

Editorial

Assalamo alaykum to all our readers and friends. This is the third issue of the PERSGA Newsletter *Al Sambouk* and it comes at a time of great activity here in the PERSGA Secretariat. On the 26 October the second meeting of the PERSGA Ministerial Council will take place here in Jeddah. At this meeting the Ministers responsible for environmental matters in the PERSGA member countries will review the achievements of the Organization over the past 12 months, and discuss the activities planned for the coming year.

This issue also comes at an important time for the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden. One of the most important regional programmes currently underway is the Strategic Action Programme (SAP) for the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden, which PERSGA is coordinating (the SAP process and schedule were reported in the last issue of *Al Sambouk*). There has been great progress in the SAP in the past six months and this issue of *Al Sambouk* contains reports on some of these activities. Importantly, the SAP is revealing the extent of environmental and conservation issues throughout the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden. While much of the region is in a good condition, not all the reports are favourable.

Surveys which have been undertaken in each country by local experts are revealing that habitats in some areas are being destroyed and degraded by coastal developments and pollution. Important marine resources are being harvested at rates which are probably not sustainable (though much of the necessary scientific information is lacking); the fishing for sharks (for their fins) is particularly worrying. The important point is that we are aware of these activities now and that this is the best time to act to prevent further degradation of our shared environment. We hope that the PERSGA newsletter *Al Sambouk* can play an important role in the region by informing our colleagues about what is happening, and how we can all contribute to the conservation of the marine and coastal environments.

In this issue of *Al Sambouk* I am pleased to include an article which describes the Jordan Environment Society, a non-governmental organization. The Jordan Environment society is very active in a range of environmental issues. It has a large membership which is growing all the time. Many people feel strongly about the environment and how it affects their lives and their children's future, and non-governmental organizations are a very important way these people can work for the

environment and contribute to their community. In future issues of *Al Sambouk* I would like to include more articles about other non-governmental organizations throughout the region, and their activities. I invite you to submit these articles and I will be very pleased to publish them

Dr. William Gladstone

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Second Meeting of the PERSGA Council

The Ministerial Council of PERSGA will hold its second meeting at the headquarters of PERSGA in Jeddah on 26 October 1996, in accordance with the resolutions of the first Council Meeting held at the Arab League headquarters in Cairo on 26 September 1995. The Meeting will be chaired by HRH Prince Fahd Bin Abdullah Al Saud, Assistant Minister of Defence and Aviation, and General Inspector of Civil Aviation Affairs in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The meeting will discuss the report of the Secretary General on PERSGA activities in 1996, its budget for 1997, and its activities in relation to the Strategic Action Programme for the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden (which is funded by the Global Environment Facility). The Council Meeting will be preceded by a Preparatory Meeting on 23 and 24 October 1996, involving experts from the countries of the region.

The PERSGA Council consists of Ministers concerned with environmental matters in the contracting parties of the Regional Convention for the Conservation of the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden Environment (the Jeddah Convention) of 1982.

Regional Training Workshop at Sharm el Sheikh

As part of the activities planned under the Red Sea Regional Framework Plan Project, which is funded by the Global Environment Facility and implemented by PERSGA, a regional training workshop on marine protected areas was held in Sharm el Sheikh, Egypt, from 1-5 June 1996. The workshop was organized with the assistance of the Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency, Ra's Mohammed National Park, the GEF Egypt project, and the Meteorological and Environmental Protection Administration (MEPA) of Saudi Arabia.

The workshop was held in the superb facilities of Ra's Mohammed National Park. There were a total of 17 participants representing Djibouti (2), Egypt (4), Jordan (2), Palestine (2), Saudi Arabia (2), and Yemen (5).

Specialized lectures, mostly in Arabic, were presented by ten expert consultants who came from Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Switzerland, and PERSGA. Presentations were given to the participants in the fields of - the effects of human activities on coral reefs, the role of marine protected areas in coastal zone management, the selection of marine protected areas, research and monitoring needs, the development of management plans, marine rangers, legal issues, and public awareness.

The workshop also included small group discussions where participants reviewed the present use and state of marine protected areas in the region, future needs for marine protected areas, and the constraints to fulfilling these needs. The participants were presented with examples of the practical management of marine protected areas through specific case studies from different countries of the region, and field visits to the Ra's Mohammed and Nabq National Parks, and a visit to a tourist development within the boundaries of the Ra's Mohammed National Park.

