



UNEP/MAP-METAP SMAP III Project
**Promoting awareness and enabling a policy framework
for environment and development integration in the Mediterranean
with focus on Integrated Coastal Zone Management**

Study on the Establishment of an Inter-Ministerial Committee for ICZM in the Syrian Arab Republic



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1. Background

The involvement of the Syrian Arab Republic in the Mediterranean Action Plan (MAP) dates back to the year 1976 when the Barcelona Convention and its two main Protocols – the Dumping Protocol and the Emergency Protocol, were adopted. In 1978, Syria ratified the Barcelona Convention and the two Protocols. Thereafter, in 1992 and 1993, two other Protocols, namely, the Protocol concerning Specially Protected Areas (SPA) and Land-based Sources (LBA) Protocol, were ratified, respectively.

After the adoption of the amendments to the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols in 1996, Syria ratified the amended Convention and its amended and new Protocols as follows:

- Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean (2003);
- Protocol concerning Specially Protected Areas and Biological Diversity in the Mediterranean (2003);
- Protocol for the Prevention and Elimination of Pollution of the Mediterranean Sea by Dumping from Ships and Aircraft or Incineration at Sea (2008);
- Protocol Concerning Co-operation in Preventing Pollution from Ships and, in Case of Emergency, Combating Pollution of the Mediterranean Sea (2008); and
- Protocol for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea from Land-based Sources and Activities (2008).

By these steps all together, it could be considered that a national set of legal instruments covering various specific aspects of Mediterranean environmental protection was outlined, taking into account that Legislative Decrees for the ratification of such a convention and protocols have the legal influent power to make complying with such instrument is enforceable. Faraway of the Mediterranean Convention and its Protocols, the current sectoral framework legislative instruments, strategies, and the institutional set-up in place, are reviewed below.

1. Environmental framework

According to the Environment Law No. 50/2002, the higher environmental authority in the country is the **Council for Environment Protection and Sustainable Development**, headed by the Prime Minister, assembling all related Ministers with heads of major relevant organisations and professional bodies. Amongst the tasks of the **General Commission for Environmental Affairs** (Ministry of Local Administration and Environment) are:

- enforcement of the Law and Council's decisions;
- proposing and following up the execution of environment-related strategies and action plans; and bilateral, regional and international legal instruments, including the Barcelona

Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean and its Protocols;

- environmental planning and cross-sectoral co-ordination; and
- along with direct executive role in some areas, such as environmental impact assessment (EIA) and permits, pollution monitoring and non-compliance control.

The Commission discharges these functions through its central managerial body and Technical Directorates along with local Environment Directorates in all governorates. The coastal issues, particularly those closely related to the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols, are handled and co-ordinated mainly by the central Water Safety Directorate, assisted by the Environment Directorate in each of the two coastal governorates of the country, Lattakia and Tartous.

2. Ecological framework

Although environmental and ecological frameworks overlap by far, the role of the environmental authority in the ecological area is limited compared to the dominant legal and institutional role assumed by the **Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform**. The Ministry is the national authority responsible for fauna and flora resources including plant farming, animal breeding, forestry and forestation, fishery, land, coastal and marine specially protected areas and biodiversity protection. The Ministry discharges these functions through its relevant central directorates and a local Agriculture Directorate in each of the two coastal governorates. However, within the Ministry's internal system, a lack of co-ordination between "terrestrial" and "maritime" functions is noticeable and could be attributed to the huge structure of the Ministry.

As far as the functions related to marine life are concerned, the effective legislation in this field, the Law on Protection of Aquatic Creatures No. 30/1964, stipulates that important issues should be handled, decided by the **Higher Council for Aquatic Creatures** headed by the Minister of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform. This Law dates from 1964, and the new modified one is being enacted to replace it.

At institutional level, the Ministry's central Directorate of Fishery Resources runs its own control system distributed at the most important fishing ports along the coast. This Directorate is assigned the tasks of enhancing the application of fishing rationalisation measures, control on fish landing, prevention of fishing of threatened/endangered species, and disturbance of wild fauna during sensitive periods, along with the enforcement of any other effective regulations related to marine wild life and biodiversity protection. Also, the national maritime authority, the **General Directorate of Ports (Ministry of Transport)**, is in charge as the executive arm in respect of the control of marine fishing activities to ensure compliance with regulations, such as fishing methods, networks size/mesh, etc.

3. Maritime framework

The **General Directorate of Ports (Ministry of Transport)** is the competent maritime authority and national controller on internal and territorial seawaters, seabed, lagoons, headlands, armlets, islands, coastline and some adjacent land areas, including ships, boats, fishing boats, barges or other objects, as well as commercial ports, oil terminals, fishing harbours, marinas, or any other coastline facilities

and constructions. Accordingly, the Directorate plays an essential role in many aspects closely related to sea and coastal management. The Directorate is responsible for environmental protection, such as coastal management and protection, maritime trans-boundary movement of hazardous wastes, prevention of wastes dumping into areas under its control, ship's originated pollution and emergency cases, fishery, other marine natural resources, and offshore exploration and exploitation.

The original legislation, upon which Directorate's functions are based, dates from 1961 (Law No. 154/1961), supported by a modified Law on Maritime Public Properties (No. 65/2001). The environmental role of the Directorate was recently defined precisely by enacting a Law on Marine Environment Protection (No. 9/2006) which addresses the issues of oil pollution and solid wastes generated from ships or shore installations, sewage and garbage from ships, and setting regulations for storing and handling dangerous goods by both ships and ports. This law appropriates to the framework and provisions of the Syrian Environmental Law (No. 50/2002).

