

MEDCOAST 15 Varna Declaration

The Twelfth International Conference on the Mediterranean Coastal Environment, MEDCOAST 15 was organised in Golden Sands, Varna, Bulgaria during 06 – 10 October 2015. Manuscripts of ninety six papers, covering a wide range of subjects related to coastal and marine management were published in two-volume conference proceedings totalling 1024 pages. The papers were presented in keynote, oral and poster sessions.

We, one hundred and nine participants of MEDCOAST 2015 conference, representing twenty-one countries, in appreciation of the charms of the Golden Sands, Varna and of the Black Sea coast of Bulgaria and warm Bulgarian hospitality, unanimously agree to highlight the following observations and recommendations for attention of national, regional and international institutions dealing with coastal and marine issues, and of concerned individuals:

- Being aware of and appreciating the significant contributions of scientific and professional activities organised with the MEDCOAST acronym since the first conference in 1993 towards enhancement of networking ; scientific research and development; communication of data, information and knowledge; and capacity building , which are all essential for improvement of coastal and marine management practices, we warmly congratulate the 25th anniversary of the birth of MEDCOAST initiative. We also welcome and support creation of the “*Mediterranean, Black and Caspian Seas Coastal and Marine Society (MBCCOAST)*” to pursue the MEDCOAST activities into the future.
- For rational development and protection of coastal and marine areas, the importance of high level integrated coastal management is definitely essential. However, it is observed that development of ICM has started slowing down in the Mediterranean as the interest has been shifting to specific elements of ICM. The progress with the implementation of the ICM Protocol for the Mediterranean is not sufficiently monitored and documented. The regional levels of interest and activities for development of ICM in Black and Caspian seas need to be elevated by utilizing the regional capabilities and support of the available funding mechanisms.

- MSP, which calls for spatial planning of marine uses for rational coastal and marine management is a developing activity all around the world. The processes of MSP development in the Mediterranean, Black and Caspian seas are currently behind some other marine areas. The situation in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea is more complicated since the EU member states in both basins are obliged to comply with a specific Directive on MSP. MEDCOAST, being a wide network of scientific and professional people in the countries around both basins, can bring together resource people for MSP from both EU member and non-member states to capacity building activities and workshops, which would enhance the processes of regional collaboration and marine spatial planning (MSP) for better coastal and marine management.
- It is well understood and accepted worldwide that climate change impacts on coastal and marine environment and ecosystems, and the consequences on the relevant socio-economic entities, could be extremely important. Mediterranean, Black and Caspian seas are all hot spots for climate change impacts. We call for development of regional collaboration schemes and programs aiming clear understanding of numerous impacts and design of rational adaptation and mitigation actions that could be applied at regional scales.
- Despite intense MEDCOAST efforts extending over 25 years for bridging the information flow and collaboration among the scientific/professional communities on one side, policy makers and program developers on the other, the success in this direction has unfortunately been marginal. This is clearly indicated by low level participation in all twelve biennial MEDCOAST conferences organised since 1993, of representatives from the Mediterranean Action Plan and the Black Sea Commission institutions together with the relevant DGs of the European Union. Building of science-policy-governance interface for dialog and collaboration is an urgent essential issue for developing rational, effective and feasible coastal and marine management policies and programs.