



Introduction to special issue on sustainable development at the regional level: the Mediterranean

Adalberto Vallega

International Centre for Coastal and Ocean Policy Studies (ICCOPS), c/o The University of Genoa, Department Polis, Stradone di S. Agostino 37, 16123 Genoa, Italy

This issue is a part of the special issues series 'The regional scale of ocean management' which is sponsored by the International Geographical Union, Commission on Marine Geography (IGU/CMG) and the International Centre for Coastal and Ocean Policy Studies (ICCOPS). A large set of intergovernmental organisations, the scientific world and decision-making systems are focusing their attention on the Mediterranean. Many reasons justify this. First, the Mediterranean was the first sea in the world to have a new Convention and a new Action Plan, both adopted in 1995, which were basically designed to respond to the recommendations and guidelines provided by the UNCED Agenda 21, the far-reaching Plan of Action emanating from the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED). Second, in 1995 the European Union adopted a long-term strategy with the aim of encouraging the development of African and Asian developing countries of the Mediterranean and their cooperation with northern European developed countries. The final target could be the widening of the geographical coverage of the European Union towards the African and Asian sides of the Mediterranean. As a consequence, in 1995 this basin acquired new interest not only *per se* but also because it became a pilot sea for experimenting with a new wave of ocean and coastal management programmes.

This issue of *Ocean & Coastal Management* focuses on some core aspects and concerns of this innovative role in the UNCED approach to the Mediterranean. Moving from a global overview of the Regional Seas Programme by P. A. Verlaan, the possible interaction between the UNCED approach and the Mediterranean policy of the European Union is discussed in technical terms by S. Belifore. Then A. Pavasovic focuses attention on the prospect of building up and diffusing integrated coastal area management programmes, while the management consequences which are expected to arise from climatic change and subsequent processes are discussed by R. J. Nicholls and F. M. Hoozemans.

The need to develop education and training systems which are able to enhance human resource capacity, as well as social participation in political processes, is discussed in the paper by A. Chircop. The effectiveness of the Convention on the Mediterranean is discussed with reference to its geographical framework and the implementation of the mechanisms designed by the Convention and its protocols (A. Vallega).

The goal of this issue is to focus on the prospects and problems *vis-à-vis* the complexity of the Mediterranean framework. The hope is to contribute to putting the management of regional seas at the centre of the discussions on ocean development which are expected to take place under the aegis of the 1998 United Nations International Year of the Ocean.