4. Water resources and wastewater framework

The water resources authority in charge of qualitative and quantitative control of waters is the **Ministry of Irrigation and Water Resources**. This includes, at the coastal region level, control of: groundwater, springs, dam-lakes, coastal rivers and their estuaries, and seasonal watercourses.

The coastal seawater is also categorised as public waters subject to a qualitative control by the Ministry. The Ministry used to discharge its functions in the coastal region through one region-wide entity, the Coastal Basin Directorate, but it was recently divided according to the administrative division basis, i.e. a Water Resources Directorate in each of the two coastal governorates.

The major problem facing these two Directorates, so far at least, is not with finding sufficient fresh water resources for allocating water supplies to domestic, irrigation and industrial uses, but rather with the polluted returns from these sectors. These returns seriously affect the quality of water resources. Each Directorate has its own water pollution monitoring system within its geographical coverage. In case of defining the specific source of a pollution case, the Directorate urgently reports the case to the Governor who is authorised to take the appropriate action including closure of causing activity. In reality, the application of this arrangement is weak and rather limited to activities polluting drinking water resources.

Pollution monitoring results are also notified to the central Water Safety Directorate of the General Commission for Environmental Affairs, periodically, as normal procedure, and urgently in case of a pollution warning. A new Water Legislation (No. 31/2005) stipulates on co-ordination between the Ministry of Irrigation and the Ministry of Local Administration and Environment (c/o the General Commission for Environmental Affairs) in monitoring pollution of public waters, while the control of polluting activities is, according to the Environment Law No. 50/2002, a sole responsibility of the latter.

Urban wastewater issue falls under the responsibility of the **Ministry of Housing and Construction**, which is expected to treat the collected wastewaters of cities, towns and villages, then, either return it to the Ministry of Irrigation (in quality compliance with the limits of national standard specifications), or dispose it into the sea (no standard specification is set for this case so far). However, the Ministry of Housing and Construction has formulated a national scheme for urban

wastewater collection and treatment (2005) including the two coastal governorates, covering cities and most of other residential agglomerations in the coastal strip and hinterland.

5. Tourism framework

Tourism sector installations submit to specific environmental stipulations set by the **Higher Council of Tourism** since 1987, including garbage disposal regulations and compulsory internal sewerage system with final treatment. Compliance verification is supposed to fall under responsibility of the Ministry of Tourism through its two Directorates of Tourism in the coastal governorates.

Another coastal role of the Ministry of Tourism is the long-term expropriation of large areas of agricultural land in the coastal strip (totalling about 6,000 ha expropriated since the mid seventies of the last century) for potential allocation to tourist compounds projects. This measure was designed to promote the coastal tourism development; however, the experience over tens of years has proved the excessively optimistic and excessive nature of this decision, confirming the priority for a long-term, multi-sectoral and integrated spatial planning system for the coastal strip as a whole. A spatial planning system that considers the allocation of reasonable areas and seafronts for coastal tourism projects in places where the adverse impact on green lands, sensitive ecosystems and natural/historical heritage sites is at a minimum.

6. Local administration framework

The preceding point leads directly to a wider and critical issue closely related to coastal zone management, that is territorial planning and land-use functions. Regional physical planning is until now lacking in legislation, but some proposals to include it in the urban planning law have been proposed. The Syrian urban planning is based on the following laws and decrees:

- Decree on Urban Planning (5/1982, amended 3/1983 and 6/2002), with the Ministry of Housing and Utilities directives No. 1/1982 (definitions related to the Decree on Urban Planning) and 2/1984 (implementation procedures of Decree on Urban Planning);
- Law on Local Administration (15/1971, amended 61/1974);
- Law on Illegal Buildings (1/2003);
- Law on Expropriation (9/1974);
- Law on Expropriation of Urban Extension Regions Except in the City of Damascus (60/1979, amended 26/2000);
- Law on Expropriation Inside Urban Plan for Public Needs (20/1983); and
- Law on Land-use Subdivisions.

Urban planning functions are shared between the Ministry of Housing and Construction and the Ministry of Local Administration and Environment (including the governorates and localities). The system consists of **Master Plans** (general organisational plans) and detailed **Urban Plans** (local organisational plans) of which both are obligatory in all localities. Outside the boundaries of the local organisational plans, land-use competencies are under the Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian

Reform, with a steering role, at the governorate level, by a committee headed by the governor, and at the central level, by the Ministry of Local Administration and Environment, and also by the State Planning Commission being the national developmental planning authority.

A pure function of local administration bodies, according to the Law on Local Administration, is the collection and disposal of urban solid wastes. A recent Law on Cleanliness and Aesthetical Values of Localities (No. 49/2004) addressed these issues. One of the changes brought about by this law is the assignment to municipalities of the custodianship of sectors of coastline falling within their administrative boundaries, in addition to coastline belonging to the maritime public properties administered by the national maritime authority (the General Directorate of Ports).

7. Protected areas' management framework (natural/historical)

The national maritime legislation accords rather a proper degree of protection to all maritime public properties, including internal and territorial seawaters, seabed, lagoons, headlands, armllets, islands, coastline and some adjacent land areas, all under control of the General Directorate of Ports as the competent maritime authority. Within the boundaries of maritime public properties there is only one small marine/coastal specially protected area (Ibn Hani) with a higher degree of protection, administered by the Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform, Directorate of Fishery Resources.

On the other hand, forests are protected, preserved and managed by another directorate of the same Ministry, i.e. the Directorate of Forestry, assisted by a Forestry Division under the Directorate of Agriculture in each governorate (Law on Forestry No. 66/1953, amended in 1994). In the coastal zone, this protection covers large areas located in its northern part. Again, some parts of the coastal forests are identified as specially protected areas with a higher degree of protection (Omm-Ettyour and Ras El-Bassit), involving in their management the General Directorate of Ports since parts of them are within the boundaries of maritime public properties.

