

Decision IG 17/2: Procedures and mechanisms on compliance under the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols

The 15th Meeting of the Contracting Parties,

Recalling Articles 18 and 27 of the Barcelona Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal region of the Mediterranean as amended in Barcelona in 1995, hereinafter referred to as the Barcelona Convention,

Recalling also its decisions adopted at its 13th Meeting held in Catania, Italy, and its 14th Meeting held in Portoroz, Slovenia, on the need to develop a mechanism to promote implementation and compliance with the Barcelona Convention,

Noting with appreciation the work undertaken by the Working Group on Implementation and Compliance on the development of the mechanism relating to compliance during their four meetings held between 2004 and 2007,

Decides to approve and adopt the Procedures and mechanisms on compliance with the obligations under the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols, hereinafter referred to as Procedures and Mechanisms, as contained in the Annex to this Decision;

Agrees to the setting up of the Compliance Committee in accordance with the Procedures and Mechanisms;

Decides also that the composition of the Compliance Committee be as follows:

- two members and two alternates to be nominated by the following southern and eastern Mediterranean countries: Algeria, Egypt, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Syria, Tunisia;
- two members and two alternates to be nominated by the seven EU Member States which are Party to the Barcelona Convention: Cyprus, Greece, France, Italy, Malta, Slovenia, Spain and the EC;
- two members and two alternates to be nominated by the other Parties: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Israel, Monaco, Turkey and Montenegro once it becomes Party to the Barcelona Convention;
- one additional member and one alternate to be nominated from each group on a rotation basis every four years. The additional member and the additional alternate are nominated for the first compliance Committee, by the group of southern and eastern Mediterranean countries;

Requests the Compliance Committee to consider during the next biennium 2008-2009, *inter alia*, general compliance issues such as compliance problems with reporting requirements under the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols;

Requests the Compliance Committee to submit to the 16th Meeting of the Contracting Parties draft rules of procedure for the Committee for adoption;

Requests the Compliance Committee to submit, in accordance with paragraph 31 of the Procedures and Mechanisms, a report on its activities to the 16th Meeting of the Contracting

Parties, including findings, conclusions and difficulties encountered and any recommendations for amending the Procedures and Mechanisms.

Procedures and mechanisms on compliance under the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols

I Objective

1. The objective of the compliance mechanism is to facilitate and promote compliance with the obligations under the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols, taking into account the specific situation of each Contracting Party, in particular those, which are developing countries.

II Compliance Committee

2. A compliance committee, hereinafter referred to as “the Committee”, is hereby established.

3. The Committee shall consist of seven members elected by the Meeting of the Contracting Parties from a list of candidates nominated by the Contracting Parties. For each member of the Committee, the Meeting of the Contracting Parties shall also elect an alternate member from the above-mentioned list.

4. A full term of office commences at the end of an Ordinary Meeting of the Contracting Parties and runs until the end of the second Ordinary Meeting of the Contracting Parties thereafter.

5. At the Meeting of the Contracting Parties at which the decision establishing the mechanism is adopted, the Meeting shall elect three members and their alternates for half a term and four members and their alternates for a full term. At each ordinary meeting thereafter, the Contracting Parties shall elect for a full term new members and alternates to replace those whose period of office is about to expire.

6. Members and alternates shall not serve for two consecutive terms.

7. The members of the Committee shall be nationals of Parties to the Barcelona Convention. The Committee shall not include more than one national of the same State.

8. Nominated candidates shall be persons of recognized competence in the matters dealt with by the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols and in relevant scientific, technical, socio-economic, legal or other fields. Each nomination shall be accompanied by the curriculum vitae of the candidate. Contracting Parties may consider the nominations of candidates from civil society and academia.

9. In electing members of the Committee and their alternates, the Meeting of the Contracting Parties shall take into consideration equitable geographical representation, shall ensure rotation in order to secure the participation of nominated individuals from all Contracting Parties as members of the Committee within a reasonable period of time. To the extent possible, they shall also take into consideration a balance of scientific, legal and technical expertise.

10. The Committee shall elect its officers – a Chairperson and two Vice-Chairpersons – on the basis of equitable geographic representation and rotation.

11. Members of the Committee and their alternates shall serve in their individual capacities and shall act objectively in the interests of the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols for the protection of the Mediterranean Sea and its coastal area.

III Meetings of the Committee

12. The Committee shall meet at least once a year. The Committee may decide to hold additional meetings, in particular in conjunction with those of other Convention bodies.

13. The Secretariat shall inform all Contracting Parties of the date and venue of the meetings of the Committee. Unless the Committee or the Party whose compliance is in question (hereinafter "the Party concerned") decides otherwise, the meetings of the Committee will be open to:

- (a) Parties to the Convention, which shall be treated as observers in accordance with the Rules of Procedure for meetings and conferences of the Contracting Parties for the purpose of their participation in the Committee; and
- (b) observers, in accordance with Article 20 of the Convention and the Rules of Procedure for the meetings and conferences of the Contracting Parties.

14. In the absence of a member from a meeting, the respective alternate shall serve as the member.

15. For each meeting, a quorum of seven members is required.

16. The Committee shall make every effort to reach agreement by consensus on its findings, measures and recommendations. If all efforts to reach consensus have been exhausted, the Committee shall as a last resort adopt its findings, measures and recommendations by at least a three-fourths majority of the members present and voting. "Members present and voting" means members present and casting an affirmative or a negative vote.

