

MEDCOAST:

An initiative for rational management of Mediterranean coastal & sea resources

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The idea of starting a new conference series focusing on the coastal and sea issues of the Mediterranean was originated in July 1990, during the conference "Littoral 1990" organized by the EUROCOAST Association. The project was discussed with colleagues internationally. It was noted that, although there were significant concerns and serious efforts by international organizations, national authorities and NGO's towards preservation of the Mediterranean environment and sustainability of resources, the level of international scientific cooperation was far from being satisfactory. Indeed, it was concluded that: a) There was an immediate need for an international conference series; b) It would be beneficial to improve the exchange of information and knowhow by establishing a network of professional and scientific centers around the Mediterranean basin, and those elsewhere having similar interests; c) It would be highly valuable to develop international educational programs focusing on the coastal and sea environment and rational management issues of the Mediterranean.

The First International Conference on the Mediterranean Coastal Environment, MEDCOAST 93 (2-5 November 1993, Antalya, Turkey), starts the new conference series. The success of the MEDCOAST 93 proved that the initiative was indeed timely and addressed to an important need. The MEDCOAST 93 Conference was sponsored by 16 international and national organizations including, the Council of Europe, UNEP Mediterranean Action Plan, UNDP, International Coastal and Ocean Organization (ICO), and the Association EUROCOAST. The conference topics covered almost all relevant issues. About 120 abstracts were selected for oral and poster presentations, and a significant number of proposals had to be rejected due to program limitations. About 90 papers were received before the deadline for being included in the conference proceedings (2 volumes).

The MEDCOAST conferences will be continued under the supervision of an International Permanent Secretariat, and will be organized every 2 years in a different Mediterranean country by a local organization committee.

Parallel to the conferences, a proposal is submitted for financing to the European Community, which aims to develop a graduate program and a certificate program on the theme of "Coastal Zone Management in the Mediterranean". Both of these program will be run by an international faculty, and will be open to students from the riparian countries of the Mediterranean and the Black Sea.