Specially protected areas of both marine and forest types submit to a ministerial regulatory framework stemming from various articles over different legislations. However, missing, so far is a proper legislative tool enacted specifically for those areas. The General Commission for Environmental Affairs, particularly its Biodiversity and Protected Areas Directorate, plays the role of environmental supervision and co-ordination between competent authorities, particularly at competency intersections such as marine and coastal areas.

Countrywide, archaeological and cultural heritage sites are legally protected under the stipulations of the Law on Archaeology No. 222/1963 and its amendments. The **General Directorate of Antiquities and Museums (Ministry of Culture)** is the national authority involved in protecting, preserving and managing these sites, assisted in the coastal region by its local/branch directorates in Lattakia, Jableh and Tartous. Limited human and funding resources, compared to huge tasks, is a chronic obstruction impeding the Directorate from implementing the most needed programmes in the coastal strip. Taking into account the institutional and governance structures, and the environmental problems in coastal zone, it could be concluded that the substantial failure in confronting and overcoming the processes of environmental degradation in the Syrian coastal strip and coastal waters could be attributed to the following reasons:

The proliferation and overlapping competencies of authorities

In the absence of the coastal zone law and a legal or administrative identification of the coastal zone, there is a major and severe lack of cross-sectoral unified management for the coastal zone as a whole. These critical weaknesses are accompanied by:

- weak horizontal co-operation among the different competent authorities; and
- weakness within each competent authority, including an overall lack of financial resources in general, and the scarcity of skilled human resources in particular.

Weakness in planning

Sectoral economic and service developmental plans for the coastal zone generally lack a sufficient environmental dimension. On the other hand, the optimistic environmental strategies and action plans lack the proper mechanisms for their integration with developmental plans.

Weak public awareness and participation

Three factors combine to further undermine the quality of decision making on the coast, including:

- the low level of environmental awareness by both public and administrations;
- the general undervaluation of the coastal zone and its vital importance to the country; and
- a low degree of public participation in policy making, including social and academic sensitivity to coastal issues.

In conclusion, the quality of coastal management is poor due to managerial deficiencies, such as the lack of spatial and cross-sectoral planning, multiplicity of legislative and administrative tools, conflict of interests and overlapped competencies, which often hinder the proper management of the coastal strip, playing a great role in magnifying the effects of socio-economic causes. A deep analysis of national, coastal and sectoral policies, and the current scattered and overlapping governing tools proved enough the need for policy and institutional reform as a matter of importance, not only to meet Syria's future needs in relation to its very short sea coast, but also to confront the already accumulated problems in the coastal zone.

Turning again to the Barcelona Convention, the recent important event for Syria was the plenipotentiaries meeting on the ICZM Protocol, held in Madrid, on 21/1/2008, at which the ICZM Protocol was signed. Syria was amongst the Mediterranean countries that signed the Protocol, expressing with this the intention to benefit from and comply with this extremely important legal instrument.

In parallel to this key event, or rather in preparation for it, the environmental authority in Syria, the General Commission for Environmental Affairs, under the Ministry of Local Administration and Environment, has eventually made benefit of the Policy Brief component of the SMAP III project entitled "Promoting Awareness and Enabling a Policy Framework for Environment and Development Integration in the Mediterranean with Focus on ICZM". The Policy Brief on ICZM importance to the country, and the proposed steps towards the implementation of the ICZM Protocol were prepared,

with a supportive background document, by the ICZM National Expert in co-operation with ICZM National Advisor (PAP/RAC National Focal Point) and PAP/RAC ICZM Regional Expert.

In a reviewing trial to answer the subsequently arisen question on how to move forward, negotiations between Syria's representative, the PAP/RAC National Focal Point and PAP/RAC, with the involvement of ICZM National and Regional Experts, have resulted in identifying the next steps towards implementing the obligations and rules of the new Protocol in Syria. It was concluded that the process should pass through the five main stages, which are:

- I. Establishing an official guiding and leading body for implementing the Protocol.
- II. Identifying the Syrian vision towards ICZM in Syria's coast.
- III. Identifying the Syrian policy towards ICZM in Syria's coast.
- IV. Setting the National Strategy towards ICZM in Syria's coast.
- V. Setting the National Action Plan (NAP) towards ICZM on Syria's coast.

It is believed that the new ICZM approach may initiate momentum for deep policy reforms and institutional building for the benefit of a long-term sustainability of coastal development. In general, such reforms should start with reconsideration of the current microscopic management pattern to improve it into a macroscopic one. An alternative approach, looking at the overall coastal zone as a specific unit of national strategic value, an individual distinguished area dynamic in reaction to both its seaward and landward area, as well as the mentioned reforms, should re-examine the numerous dominant legal instruments calling, probably, for a new integrated legislation, which will mould all concerned legal instruments that belong to coastal zone management into one form. Such approach is expected to be of high value for improving the economic, social and environmental situation not only in the coastal zone itself but countrywide. Thus, the issue could not be dealt with in a narrow environmental-concern specialists' framework, but, rather, in the widest possible national framework, according, meanwhile, the utmost possible environmental importance.

In this respect, it was clear that no applicable conclusions could be reached without implementing the participatory approach from the early beginning of the whole process. In order to activate this approach, it is wise to establish a high level Inter-ministerial Committee (IMC), which should play the essential and leading role in the whole process in order to ensure, step by step, a high-level governmental support.

