



Round Table Session III

Conservation of Mediterranean marine vegetation

One of the main objectives of the Barcelona convention (1995) was to establish a new protocol concerning Special Protected Areas and the BioDiversity (SPA/BD). This protocol, which was adopted by the contracting Parties and implemented in 1999, actually serves as a main tool for Mediterranean countries in implementing the 1992 Convention on Biological Diversity. The main aims of the SPA/BD protocol are as follows:

- conservation of threatened species;
- sustainable use of biological resources;
- protection of threatened marine and coastal ecosystems and habitats

The SPA/BD Protocol recommends effective protection measures to safeguard elements of biological diversity through **action plans** and technical inventory **tools**. One of these action plans specifically concerns marine vegetation and aims to:

- ensure the conservation of marine vegetation and plant assemblages by implementing management and legal protection measures;
- prevent loss and degradation of seagrass meadows and other “key” plant assemblages;
- ensure the conservation of natural formations, such as *Posidonia oceanica* barrier reefs and other biogeochemical structures (e.g. those formed by the Corallinales), as well as *Cystoseira* belts.

To achieve these objectives, particular attention must be paid to 14 selected plant species that include *Posidonia oceanica*, *Zostera marina* and *Zostera noltii*, all of which are worthy of the highest conservation efforts at national and international levels.

This round table session calls for discussion on the above points. It would seem important to evaluate the available knowledge concerning the distribution (e.g. spatial distribution data and maps) and the actual status of Mediterranean seagrasses species and to promote monitoring of meadows formed by these plants. In particular, one of the aims of this meeting is to compare monitoring systems and exchange results obtained by seagrass researchers from around the Mediterranean. The meeting will also contribute to expand collaboration in these fields of study.