

Welcome

Dear friends and colleagues,

So much news nowadays describes to us the poor state of health suffered by many of the earth's seas and oceans: coastal areas being degraded by oil and chemical pollution and poor building practices; coral reefs being destroyed by excessive nutrients, explosives, or siltation from unmanaged land activities; marine resources being over-fished relentlessly. But the news is not all bad.

In the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden we are indeed fortunate that the marine environment, in most places, remains in a healthy and pristine state. We are blessed with beautiful coral reefs, with a rich and unique biodiversity, which are visited by people from all over the world. Our waters contain sizeable populations of marine animals which are regarded as being endangered and vulnerable in many parts of the world. And, our fish stocks support significant industrial fisheries as well as coastal populations of subsistence fishermen.

Our situation is good, but we must act now to maintain this situation, and to prevent its degradation. We do not want the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden to join the ranks of sick and dying marine environments. Many countries border the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden, and the waters are almost totally enclosed. Damage to the marine environment in one area is likely to spread to neighbouring countries.

Conversely, rewards from protection and management will be reaped by all countries in the region, as well as by the generations of people succeeding us.

PERSGA has a central role to play in this. In September 1995 the new organization was established in Cairo, and it is called the Regional Organization for the Conservation of the Environment of the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden (the title will continue to be abbreviated to PERSGA). The title was chosen by the representatives of the people of the region and I believe the choice of the word 'Conservation' in the title is significant. PERSGA's aim is to conserve the current excellent state of our shared marine environment. Our region is experiencing considerable growth which will bring benefits to all of us, but we must ensure that our use of the marine environment is sustainable and that developments have minimal impacts.

We will promote conservation, environmental protection and the wise use of natural resources throughout the region. We will act to coordinate programmes which are occurring in different countries to ensure that the benefits and experiences of national programmes will be spread throughout the region. And, we will foster the growth of each country's capacity to assess and protect its marine environments.

We will do this by maintaining communication among projects in different countries, through meetings, workshops and conferences, and through implementing specific projects and monitoring programmes. The PERSGA newsletter *Al Sambouk* is one of our vehicles for achieving our aims. I invite you to read it, to use the information and to comment upon it. The newsletter belongs to the region and so I also invite you to send us articles about activities which are occurring in your part of the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden. Welcome to the first issue of *Al Sambouk*.

Professor Nizar I Tawfiq
Secretary General, PERSGA

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Editorial

Welcome to the first issue of *Al Sambouk*, the PERSGA newsletter. *Al Sambouk* will be produced by PERSGA, for the region. This is an important year for PERSGA and this newsletter will be one of the vehicles by which PERSGA will undertake its work in the region. Each issue will contain a number of feature articles, as well as regular columns. The regular columns will provide information about meetings, workshops, conferences, and regular progress reports on significant projects. If you would like to submit a feature article for publication in the newsletter please send it, in either Arabic or English, to myself or to

Dr. Dirar Nasr. We will be looking to report on research projects, education and training programmes, and issues related to management in the marine environment and conservation.

In this first issue you will be introduced to the current staff of PERSGA, and to the work programme we will be undertaking in the coming year. There is also an overview of the regional training workshops which PERSGA will be conducting throughout the year, and an account of the successful *Sea to Sea Conference* recently held in Jeddah.

PERSGA intends that this will be a useful way of communicating to our colleagues and friends throughout the region. We welcome your comments and feedback on the success of this endeavour.