This process was supported by PAP/RAC that provided financial and technical assistance to the Ministry of Local Administration and Environment (LA&E) in establishing the Inter-ministerial Committee (IMC) as the leading body to guide and supervise the process of implementing ICZM Protocol in Syria. This support falls again under the framework of SMAP III project "Promoting Awareness and Enabling a Policy Framework for Environment and Development Integration in the Mediterranean with Focus on ICZM", and based on a contract between the EU and UNEP, signed on the 7th December 2005. In order to regulate this support, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between the two parties, the Syrian Ministry of LA&E and the PAP/RAC, on implementation of the activities related to promoting policy towards ICZM in Syria's coast and co-ordination of work of national agencies, institutions and experts engaged in the preparation of Syria's vision and policy towards ICZM in Syria.

2. The Need for ICZM

It is now widely accepted that sectoral activities produce combined environmental impacts resulting in marine and coastal area pollution, fresh water pollution, air pollution, loss of marine resources, loss of natural land resources, land degradation, destruction of historic sites, etc. Very often, the hitherto policies to reduce coastal degradation have been based on sectoral approach and have, therefore, failed.

In most cases, the efforts based on sectoral approach made the coastal environmental problems transferred from the realms of a certain sector, where they were originally created, to the "jurisdiction" of another sector, without, or with very little, contribution to the effective improvement of the environmental situation in the coastal zone. However, this situation is not characteristic to a certain country, or even to developing countries in general, but rather typical in most of the coastal areas world-wide. In fact, a number of activities have been undertaken, so far, to improve the environmental situation in the coastal areas, but these efforts were far from being adequate, and steps have to be taken towards a more effective management of the coastal zone.

ICZM is considered future proofing working together across different sectors and levels of government, across local society and with the coastal community, to anticipate future developments, to take actions to minimise negative consequences, to seize opportunities, to manage coastal resources in a sustainable way, and to improve the quality of life for residents and visitors alike. So, it is considered a must rather than a choice for a healthy coast in Syria, bearing in mind the absolute and relative shortness of Syria's coast compared to the size of the country (in area, population, economy, etc.) and the consequent magnitude of the various pressures onto it.

Since the coastal and coastal management issues fall under the interests and competencies of many central and local authorities and other stakeholders, the contribution of these parts should be considerable for setting up the policy, strategy, and action plan towards ICZM. Neglecting any of them may create negative consequences upon transiting to implementation.

An essential part of the coastal management is decision-making, as this dimension determines whether the performance of protection measures is indeed supporting the national development with regards to the coastal zone, and if that is the case, it should identify the additional measures that should be taken, and how they should be implemented. Given that a great deal of day-to-day coastal management procedures is undertaken at the local governance level, local involvement has become a crucial issue. Many examples world-wide demonstrate that local agents or stakeholders are prepared to accept non-optimal situations, provided that they are substantially involved in the decision-making process in a timely way.

With reference to the participatory approach, it should be noted that it is not sufficient to apply them in a way in which stakeholders are only given the impression of participation in decision-making. Stakeholders have to be genuinely listened to, not just confronted with a participatory tool. This implies that for each local case, it has to be delineated which conditions need to be fulfilled, in

order for communities to develop and function as solid, co-operative and inventive partners in the decision-making of coastal management.

Bearing in mind the MCSD recommendations on the integrated and sustainable management of coastal zones, which were approved by the 10th ordinary meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention, held in Tunis, in 1997:

"To improve institutional mechanisms for the integrated management of coastal areas by creating, if necessary, and/or strengthening Inter-Ministerial or Inter-Administrative structures and frameworks for the co-ordination of the actors involved in coastal development and management and the integration of their activities. Such structure should be set up at the level relevant to each country. Local and national authorities should be invited to play a significant role in the preparation of integrated coastal management strategies."

Bearing in mind the 3rd point of Article 4 of the Barcelona Convention, this stipulates:

"In order to protect the environment and contribute to the sustainable development of the Mediterranean Sea areas, the Contracting Parties shall:

(e) Commit themselves to promote the integrated management of the coastal zones, taking into account the protection of areas of ecological and landscape interest and the national use of natural resources."

There are plenty reasons to believe in the necessity of establishing IMC with a leading role in setting the vision, policy, strategy, and National Action Plan (NAP) for ICZM in Syria from the very early beginning of the whole process. Such IMC should involve a wide spectrum of stakeholders to enable each to reflect its viewpoint, express its opinion, and participate in an interactive and, more important, constructive way.

Furthermore, the participation of all players is a good opportunity to convince them of the conclusions and anticipated decisions. This might positively reflect, as well, in enabling each party to review its own domain of considerations and practices, within its scope of competencies, some of which were negatively affecting over a long period the efficient and environmentally sustainable coastal management in the country. In the optimistic scenario, it is anticipatable that the conclusions of the IMC will be translatable into legislative, administrative and institutional reforms, and taken into consideration upon drawing up the next (11th) national five-year development plan (2011-2015).

3. Stakeholders Consultation

Initial consultations with stakeholders were necessary to start the process of establishing the proposed IMC. For this purpose, the process started with preliminary communication at the top level, by H.E. Minister of Local Administration and Environment with other concerned ministers. The aim of this communication was to pave the road for a task force group mission from the Ministry of Local Administration and Environment, which intends to visit other concerned ministries, in order to meet with whom concerned from each ministry to explain the new steps to be followed by the government after the signature of the ICZM Protocol.

The concerned stakeholders were identified after consultation with the Minister of Local Administration and Environment, as follows:

- Ministry of Presidency Affairs;
- Ministry of Economy;
- Ministry of Tourism;
- Ministry of State of the People Council Affairs;
- Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform;
- Ministry of Irrigation and Water Resources;
- Ministry of Housing and Construction;
- Ministry of Transportation;
- Ministry of Industry;
- Ministry of Health;
- Ministry of Electricity
- Ministry of Oil;
- State Planning Commission;
- Governorate of Latakia; and
- Governorate of Tartous.

