

Editorial

The «Symposium International sur la Pollution des Eaux Marines» (SIPEM 91) was organized by the «Ecole Hassania des Travaux Publics», Casablanca, Morocco, from 20-22 november 1991. This Symposium was supported by the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission as a part of the regional activities of the IOC in the Mediterranean and West African coastal regions as well as a part of actions within the Global Investigation of Pollution in the Marine Environment (GIPME) Programme.

This Programme was initiated as a result of the Stockholm Conference and the Human Environment 1972 in response to the need for a scientifically based assessment of the pollution in the marine environment, its effect on the marine resources and various human uses of the marine environment, including the coastal zone. This programme is now jointly sponsored by the IOC and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), in order to ensure that there be a direct linkage and dialogue between the fact finding and method developing activities of GIPME and the formulation of control and management measures carried out within the UNEP framework.

It is also from this perspective most encouraging that the EDF co-sponsored the Symposium and is now publishing its proceedings. It is of utmost importance that the management and decision makers of large scale industrial establishments are involved and are well informed about the environmental consequences of development and the impacts of pollution on the marine environment, in particular the coastal zone.

The oceans play a decisive role in shaping life on this planet, and is a major part of our climate system. The global energy budget and the biogeochemical processes on which all life depends are critically influenced by the oceans. The near-shore marine areas contain the largest part of commercially exploitable marine living and non-living resources. At the same time more than half of the present global population lives at the sea-shores or in their immediate proximity; a variety of industries have developed on a large scale along the coast; the coastal zones are major recreational areas and the basis for expanding tourism; harbours are essential centers for national and international development.

The physical and ecological degradation of coastal areas and the increase of pollution of near-shore waters from land-based sources are accelerating. This is mainly caused by the rapid growth of coastal populations, the expansion of industry and recreation. The situation in many enclosed and semi-enclosed seas is of particular concern. The protection of the marine and coastal environment is reflected in the national legislation of most countries and in many international agreements. However, the provisions of those legislative acts are not applied efficiently to help generate development without undermining the natural re-

source base. Public awareness of the nature, extent and implications of the problems of the marine and coastal environments needs to be considerably increased in most countries.

The knowledge obtained over the past decades about the magnitude and the main causes of the problem is considerable and sufficient to indicate that the situation is serious and calls for urgent action. The technological solutions to these problems are also quite well known and are available, at a price. However, the present data bases and understanding of the processes shaping the natural condition of oceans and coastal areas are generally inadequate for management purposes and for reliable predictions about trends.

The Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO is the partner in the UN System responsible for facilitating and developing marine research related co-operation, capabilities and marine services. This is a fact-finding role. It needs to be combined with the users of the facts for management and development.

The Symposium was a timely event in this context, in a series of events leading up to the United Nations Conference on Environmental and Development, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, June 1992.

The publication by EDF of the proceedings demonstrates the realization of the importance and acknowledgment of responsibility of industry for the environment in relation to development. This support is hereby acknowledged with appreciation.

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