Dr William Gladstone
Chief Technical Adviser and Coordinator,
Red Sea Regional Framework Plan, PERSGA

Cairo Declaration

“The Regional Organization for the Conservation of the Environment of the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden” (PERSGA) was officially established at a meeting in Cairo in September 1995. The following declaration (known as the Cairo Declaration) was signed:

The Council of the Regional Organization for the Conservation of the Environment of the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden (PERSGA), which is formed of the ministers concerned with environmental affairs in the contracting parties of the Regional Convention for the Conservation of the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden Environment ;

NOTING that Article XVI of the above mentioned Convention refers to the formation of a regional organization for the conservation of the environment of the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden headquartered in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia;

RECOGNIZING that all the states of the region that have signed the Convention have ratified the Convention, the Protocol and the Action Plan;

CONFIRMING that the establishment of the Organization will help in fulfilling the objectives of the Charter of the Arab League and the Charter and Constitution of the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (ALECSO) as mentioned in the Convention;

BEARING in mind that the Organization, when established, will serve part of the Arabian waters known for its strategic position and its unique natural resources that have economic and scientific importance;

REFERRING to the Decision of the Arab Council of Ministers Responsible for Environmental Affairs No. 42-DA5 dated 24 November 1993 regarding welcoming the formation of the Organization as an organization with considerable status and confirming that the Organization, when it is formed, will be under the umbrella of the Arab League;

DEEPLY appreciative of the efforts made by ALECSO in forming and nurturing PERSGA and providing technical and financial support for basic needs of specialized institutions in some PERSGA member states; and further appreciative of the effective cooperation with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP);

DECLARES the formation of the Regional Organization for the Conservation of the Environment of the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden (PERSGA) to take its full responsibilities in implementing the Convention, the Protocol and the Action Plan, thereby discharging its duties as assigned in the Convention.

PERSGA Staff

As PERSGA establishes itself as an independent organization with a programme of different projects, our staff will grow. At present the staff consists of:

- Dr Nizar Tawfiq, Secretary General,
- Dr William Gladstone, Chief Technical Adviser and Coordinator, Red Sea Regional Framework Plan,
- Dr Dirar Nasr, Assistant Coordinator, Red Sea Regional Framework Plan,
- Mr Ahmed Daoud, Financial Officer,
- Mr Jamal Fageer Abdul Rahman, Driver

Programmes and Projects of PERSGA for 1996

Projects concerned with combating marine pollution in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden region were chosen in accordance with guidelines laid down in two documents: the Action Plan attached to the Regional Convention; and the Regional Action Plan for

Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-Based Activities in cooperation with UNEP.

Programmes concerned with combating marine pollution include:

- (1) a feasibility study for the establishment reception facilities and a Marine Emergency Mutual Aid Centre (MEMAC), in cooperation with the International Maritime Organization (IMO);
- (2) training of personnel from member countries in responding to oil spills; and
- (3) development of regional and national plans for combating oil spills.

UNEP is cooperating with PERSGA on a project called Protection of the Environment of the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden: Pollution Control and Development of Programmes for Coastal Zone Management and National Capacity Building.

Research projects concerned with protection of the marine environment from land-based activities depend mostly on technical and financial support from relevant international organizations.

A long-term programme will concentrate on the development of information services to support sustainable development in the region. These services include a centralized regional, environmental database system, and a regional library. PERSGA will start implementing this long-term programmes according to available resources.

PERSGA Regional Training Workshops

This coming year will be busy at PERSGA. We will be organizing and conducting three training workshops for participants from throughout the PERSGA region. The workshops will cover the following topics:

environmental impact assessment, marine protected areas, and surveys and monitoring.

PERSGA will conduct the workshops using funds provided by the two Global Environment Facility (GEF) projects, in Egypt and Yemen. The workshop topics are particularly relevant to the two GEF projects; however, a principal aim of the two GEF projects is that the benefits from these two projects will spread from the host countries throughout the entire region. So participants will come from throughout the region. Each workshop will be conducted in Arabic and led by an international expert. PERSGA will provide

participants with airfares, accommodation, and meals to attend the workshops.

The first workshop, on 'environmental impact assessment', was held in Jeddah from January 13-17, and the outcomes will be reported in the next issue of *Al Sambouk*.