In view of the importance of task force mission, the Minister refers during his direct calls to the requirement of nominating a high-level representative from each ministry. In fact, most of the representatives were Deputy Ministers, while in some cases they were General Directors. At the local level, the visit was oriented directly to the Governorates of Latakia and Tartous, and to meet with both Governors themselves.

For this purpose, the national expert for ICZM, in conjunction with the General Director of the General Commission for Environmental Affairs and the PAP/RAC National Focal Point as the task force mission, has individually consulted the appointed persons representing the most important related ministries, trying in this mission to the parties at national and local level to pave the road for

a good understanding of the new ICZM orientation. At most meetings, the Deputy Minister or the General Director were accompanied with other man, who is in most cases the Director of Environment in his ministry.

During this course of consultations, discussions were opened with a brief speech by the General Director of the General Commission for Environmental Affairs and the PAP/RAC National Focal Point on Syria's signing to the 7th new Protocol of the Barcelona Convention, followed by a brief on ICZM concepts by the National Expert. Then, proactive and deliberate discussions were opened on coastal problems in general, and on coastal management issues in particular. Some of these discussions were characterised by reciprocal frankness and were helpful in identifying objectives, tasks, duties, structure, and work mechanism of the proposed IMC.

All consulted representatives expressed their appreciation to involve them from the early beginning of the process. They also expressed their readiness to co-operate with the environmental authority so as to extend their possible assistance that may help in narrowing the current gap between the unsatisfactory status of the coastal zone and a hopeful healthy coast, and their willingness to contribute, each from his position, to enable the state to comply with the rules and stipulations of the ICZM Protocol.

However, this does not mean that all representatives were satisfied with the new approach. Having in their background that it may contradict with their domain policy and strategy, as well as the short-term interests from their viewpoint, some were somewhat anxious about any new regulations that may affect or restrict public or private investments in the coastal zone. Anyway, most, if not all, preferred to participate in the IMC to share and care of the new policy, hoping to reach a shared ground of understanding that all parties could start from, rather than taking an overt negative attitude.

To illuminate these reservation attitudes, it should be noted that a wide variety of activities and interests are engaged into explicit or implicit competition for an extremely limited coastline of only 183 km stretch. Urban development, transportation facilities, commercial ports, oil terminals, oil refining and some other large-scale industries were the customary non-agricultural users of the seafront, but, increasingly of late, coastline sectors are more and more demanded by tourism industry. These demands are often favoured by policy-making and decision-taking levels since tourism is increasingly considered as an important source of foreign currency and job creation. On the other hand, this has given rise to some concern as the local residents and non-rich vacationers suffer an accelerated process of coastline "privatisation" and, therefore, face the prospect of ever-diminishing access to the beach.

The shortness of Syria's seacoast is a convincing reason for the utmost importance of ICZM to the country, but, meanwhile, a strong factor that could make ICZM an objectionable process in application. No doubt that some "voices" in the intended IMC will try to drive the ICZM to just an economic investment strategy, rather than being a sustainable development and environment protection approach. However, the consulted stakeholders have generally stressed the necessity of representing their institution in the IMC by the deputy minister, general director, or other high position representative, pursuant to the obvious importance of the matter. They also stressed the importance of participating through sectoral experts who could participate in formulating and

precising proposals for setting up the national vision and policy towards ICZM in Syria. At the end of each meeting, the task force missions were entrusted with submitting a specific official note by the Minister of Local Administration and Environment to other concerned ministries, calling to nominate a representative for the purpose of establishing the Inter-Ministerial Committee (IMC) for ICZM.

In general, it is difficult to be positive about deciding previously to which extent could the IMC influence the future orientations of the ICZM in Syria, although the purpose of its establishment is to have formal governance responsibilities rather than a think-tank group, but the progress of the whole process is subject to different future orientations. Anyhow, we could rely on the IMC for achieving considerable steps towards ICZM in Syria, since the ICZM stands at the top priority of the Syrian government, and the opportunity is open for the IMC to promote the coastal question and ICZM issue from theoretical level to decision-making level. In general, the stakeholder initial consultation course could be evaluated positively as a necessary and constructive step on the way to create and activate the proposed IMC. It was also helpful in crystallising IMC's tasks and duties as appearing in the next section of this study.

4. Objectives of IMC for ICZM

The purpose of the proposed IMC is to set forth the participation of all stakeholders in a process aiming at achieving the following general objectives:

- Promoting the "coastal question" to be one of the national top-priority issues;
- Integrating ICZM approach and rules in the national coastal visualisation and policy outlines;
- Adapting the national legislative and administrative frameworks to the Mediterranean commonly agreed stipulations of the ICZM Protocol;
- Providing support in strengthening and modifying the existing national-level enabling environment, including policy and legislation;
- Ensuring that the results of the whole process will be considered by decision-makers to initiate momentum for long-term sustainable coastal reforms;
- Involving stakeholders' participatory capabilities in a successful implementation of the new policy initiatives;
- Making sure that policies, strategies and NAPs developed by experts in co-operation with PAP/RAC and other MAP activities and projects would be considered by decision-makers for a sustainable use of coastal assets and resources by facilitating the continuous policy dialogue; and
- Feeding up the forthcoming 11th national five-year development plan with as much as possible definite needed actions, to be harmonised within in correspondence to the new policy and strategy towards ICZM in Syria.

Though this initiative is essentially tailored to national policy-making level, it may form an impartial part of an integrated and proactive awareness promotion process at coastal and local levels.

