

FINAL DECLARATION
of the First Inter-Parliamentary Conference
on the Environmental Protection of the Black Sea
Istanbul, 10-12 July 1996

The participants in the Conference on the Environmental Protection of the Black Sea (Istanbul, 10-12 July 1996), including members of 25 national parliaments, were gathered on the joint initiative of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (PABSEC). At this first inter-parliamentary conference, the participants examined reports presented by experts on the following subjects:

a) the present environmental situation in the Black Sea Basin aggravated by an ecosystem which, in itself, is particularly fragile;

b) the sources of pollution to the Black Sea, namely: rivers, direct discharges of industrial and domestic effluents, solid waste disposal and dumping, pollution arising from normal operations of and accidents by ships, atmospherically transported contaminants;

c) measures to be taken (technological, political, legislative and economic); and

d) the raising of public awareness and the need to take measures ensure public participation.

The participants underlined that the protection of the Black Sea Basin which covers seventeen States, six of which are Black Sea coastal States and which together have a population of 160 million inhabitants, is a European responsibility of the first order.

The participants, following consideration of the alarming degradation of the Black Sea environment, its bio-diversity, landscape, fish stocks, tourist resources and the health of many of its coastal populations, resolved the following:

Concerning the general state of the Black Sea

1. To express the need for urgent action to protect and restore the marine and coastal environment of the Black Sea and to inform the appropriate assemblies of all constituent countries of this need for urgent action.

2. That efforts should be maintained and further enhanced to scientifically assess the nature of the problems affecting the Black Sea and the straits of the Bosphorus and Dardanelles, their causes - including increasing pollution from land-based sources, rivers and dense shipping, particularly of ships carrying dangerous cargoes and the possible risk of pollution, caused on the one hand by collisions or shipwrecks and, on the other by discharges of various kinds - as well as their effects and social and economic implications. Given the alarming degree of the pollution in the Black Sea, it is imperative that the Black Sea countries promote a program of comprehensive scientific study of these factors using agreed common methodologies. In this connection, due regard should also be given to the Draft Black Sea Action Plan. The participants recognize the important contribution of the scientific institutions of the Black Sea countries which remain active despite the financial difficulties

experienced by them. They also recognize the efforts of international organizations in providing necessary outside support to the scientific institutions in the Black Sea countries but feel that this work should be sustained in the future in order to continuously monitor the state of environment of the Black Sea Basin.

3. That if appropriate measures -including the obligation to make environmental impact assessments - are not taken in the regional planning, industrial policy and environmental policy, the region's economic development may well increase pollution of industrial origin and have, as a consequence unsatisfactory development of the coastal zone.

Concerning the urgent need for international cooperation and action

4. To bring to the attention of all relevant instances the international nature of the Black Sea's environmental problems and the need for actions to be taken as part of a globally and mutually supportive approach with other regions of the world. In particular, it was recognized that a large fraction of the pollution entering the Black Sea, notably that of nitrogen and phosphorus is brought from major international rivers, notably the Danube and the Dnieper, and that these rivers drain substantial areas of thirteen countries, spanning about one-third of the total land area of Europe.

5. That, in view of the large number of countries contributing to the environmental problems of the Black Sea Basin, a basin-wide forum should be established. This should enable an active and action-oriented dialogue to take place between all countries upon which the future environmental and economic sustainability of the Black Sea depend.

6. That cooperation with the Mediterranean countries should be furthered in order to exchange information and experience concerning the protection of the marine and coastal environment.

7. In view of the global importance of the Black Sea's bio-diversity and landscapes to encourage the widest possible international support to the measures deemed necessary to restore and protect it.

8. To encourage the governments of the countries in the Black Sea Basin to support on-going programmes for international cooperation in the Black Sea, notably the Parliamentary Assembly of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (PABSEC), the Secretariat of the Commission for the Bucharest Convention for the Protection of the Black Sea against Pollution (The Istanbul Commission), and BSEC. In the case of the Istanbul Commission the relevant participants are encouraged to request their governments to honour the commitments made for the formation of the Secretariat during the ratification of the Convention itself.

9. To support NGO participation in national and international actions.

Concerning the needs for improvement and harmonized legislation

10. Whilst accepting the political, cultural and social circumstances requires legislation to be adapted to the needs of each country to recognize the need for common environmental quality objectives for the Black Sea.

11. To propose the necessary amendments to national laws to achieve the agreed quality objectives.

12. To promote the adoption and accelerate the enforcement of the relevant international agreements such as:

- Convention on the Protection of the Black Sea Against Pollution (Bucharest, 1992)
- Ministerial Declaration on the Protection of the Black Sea (Odessa, 1993)
- International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL 1973/78)
- Council of Europe Convention on Civil Liability for Damage resulting from Activities Dangerous to the Environment (Lugano, 1993)
- Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (Berne, 1979)

13. With a view to achieving sustain-able development, to establish the legal framework for the implementation of the precautionary principle, the polluter-pays principle, introduction of user fees for environmental goods and services, promoting the transparency of, and access to, information, and to enhance public participation.

Regarding the specific actions proposed in the Draft Black Sea Strategic Action Plan

14. Having received the draft text of the Black Sea Strategic Action Plan (prepared by government and independent experts of the six Black Sea coastal countries with the support of the GEF Black Sea Environmental Programme), to promote an active intersectoral dialogue in the region on the aims and contents of the Draft Action Plan in order that the Final draft reflects the widest possible views of the Black Sea countries. This process will culminate in a Ministerial Conference scheduled for 30-31 October 1996.

15. That active assistance should be given to the development of National Black Sea Strategic Action Plans in order to enable each Black Sea country to make appropriate and sustain-able use of its coastal and marine resources and to actively contribute to the common objective of restoring and protecting the Black Sea. These Action Plans should be adopted by July 1997.

16. To work together to complete and enhance the protocols to the Bucharest Convention, particularly on Bio-diversity and Landscape, Dumping and the Trans-boundary Movement of Hazardous Waste.

17. To study the proposal for establishing a Black Sea Environmental Fund to be partly financed through the region - wide application of agreed economic instruments.

Regarding the role of PABSEC and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and their future cooperation

18. That there is a need form on the one hand, legislative initiatives taken by national

parliaments and, on the other, for development of inter-parliamentary dialogue which aims at encouraging, supporting and developing inter-governmental cooperation.

19. That the joint initiative of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (PABSEC) in organizing the Conference, was a highly welcome contribution to solving the environmental problems of the Black Sea Basin.

20. To fully acknowledge the important role played by the international organizations and institutions (World Bank, UNEP, EBERD, European Union...) engaged in safeguarding the Black Sea and to encourage them to continue their efforts to promote the sustainable development of the region.

21. To welcome the support of organizations representing other public and private sectors.

22. To encourage future joint activities between the relevant international organizations and institutions, including regular dialogues, in order to monitor the implementations of the actions included in this Declaration and the Implementation of conventions and policy declarations included in this Declaration and the implementation of conventions and policy declarations including the Black Sea Strategic Action Plan.

23. To proclaim 1998 as the "Year for the conservation of the Mediterranean and Black Sea Systems" in order to create awareness at all levels of the problems of these two seas, to mobilize the ecological conscience of the peoples of European countries and of countries on the southern shore of the Mediterranean.

24. To request the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (PABSEC) to examine this Declaration in order to follow it up in accordance with their respective procedure and practice.

Adopted in Istanbul on 12 July 1996