The second workshop, on 'marine protected areas', will be held in Egypt during April 1996. This workshop will address the selection of sites suitable as marine protected areas, management plans, education and research, and the integration of marine protected areas into national and regional conservation processes.

The third workshop, on 'surveys and monitoring', will be held in Al Hodeyda (Yemen) in June 1996. This workshop will review the techniques used in the two GEF projects and introduce other PERSGA countries to these techniques (using field classes). An attempt will be made to develop standardized methods for surveys and monitoring which could be used throughout the region.

Sea to Sea Conference

From 9 to 12 of October of 1995, Jeddah was the site of the *Sea to Sea* Conference. This was an inter-regional conference centering on practical ways in which the ROPME (Arabian Gulf) and PERSGA (Red Sea and Gulf of Aden) Regional Organizations might assist their member countries in achieving sustainable development of the marine environment.

The conference was attended by nearly 150 technical experts, national and municipal government decision makers and members of the private and industrial sectors. Attendees came from the 12 member countries of the two organizations as well as from 13 other nations within the region and throughout the world. Over 250 persons attended the October 9 opening ceremony to hear HRH Abdul Rahman ibn Abdul Aziz, Vice Minister of Defense and Aviation, officially open the meeting.

"I believe there are opportunities for positive regional cooperation among the countries of the two organizations" said His Royal Highness, "that it is appropriate and important for the Gulf countries to provide the Red Sea countries with the benefits from their experience in dealing with marine environmental problems. On the other hand, international technical and financial organizations must play a significant role. Companies active in the field of oil industries also have

Environmental Training and Education Network in West Asia

great responsibilities in this respect.” This call to action was well heeded by both Regional Organizations as well as representatives from the World Bank, UNEP, UNDP and the Islamic Development Bank, who were all represented at the meeting.

When the Regional Organizations of the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden (PERSGA) and the ROPME Sea Area (ROPME) agreed to convene a conference on the sustainable use of the marine environment, a decision was made that the conference should concentrate on opportunities for cooperation between the two Regions rather than on purely technical themes.

The main topics for the conference - Environmental Impacts from Oil Production, (Transport, Oil Basic Industries with an additional sub-theme on Oil Spill Preparedness and Response); Integrated Coastal Zone Management and Legal, Institutional and Financial aspects of Sustainable Environmental Management, all represent major issues facing the two Regions' nations.

In order that the attendees might share an additional element of common ground, the conference organizers commissioned a series of background papers which were translated into the official languages of the two Regional Organizations (English and Arabic) and presented by the authors during the meeting.

The success of the Conference was reflected in the “Jeddah Recommendations” a series of suggested actions for the two Regional Organizations, national and municipal governments, private sector and scientific organizations. PERSGA has already begun to implement a number of these recommendations through a series of workshops, initial efforts to establish a Regional Marine Emergency Mutual Aid Centre and investigation of new technologies available for improved navigation (and reduced pollution) in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden.

The PERSGA Secretariat would be pleased to provide interested parties with copies of the “Jeddah Recommendations” in the hope that it might stimulate your thoughts and creativity and encourage contribution to the continuing “Sea to Sea Process” of cooperation. In addition, a Conference Proceedings is being assembled and should be available in the near future.

David A Olsen PhD, ARSAD Adviser, Office of the President, Meteorology and Environmental Protection Administration (MEPA), Jeddah

The Regional Meeting for the establishment of an ‘Environmental Training and Education Network in West Asia’ was held at Al-Ain from 18-20th November 1995 under the patronage of H.E. Sheikh Nahyan Bin Mubarak Al-Nahyan, the Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research and Chancellor of the United Arab Emirates University. The meeting was sponsored by the UNEP Regional Office for West Asia in cooperation with the Environmental Education Training Unit (EETU) at UNEP headquarters and was hosted by the Federal Environmental Agency in the United Arab Emirates University. The meeting was attended by representatives from 12 universities and research institutions, representing seven countries from the region. They were: Bahrain, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, U.A.E., and Yemen. Representatives from the Arab Gulf Cooperation Council, the Federal Environmental Agency of the U.A.E., the Coordinator of UNEP Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean’s Environmental Training Network and UNEP/ROWA were also present.