5. Tasks and Duties of IMC for ICZM

The main task of the IMC is to ensure that the vision, policy, strategy, and NAP intended to apply ICZM approach and rules to the Syrian coastal zone are supported and eventually committed to by the government and the public, and fulfils the obligations stemmed from the Mediterranean ICZM Protocol. In specific, the IMC shall:

- I. supervise the whole process of elaborating the national basic ICZM documents (vision, policy, strategy and NAP, successively), and to follow up and facilitate the proceeding and progress of each stage of them;
- II. function as the official channel to raise the conclusions of each stage to the highest environmental-decision assembly in the country, the Higher Council for Environmental Protection and Sustainable Development, headed by the Prime Minister, for final governmental approval; and
- III. co-ordinate any other activity at the national level under the current SMAP III project or any succeeding project suggested by PAP/RAC.

IMC Duties

In order to successfully execute the above tasks, the IMC shall:

- formulate national policies and strategies and deal with general issues of high-level concern related to ICZM;
- identify the national vision towards ICZM in Syria's coast;
- identify the national policy towards ICZM in Syria's coast;
- set up a national supporting team (NST) from the General Commission for Environmental Affairs (GCEA), to facilitate the work of the IMC and provide logistic support;
- provide direction and strategic guideline at the national level to the national and sectoral experts working in preparing the vision and policy towards ICZM in Syria; stakeholders will be asked to nominate sectoral consultants (Focal Points) to provide the national expert with all required information, data, reports, and to reflect the opinion of the stakeholders they represent, and to co-operate with the national expert in preparing the vision and the policy;
- share in creative discussions calling for the adoption of vision, policy, strategy, and NAP towards ICZM;
- endeavour to reflect attitude and viewpoints of the stakeholders, as well as transmitting the conclusions of the meetings to their institutions to be taken into consideration; the provisional agenda and proposed documents will be distributed to all IMC members in advance of each meeting;

- receive, review and approve reports by the national and sectoral experts regarding outputs and outcomes of project activities and insure their compatibility;
- ensure the necessary bilateral or multilateral co-ordination and co-operation at the national level, amongst the national institutions participating in the process;
- ensure adequate public participation at the successive stages and activities of the preparation and implementation of the ICZM Protocol so as to ensure consensus on the outputs, taking into consideration that participation of the Public Council in the committee will bring a good opportunity to public participation, and open the door to expand the scope of public participation, because each member in the IMC for each Governorate will transfer the conclusions of the discussions to concerned people during the Parliament sessions;
- co-operate with PAP/RAC in utilising the assistance in capacity building and awareness raising about ICZM vision and policy in Syria, especially through the workshop to be held in the coastal region after setting the draft vision and policy;
- keep PAP/RAC briefed on the minutes of the meetings and the attained progress through PAP/RAC National Focal Point;
- open its meetings to the media; and
- play the role of the official channel to raise the conclusions to the Higher Council for Environmental Protection and Sustainable Development for obtaining the final governmental approval on the basic ICZM national documents, following to their approval in the IMC itself.

In this respect, it should be noticed that the Minister of Local Administration and Environment, President of the Committee, performing at the same time the role of the Deputy President of the Higher Council for Environmental Protection and Sustainable Development, this council according to the Environment Law No. 50/2002, is the higher environmental authority in the country, headed by the Prime Minister, assembling all related Ministers with heads of major popular organisations and professional bodies. This Council is authorised by the law to take decisions concerning approval of specific strategies, policies, and NAPs, and these decisions automatically transfer to concerned ministries to take them into consideration through preparing their sectoral strategy and action plans.

6. Activities of IMC

IMC activities could be divided into two main stages, as follows.

The 1st stage

The 1st stage within the SMAP III project, to include:

- Setting up the national coastal vision to be the future target for the Syrian coast end of the current quarter century.
- Outline the national policy towards ICZM in Syria, including the identification of:
 - obstacles, barriers, difficulties and conflicts of interests that could face or delay the proper application of ICZM from legal, institutional, technical, and financial sides; for this purpose, the national expert will prepare a stocktaking report of major actors, laws and institutions with influence on the coastal zone. This stocktaking will identify both opportunities and barriers;
 - required changes at legal and institutional levels; for this purpose, the national expert will draft a programme of action for the development of a National Strategy and National Action Plan (NAP) towards ICZM in Syria's coastal zone.

The existing Policy Brief and its background document will be considered as a base to kick-off with previous tasks.

The 2nd stage

After finding the new donor(s) to support the preparation of the National Strategy and Action Plan, the IMC will resume its activity and play its essential role to supervise these two stages and to follow up and facilitate the proceeding and progress of these stages.