The participants agreed that the workshop was a success because of its organization, the mixture of practical and theoretical materiel, the sharing of experiences among participants from different countries, and the increased knowledge of participants concerning the state of marine protected areas throughout the region.

Jordan Environment Society

The Jordan Environment Society (JES) was established in 1988 as an independent, non-profit making, non-governmental organization (NGO), engaged in activities in different areas of protection of the environment and promoting sustainable development. JES has ten full time staff and a team of volunteers addressing different environmental issues who create, refine, and disseminate environmental knowledge to help policy-makers and the general public to protect the environment and manage and use natural and environmental resources wisely. JES is also working towards encouraging the establishment of environmental laws in Jordan, which will give the public a role in setting environmental policies.

The objectives of JES are: (1) to work towards the establishment and application of policies, standards and actions for the protection and improvement of the Jordanian environment; (2) to keep major environmental elements healthy and balanced by adopting a national framework for the conservation of the environment; (3) to decrease environmental pollution; (4) to identify local environmental problems and participate in finding solutions to such problems in accordance with national priorities; (5) to improve the level of environmental awareness among all strata of the Jordanian community; (6) to inspire self commitment and generate national feelings towards environmental matters; (7) to conserve the use of natural resources; hence creating new positive behavioural patterns towards the environment.

JES has more than 3700 individuals and 70 organizations as active members; they represent concerned public scientists, environmentalists, and policy-makers. The main branch is in Amman and there are 20 more branches in the country. JES is the largest environmental pressure group in Jordan. Many members of JES have participated in national, Arab and international conferences, seminars, workshops, training courses, and other activities relating to environmental protection and pollution control. Furthermore, JES organizes environmental field activities, contests and community meetings to help solve or highlight local and global environmental issues of major concern.

JES has opened channels of cooperation with several national and international environmental groups. JES is a member of the World Conservation Union (IUCN), the International Association on Water Quality

(IAWQ), the Environment Liaison Center (ELS), the Environmental Law Institute (ELI) and others, in order to exchange environmental information and expertise with other specialized societies and organizations locally and internationally.

JES is run by an elected Board of Directors and a Board of Trustees. It also has a Scientific Committee, Information and Education Committee, Public Relations Committee, Arts and Environment Committee, a Legal Committee, and a Recycling Committee.

JES publishes environmental material in the form of a quarterly newsletter, results of research and studies, proceedings of seminars, posters, leaflets, press releases and storybooks for children. Additionally, a specialized environmental library and data bank have been established, containing major environmental journals and publications.

The Jordan Environment Society aims to increase its membership base by attracting more people and institutions to join the Society. By having more members and carrying out fund-raising and money generating activities, JES will be able to secure funds to support the sustainability of the projects in the future. The capability of JES to carry out public awareness activities will increase, as new members will bring more expertise and resources.

For further information contact: Jordan Environment Society, PO Box 922821, Amman 11192, Jordan. Tel:++ 962 6 699 844; Fax:++ 962 6 695 857.

Osprey Research in the Red Sea

The Red Sea Osprey, *Pandion haliaetus*, is a bird of prey (raptor) which specifically hunts coral reef fish species. Over-wintering migratory Ospreys are occasionally observed at suitable resting sites, such as freshwater dams, deltas of wadis or inland sewage outlets. The Osprey is well studied in North America and Europe though little is known about the Middle East population. As a higher predator of the marine food chain, the Osprey is considered a sensitive biological indicator. In the late 1960's declines in Osprey egg quality and productivity from organochlorine contamination within the marine food chain were used as evidence to ban the use of insecticides containing poly-chlorinated biphenyl (PCBs) and their derivatives. More recently comparative studies of Osprey productivity in

neighbouring subpopulations subject to different fisheries management practices, have shown that declines in Osprey productivity are related to declines in their food supply, as a consequence of unsustainable fisheries management, and other maritime activities.

In 1993 a collaborative venture between the National Commission for Wildlife Conservation and Development (NCWCD) of Saudi Arabia, and the Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU) was set up to study the biology of the Red Sea Osprey. Preliminary studies of seabird populations within the Farasan Archipelago, involving NCWCD/MMU researchers, identified the Farasan Archipelago as an important Osprey breeding area with around 100 pairs, thought to be the highest density in the Red Sea. Following a two-month pilot study in March 1994, a research programme was devised to survey all islands within the proposed Farasan Marine Protected Area. Areas with Osprey hotspots were monitored on a weekly basis to determine basic reproductive parameters such as laying and hatching dates, hatching success, growth and behaviour of chicks within the nest and fledging success. Observations were also made to assess hunting success and fish delivery rates to chicks, recording fish size and species. Furthermore, a reference collection of reef fish skeletons, jaws and other body parts was established to identify and estimate the size of prey remains systematically gathered from Osprey nests during the course of this study. Data from this study will be used to formulate measures for managing and monitoring productive Osprey breeding areas, and for identifying specific islands to be included within the Farasan Islands Marine Protected Area.