The technical programme included two plenary lectures on the establishment of a regional training network and the need for environmental training strategies in West Asia. Other papers discussed the historical background on the formation of an Environmental Training Network in West Asia and the establishment and operation of the Environmental Training Network in Latin America and the Caribbean. Participants also presented papers on Environmental Training and other activities in their institutions. The papers identified several priority issues and selected the institutes that will carry such training activities.

Finally, the participants adopted several recommendations and declared the establishment of a regional Environmental Training and Education Network that will act as a medium of institutionalization and regional cooperation needed for the accomplishment of environmental training activities.

The participants also selected UNEP Regional Office for West Asia to coordinate and facilitate the environmental training activities in the region.

*Fouad Kanbour
Officer-in-Charge & Senior Environmental Affairs
Officer, UNEP/ROWA, Bahrain*

ICZM Workshop

A national and regional seminar on Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) took place in Aqaba from October 20-25 1995. The seminar content reflected suggestions of participants in the Program Design Seminar (of the Program of Environmentally Sustainable Development in the Middle East) held in Washington DC, April 21-24, 1995. In this seminar ICZM was identified as the highest priority issue to be addressed in Phase II of the Program.

The main objectives of the seminar were: to strengthen the capacity of participants to address ICZM issues using a multi-disciplinary approach; to promote institutional and organizational management in ICZM through a multi-sectoral planning approach; and to create a forum for dialogue among stakeholders aimed at resolving natural resource conflicts in the coastal zone. The seminar offered a unique opportunity for key professionals, who work in coastal zone management, to come together to discuss coastal management from an integrated coastal zone management perspective and examples of "best practice".

The seminar was attended by 18 participants from Egypt, Yemen, Jordan, Sudan, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Eritrea and ten observers from the Aqaba Regional Authority and the Port Authority.

Formal presentations and lectures were limited with priority given to participants' discussions and presentations of case studies. Extensive use was made of specific examples of "best practice". Training materials in both English and Arabic were carefully selected in relation to the main topics of the seminar.

National and regional partner institutions, including NGOs, played a key role in the design and implementation of the seminar. In this way the seminar fostered a high degree of "ownership". Of particular note were the Ministry of Water and Irrigation, the Jordan Environment Society (an NGO), the Aqaba Regional Authority, and the Port Authority in Jordan.

The seminar provided a forum for coastal zone managers and specialists from different countries to interact more effectively in the search for strategies and policy options to address coastal zone problems. Participants indicated repeatedly that they now have viable options to address and disseminate information on CZM issues. The Jordan Environment Society and the Sudanese Conservation Society were very active throughout the seminar.

Participants were of the highest calibre. The regional seminar program was modified as it progressed to accommodate participants' interests and expectations. Small group discussions contributed to the identification and discussion of specific present problems, including constraints to addressing them. Participants benefited most from the discussions of case studies, examples of "best practice" and interaction during the formal and informal sessions.

A field trip in Aqaba demonstrated that a regional development approach to the Red Sea region is preferred given the proximity and linkages of the countries involved. A visit to the Historical Settlement of Aqaba, a site that had been proposed for development, was also valuable.

Provided by the World Bank

Workshops and Conferences

First International Scientific Symposium on Socotra Island: Present and Future

The University of Aden is hosting the first international symposium about Socotra Island, between 24 and 28 March 1996.

The topics to be covered in the symposium will be:

1. Geography, geology and history
2. Conservation of natural resources, natural history (fauna, flora etc.) and environmental protection
3. Animal and fish wealth and plant production
4. Socio-economic considerations

Further details are available from the Chairman of the Organizing Committee

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