7. IMC Proposed Structure

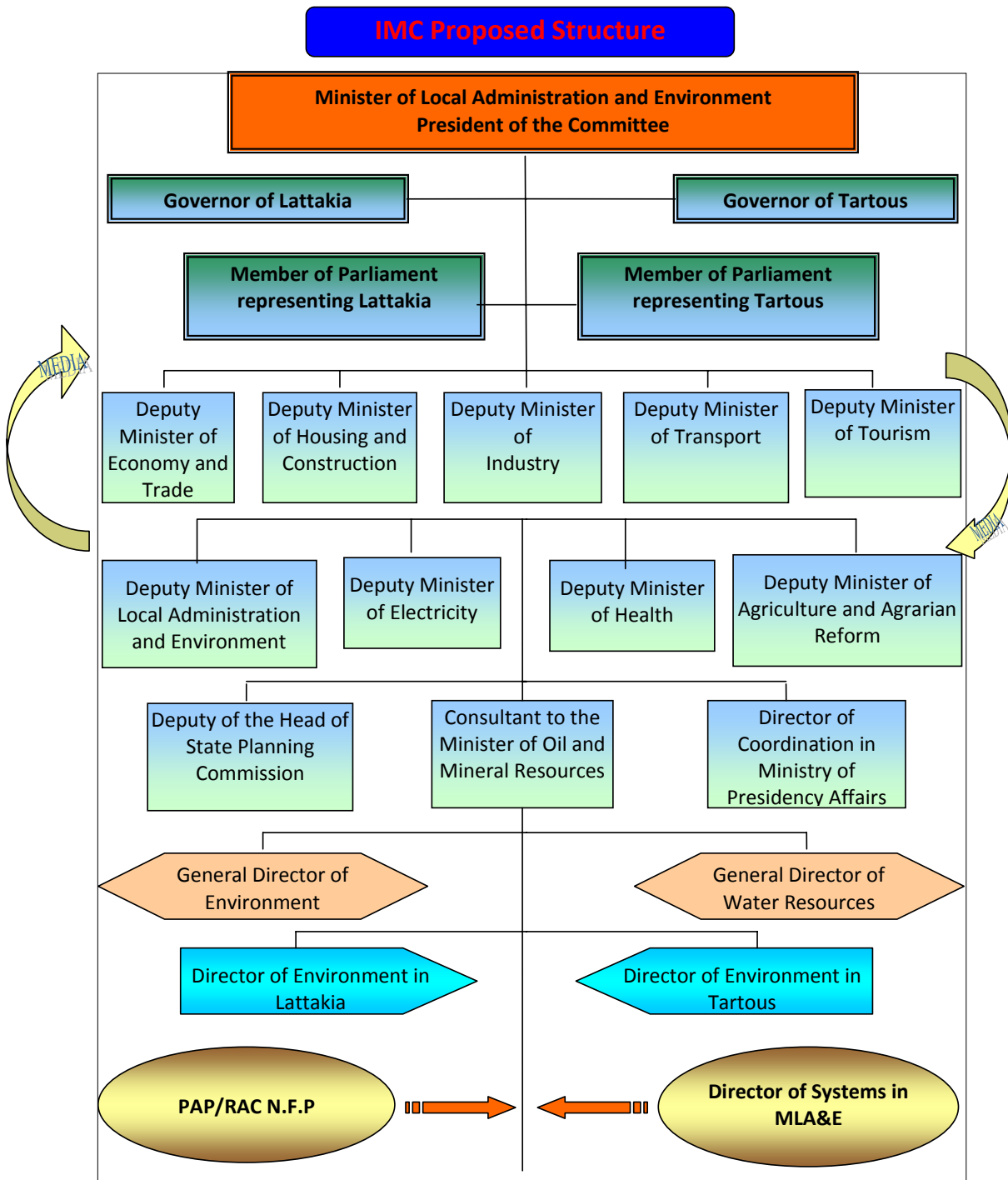
The Inter-Ministerial Committee (IMC) should consist of high-level representatives of ministries and departments, which have responsibilities for the management, and protection of the coastal zone. Members should, *inter alia*, include representatives from the ministries or institutions, which are responsible for the environment, local administration, developmental planning, spatial planning, urban development, health, water management, agriculture, fisheries, industry, transportation, tourism, maritime authority, economy, in addition to representatives of the public. This wide spectrum is intended to ensure a wide consensus on the intended vision, policy, strategy, NAP, and any other outcomes.

The membership of the committee shall be formally established by a ministerial decision by the competent Minister (Minister of Local Administration and Environment) after corresponding all related ministries and other authorities. Committee's president, in principle, shall be the Minister of Local Administration and Environment, who is the top executive for the protection and management of the environment countrywide.

The scope of the IMC shall include:

- The Minister of Local Administration and Environment (who will assume the president of the committee);
- The Governors of the two coastal governorates in the country, Latakia and Tartous;
- High level representatives of major ministries, which are involved in deferent aspects related to the management and protection of the coastal zone, preferably at the level of deputy ministers;
- The general directors of environment and water resources institutions at central and local levels;
- Members of the People's Council from the coastal governorates; and
- Prominent personalities and experts.

At the time of finalising this study, and following preliminary discussions with all stakeholders, it could be said that the Inter-Ministerial Committee (IMC) will be formed soon of about 20-25 members as proposed in the following chart:



Thus, it could be said that there is a precise selection of representatives in the IMC formation; they are not only representing multiple ministries and stakeholders, but they also have a wide scope of expertise to be of benefit in the whole process of implementing ICZM in Syria. The presence of a representative of the State Planning Commission, and the Ministry of Economy, will provide opportunity to discuss developmental priorities of the coastal zone, and the impact of the new approach to be followed in the Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) developmental goals, consequently on the national economy.

On the one hand, the presence of a representative of deferent sectoral ministries, which are considered as polluting parties due to their investments in the coastal zone, such as the ministries of oil and mineral resources, industry, agriculture and agrarian reform, electricity, and transportation, is very important. Namely, any agreement on a certain policy and strategy will create a turn point in the domain trend in setting the forthcoming 2011-2015 11th five-year national development plan for each of these ministries, taking into consideration that the State Planning Commission, present in the committee, is the higher planning authority for formulating the developmental plans in Syria. And, on the other hand, the shortage of healthy and environment-friendly activities and investments, such as those belonging to irrigation, environment, housing and health sectors, could be managed through the adoption of a new strategy and action plan for a good management of coastal zone.

The presence of local representatives, such as the directors of environment in the two coastal governorates, subordinates to the Governors in the local administration hierarchy, as well as representatives of the national legislative authority representing both governorates, should match all the discussions with local community and reflect the tangible problems in the coastal zone which may impede or delay the application of ICZM tools.

