceans and Coastal Areas of the Commission of Sustainable Development (CSD) to perform the function of a steering committee on technical cooperation and assistance for the GPA. This Sub-Committee will work in collaboration with the Sub-Committee on Freshwater and will provide regular review on the state of the implementation of the Programme, GPA.

## Regional strategies

In practice the GPA is best implemented through the regional seas programmes. This means cooperation between UN Organizations, Regional Development Banks, science, industry, governments and local governments, NGOs etc. Integrated coastal management is possible only through integrated water management including even rivers originating from land-locked countries. The basis for action oriented joint strategies is in many regions existing conventions, protocols and action plans agreed within the framework of UNEP's Regional Seas Programme or other regional mechanisms. On practical level there are different options, such as broadening the mandate of the regional conventions to cover all uses of the regional sea concerned and its drainage area including associated freshwater basins. Adoption of specific protocols and establishment of regional systems for clean technology cooperation are other possible tools. The Law of the Sea Convention offers the framework for many innovative and advanced concepts for the implementation of the GPA on regional level. Transfer of advanced or clean technology, including sewage treatment, especially in megacities and identification of new sources of funding are examples of requirements for effective regional implementation of the Programme. Relevant linkages between local, national and regional decision making should be established to support the system, including national and regional laws, regulations and management plans.

Due to differences between regions with regard to their natural resources, social, economic and cultural development it is not possible to find one single model for the implementation of the pollution reduction programmes. Different regions should thus adopt different strategies and institutional arrangements in order to achieve results in the process leading to improvement of their water environment.

At present, the globally agreed programme, GPA, even if complicated, provides the best possible framework for minimizing pollutants from land-based sources.