

## International Coast Day 24 October 2008

The International Coast Day is a unique event in the Mediterranean aiming to promote the value of the coast and to call for an active engagement to preserve it. Being the key event of a more comprehensive awareness raising campaign implemented within the joint UNEP, World Bank, and European Commission initiative, the overall objective of the Coast Day is twofold: it serves as a catalyst to raise the awareness of policy makers and the general public on the value of the Mediterranean coast, and to call for a serious commitment to save it; and it promotes the implementation of the Mediterranean Protocol on Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM), signed in Madrid, in January 2008. The ICZM Protocol is a unique legal instrument that allows the countries to better manage their coastal zones, as well as to deal with the emerging coastal environmental challenges, such as the climate change.

Although relatively small, coastal areas are considered to be the most valuable parts of national territories in most of Mediterranean countries and world-wide. However, as a result of recent environmental and socioeconomic changes, the sustainable development of coastal zones is highly threatened, and necessitates rapid implementation of adequate policies and measures. Recent Blue Plan publication: *A Sustainable Future for the Mediterranean* warns that, unless strengthened policies in all countries to stop coastal degradation are put in place, nearly 50% of the coastline could be built-up by 2025 versus 40% in 2000. The same source reveals other striking facts: 60% of urban wastewater is still discharged into the sea without any treatment; tourist flows are nearly doubling (additional 137 million in coastal regions) and greater transport growth. In this context, the Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM), and the recently adopted protocol are the most efficient "tools" for ensuring sustainable coastal development, as provides an effective way to ensure that human action is undertaken with a concern over balancing economic, social and environmental goals and priorities in a long-term perspective.

The Coast Day event will be celebrated in several countries of the Mediterranean region, and will focus on sustainable beach management, with the aim to promote the value of beaches as of the most important coastal ecosystems, that plays a key role in economic coastal tourism. In Algeria, for instance, Coast Day activities will include media launch, broadcasting in local radio channels, beach cleaning activities, photo contest, and fishing excursions. In Cyprus the mass media will support the event which will focus on sustainable beach management and will include a range of capacity-building and promotional activities. In Sardinia, Italy, a film festival entitled "Visions of Coasts" will further raise awareness on the need for a serious commitment to save the Mediterranean coast. The Coast day will also be celebrated in Croatia, Egypt, Jordan, Montenegro, Morocco, Syria, Tunisia and Turkey and will include organization of seminars on the theme of sustainable beach management, photo exhibitions, concerts, sailing contests, excursions, TV transmissions and interviews with policy-makers. Finally, would like to take this opportunity to invite all institutions and organizations working for the sustainability of our coasts to join this initiative. Together, we can make the difference!