To date 140 Osprey chicks have been ringed with NCWCD metal rings and plastic colour rings, to monitor dispersal and assess post-fledgling mortality. Please report any sighting of ringed Ospreys to the study coordinator: Dr Hany Tatwany, NCWCD, PO Box 61681, Riyadh 11575, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. It is important to include the following details: ring number (if found dead), colour of plastic rings, the location of the sighting, the date, and the cause of death if known. All persons assisting with this information will be contacted and informed of the bird's history. I would like to thank Prof. Abdulaziz Abuzinada and Prof. Terry Looker, the Farasan NCWCD Rangers, the Coast Guards and friends for supporting this research. This research was kindly funded by the NCWCD, MMU, BES, RGS, BA/BTO Conservation Awards, the Albert Reckitt Trust and the British Council.

Paul R. Fisher, Conservation Biology Research Group, Manchester Metropolitan University

Oil Spill Trajectory Model

A joint project between PERSGA and UNEP, entitled "Protection of the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden Environment: Initiation of Marine Pollution Control Policies and Development of Tools for Coastal Area Management and Capacity Building" is currently underway. As part of this project, it has been agreed between PERSGA and the Research Institute of King Fahd University of Petroleum and Minerals in Saudi Arabia, that the first phase of a trajectory model for oil spills in the Red Sea region will be developed.

The development of this trajectory model is regarded as the first important step in the preparation of regional contingency plans for oil spills. Nationally, the development of this model will also help oil spill working groups in each country to take the necessary decisions to minimize oil spill impact and to use the available resources to combat oil pollution with the minimum cost. By using such models the spread and fate of oil spills can be predicted. The model also includes calculations regarding the dispersal of oil on water, its evaporation, and its spread on the coast. The project is expected to be completed within two years.

Aqaba Workshop

As part of the development of the Strategic Action Programme (SAP) for the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden a workshop was held in Aqaba, Jordan, on 24 July 1996. The SAP is an assessment of regional issues related to the environment, conservation and resources. As well, the SAP will also be a programme of activities and projects designed to address the identified issues. The SAP is being built from expert reports from each of the participating countries. The Aqaba workshop was convened to review the report which had been prepared on Jordan.

Participants to the workshop included representatives of the General Corporation for the Protection of the Environment, the Aqaba Region Authority, the Ports Corporation, the Ministry of Planning, the Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature, the Jordan Environment Society, the Jordan Royal Ecological

Divers Society, the Aqaba Marine Science Station, the Environmental Law Institute, and PERSGA.

The workshop was officially opened by Dr Eng. Saleh Al-Share, Director General of the General Corporation for the Protection of the Environment. The keynote address, "Environmental Protection Capacity Building in the Aqaba Region" was given by His Excellency Dr. Fayez Khasawaneh, President of the Aqaba Region Authority.

The format of the workshop involved the presentation of background papers in the morning sessions, followed by a discussion and review of the report in the afternoon. At the end of the day it was agreed that the relevant agencies would consider the comments raised at the workshop, and undertake a final review of the draft report, submitting their final comments to Dr. Eng. Saleh Al-Share. The final review report was received by PERSGA in early September (PERSGA is coordinating the development of the SAP, including the final report).

The Aqaba workshop was a valuable experience in the joint development and review of a country report by the relevant partners. It succeeded for several reasons: a comprehensive draft report was available to the workshop participants well before the workshop; all relevant agencies were invited to attend and participate; discussion was actively encouraged; all logistical arrangements were coordinated and the production of the final report was coordinated by a single expert consultant.

In the coming months similar workshops are planned for the development and review of the remaining country reports, with funding from the Global Environment Facility.

Progress in The Strategic Action Programme for the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden (SAP)

In early September a meeting was convened by the Secretary General of PERSGA, Dr Nizar Tawfiq, in Jeddah involving the partner agencies in the Global Environment Facility and the PERSGA Secretariat. The aim of the meeting was to begin the preparation of the report of the SAP, and to prepare an executive summary of current progress in the SAP. This executive summary will be presented by Dr. Tawfiq to the annual meeting of the PERSGA Council on 26 October.