The presence of the General Director of the General Commission for Environmental Affairs, and the Deputy Minister of Local Administration and Environment, should form the core of the environmental import of the Committee and will control the process orientation to ensure sustainable development in the Syrian coast. The presence of a representative of the Republic presidency should add value to the IMC, promote the work of the Committee, empower it and support the whole process in the framework of the President orientations to the advancement and modernisation of policies and institutions overall the country and across all sectors and levels. The presence of Spatial Planning Experts, anticipated from the Directorate of Systems in the Ministry of Local Administration and Environment, which is in charge of studying, supervising, and upgrading the regional planning country-wide including the coastal region, is of additional value to the discussions of the IMC as well as to the whole ICZM process.

Actually, at the time of finalising this study (late September 2008), all of the ministries have already nominated their representatives. A list of them is given under the last title of this study, namely, the "List of IMC Members". However, the given List of members could not be considered firm and official until the Minister of Local Administration and Environment issue the formal decision on the formation of the Committee which is expected soon after the approval of this study.

8. National Supporting Team: Role and Structure

A National Supporting Team (NST) is to be established from the staff of the General Commission for Environmental Affairs (GCEA) of the Ministry of Local Administration and Environment, so as to facilitate the work of the IMC. The purpose of the NST is to smooth the work of IMC and its meetings through providing all necessary logistic supports, such as secretariat duties, audio-visual aids, spreading meetings' invitations to the members of the IMC, recording the minutes of the meetings, finalising the power point presentations, registering the comments or remarks by any of IMC's members, distribution of necessary documents before the meetings to the members, the matter that may often need travelling to the coastal governorates, as well as serving coffee breaks for the meetings.

The PAP/RAC National Focal Point has already chosen six members to the NST, namely:

1. Mrs. Sawsan Arafeh;
2. Mr. Khaldoon Mourad;
3. Mr. Mounzer Seijar;
4. Mrs. Hanan Saffieh;
5. Mrs. Rula Jabbour; and
6. Mr. Rafic Bacdash.

They will be remunerated partially from the budget of the MoU allocated to cover the expenses of the IMC.

9. IMC Meetings

In principal, the chairperson of IMC meetings shall be its president, the Minister of Local Administration and Environment, who shall presumably convene the first meeting at his office and initiate it with an outline speech on the utmost importance of the task. It is recommended that the IMC should meet regularly, preferably on a monthly basis, so as to speed up the process and execute the tasks within the limited timeframe of the MoU agreed between PAP/RAC and the Ministry of Local Administration and Environment. The committee may also hold additional meetings, if needed, at its president decision based on PAP/RAC National Focal Point justified proposal.

The PAP/RAC National Focal Point will be the moderator of the meetings; she will set the agendas, organise and perform the meetings assisted by the National Supporting Team (NST), prepare and present, in co-operation with the national expert, the drafts and presentations to the IMC. She will also undertake briefing PAP/RAC, in due course and proper format, on the minutes of the meetings and the conclusions and recommendations adopted thereby. During the intervals between the two IMC meetings, the PAP/RAC National Focal Point shall, on behalf of the IMC President, the Minister of Local Administration and Environment, facilitate appointments with the sectoral experts nominated by the various ministries who will provide the national expert with all required information, data and reports, and reflect the opinion of the institutions they represent.

Lastly, IMC meetings should be open to the media in order to secure transparency and create a wider attention among the public to the issues under consideration in the meetings. The PAP/RAC National Focal Point, assisted by the NST, has to take necessary actions to invite TV, radio and newspaper correspondents to attend the meetings in the due course.

10. List of IMC Members

1. **Eng. Helal Al-Atrash: Minister of Local Administration and Environment – President**
2. Mr. Zahed Haj Mousa: Governor of Lattakia
3. Dr. Waheeb Zein Al-Deen: Governor of Tartous
4. Dr. Jaafer Al-Khaier: Member of Parliament, represents Lattakia Governorate
5. Eng. Ali Ali: Member of Parliament, represents Tartous Governorate
6. Eng. Imad Hassoun: Deputy Minister of Local Administration & Environment
7. Mr. Ghassan Wadea Al-Eid: Deputy Minister of Economy and Trade
8. Dr. Imad Al-Deen Abdulhai: Deputy Minister of Transport
9. Dr. Nabi Rasheed Muhammad: Deputy Minister of Agriculture
10. Dr. Muhammad Tawfeek Summak: Deputy Minister of Industry
11. Muhammad Jameel Al-Owayed: Deputy Minister of Health
12. Dr. Kamal Al-Sheikha: Deputy Minister of Housing and Construction
13. Eng. Abdul Halim Kasem: Deputy Minister of Electricity
14. Dr. Mouhieddeen Hamzeh: Deputy Head of State Planning Commission
15. Eng. Mouhannad Kalash: Deputy Minister of Tourism
16. Eng. Housein Makhoulouf: General Director of General Commission for Water Resources
17. Dr. Akram Al-Khoury: General Director of General Commission for Environmental Affairs
18. Dr. Muhammad Riad Zarka: Consultant to the Minister of Oil & Mineral Resources, Director of Scientific & Environment Studies
19. Eng. Haitham Rihawi: Director of Co-ordination in the Ministry of Presidency Affairs
20. Eng. Lama Ahmad: Director of Environment in Lattakia
21. Eng. Hasan Mourjan: Director of Environment in Tartous
22. Eng. Orfan Ali: Director of Systems in MLA&E
23. Eng. Reem Abed-Rabboh: Director of Water Safety – PAP/RAC National Focal Point