The group met in the PERSGA headquarters from 7-12 September, and 21-23 September. Present at the meeting were representatives of the United Nations Development Programme (Ms Catherine Cheung), the United Nations Environment Programme (Mr. Halifa Drammeh), the World Bank (Dr. Stephen Lintner), the Chief Technical Consultant to the SAP (Dr. Friedhelm Krupp), and the PERSGA Secretariat (Dr. William Gladstone and Dr. Dirar Nasr).

The group prepared the first draft of the SAP report, and this will be edited and updated as information continues to become available from the remaining country reports. The final report is expected to be completed in early 1997.

Navigation Risk Assessment

The Red Sea is a major shipping highway: each year there are around 25,000 transits by ships carrying a variety of cargoes. Most importantly for the environment, over 100 million tons of oil are transported through the Red Sea each year. This is a staggering number of ships to pass through a narrow, semi-enclosed sea, where the entry through the Bab el Mandab is a mere 29 kms wide. For most of its length the Red Sea is deep (2,000 m); however, it is fringed by coral reefs and islands which are internationally important reservoirs of biodiversity, a source of livelihood for large numbers of coastal dwellers, and a recreation ground for locals and international visitors. As a large number of these ships carry oil, an accidental collision, wreck, or shipboard accident has

the potential to cause serious environmental, economic and social damage.

There are a number of activities in the region which will lead to an increase in ship traffic and an increase in cargoes transported, including plans to increase the volume of oil transported by the Petroline to Yanbu, expansion of oil export facilities in Yemen and oil reception facilities in Eritrea and Sudan, and the establishment of Free-ports in the region. The increase in maritime traffic requires a continual review and improvement of safety measures to prevent accidents.

Recognising this, a Navigation Risk Assessment and Management Plan is currently being prepared for the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden. Funded by the Norwegian Trust Fund of the World Bank, the study will be undertaken by consultants from the Norwegian foundation Det Norske Veritas (DNV), and will begin in November. The goals of the Plan are to improve vessel traffic management, reduce the risk of accidents, and thereby protect the environment.

There is a wealth of expertise and practical experience in the navigation field throughout the region. The development of this study will benefit a great deal from this, and in an effort to utilise this expertise and coordinate regional input into the study, a Regional Expert Working Group will be formed. The Working Group will consist of experts in the field of navigation and maritime safety from countries throughout the region. The activities of the Working Group in relation to this study will be coordinated by PERSGA, with funding provided by the World Bank as part of its contribution to the Strategic Action Programme for the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden.

PERSGA has appointed Captain Saeed Yafai, Chairman of the Public Corporation for Maritime Affairs in Yemen, to be the Technical Coordinator of the Working Group. Dr Nizar Tawfiq, Secretary General of PERSGA, has invited the PERSGA focal points, and the Governments of Djibouti and Eritrea, to nominate their members for the Working Group.

The Working Group's contribution to the study will take place through meetings between the consultants and the members of the Group in each country, and also more formally through a series of workshops. The first workshop, which is being coordinated by Captain Yafai and PERSGA, will take place in Aden from 17-19 November 1996. This workshop will review the preliminary findings of the consultants and develop the workplan for the remainder of the study. A second

workshop is planned to take place in Ismailia in early 1997.

New Projects

As part of the development of the Strategic Action Programme for the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden (SAP), PERSGA is implementing a number of projects which will provide technical support to the SAP. Funded by UNEP, as part of its contribution to the SAP, the following projects have recently commenced, or are planned to begin in the near future:

(1) An update of the bibliography of the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden. The original bibliography was jointly undertaken by PERSGA and UNESCO and covered all references published up until 1984. The update will address all materials from 1985 to the present, and will cover published scientific literature, monographs, and published reports. Due for completion by the end of January 1997.

(2) A review of regional environmental programmes. This project will identify issues throughout the region related to the marine and coastal environments, and groundwater. It will assess the programmes which have been put into place to address these issues, and identify issues which are not being adequately addressed. Due for completion by the end of January 1997.

(3) Update of the State of the Marine Environment report. The SAP will produce the most up-to-date information on the marine and coastal environments of the region. Following the completion of the SAP this information will be assembled into a report which will update the existing reports on the state of the regional marine environment. Due for completion by the end of June 1997.

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