IV Role of the Compliance Committee

17. The role of the Committee shall be to consider:

- (a) specific situations of actual or potential non-compliance by individual Parties with the provisions of the Convention and its Protocols;
- (b) at the request of the Meeting of the Contracting Parties, general compliance issues, such as recurrent non-compliance problems, including in relation to reporting, taking into account the reports referred to in Article 26 of the Convention and any other report submitted by the Parties; and
- (c) any other issues as requested by the Meeting of the Contracting Parties.

V Procedure

1. Submissions by Parties

18. The Committee shall consider submissions by:

- (a) a Party in respect of its own actual or potential situation of non-compliance, despite its best endeavours; and

- (b) a Party in respect of another Party's situation of non-compliance, after it has undertaken consultations through the Secretariat with the Party concerned and the matter has not been resolved within three months at the latest, or a longer period as the circumstances of a particular case may require, but not later than six months.

19. Submissions as referred to in paragraph 18 concerning the alleged non-compliance of a Party shall be addressed in writing to the Committee through the Secretariat, supported by substantiating information setting out the matter of concern and the relevant provisions of the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols.

20. The Secretariat shall, within two weeks of receiving a submission in accordance with paragraph 18 (b), send a copy of that submission to the Party concerned.

21. The Committee may decide not to proceed with a submission that it considers to be

- anonymous,
- de minimis or
- manifestly ill founded.

22. The Secretariat shall inform both the Party concerned and the Party indicated in paragraph 18(b) about the Committee's findings under paragraph 21 within two weeks of the date of the findings.

2. Referrals by the Secretariat

23. If the Secretariat becomes aware from the periodic reports referred to in Article 26 of the Convention and any other reports submitted by the Parties that a Party is facing difficulties in complying with its obligations under the Convention and its Protocols, the Secretariat shall notify the Party concerned and discuss with it ways of overcoming the difficulties. If the difficulties cannot be overcome within a maximum period of three months, the Party concerned shall make a submission on the matter to the Compliance Committee in accordance with paragraph 18 (a). In the absence of such a submission within six months of the date of the above mentioned notification, the Secretariat shall refer the matter to the Committee

3. Proceedings

24. The Party concerned may present information on the issue in question and present responses and/or comments at every stage of the proceedings. At the invitation of the Party concerned, the Committee may undertake on-site appraisals.

25. The Committee may:

- (a) ask the Party concerned to provide further information, including an assessment of the reasons why the Party may be unable to fulfill its obligations; and
- (b) with the consent of the Party concerned, gather information in the territory of that Party, including on-site appraisals.

26. In its deliberations, the Committee shall take into account all the available information concerning the issue in question, which shall also be made equally available to the Party concerned.

27. The Party concerned shall be entitled to participate in the discussions of the Committee and present its observations. The Committee may, if it considers it necessary in a

particular case of non-compliance, ask the Party concerned to participate in the preparation of its findings, measures and recommendations.

28. The Committee shall be guided by the principle of "due process" in order to ensure fairness and transparency.

29. The Committee shall, through the Secretariat, notify the Party concerned of its draft findings, measures and recommendations in writing within two weeks from the date of their completion. The Party concerned may comment in writing on the draft findings, measures and recommendations of the Committee within a period of time determined by the Committee.

30. The Committee, any Party or others involved in its deliberations shall protect the confidentiality of information transmitted in confidence by the Party concerned.

VI Committee reports to the Meetings of the Contracting Parties

31. The Committee shall prepare a report on its activities.

- (a) The report shall be adopted in accordance with paragraph 16. Where it is not possible to reach agreement on findings, measures and recommendations by consensus, the report shall reflect the views of all Committee members.
- (b) As soon as it is adopted, the Committee shall submit the report through the Secretariat, including such recommendations on individual and general issues of non-compliance as it considers appropriate to the Parties for consideration at their next meeting.

VII Measures

32. The Committee may take one or more of the following measures with a view to promoting compliance and addressing cases of non-compliance, taking into account the capacity of the Party concerned, in particular if it is a developing country, and also factors such as the cause, type, degree and frequency of non-compliance:

- (a) provide advice and, as appropriate, facilitate assistance;
- (b) request or assist, as appropriate, the Party concerned to develop an action plan to achieve compliance within a time frame to be agreed upon between the Committee and the Party concerned;
- (c) invite the Party concerned to submit progress reports to the Committee within the time frame referred to in subparagraph (b) above on the efforts it is making to comply with its obligations under the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols; and
- (d) make recommendations to the Meeting of the Contracting Parties on cases of non-compliance, if it finds that such cases should be handled by the Meeting of the Contracting Parties.

33. The Meeting of the Contracting Parties may decide, upon consideration of the report and any recommendations of the Committee, taking into account the capacity of the Party concerned, in particular if it is a developing country, and also factors such as the cause, type and degree of non-compliance, appropriate measures to bring about full compliance with the Convention and its Protocols, such as:

- (a) facilitate implementation of the advice from the Committee and facilitate assistance, including, where appropriate, capacity-building, to an individual Party;

- (b) make recommendations to the Party concerned;
- (c) request the Party concerned to submit progress reports on achievement of compliance with the obligations under the Convention and its Protocols; and
- (d) publish cases of non-compliance.

34. In the event of a serious, ongoing or repeated situation of non-compliance by a Party, the Meeting of the Contracting Parties, where appropriate, may:

- (a) issue a caution;
- (b) issue a report of non-compliance regarding that Party; or
- (c) consider and undertake any additional action that may be required for achievement of the purposes of the Convention and the Protocols.

VIII Review of procedures and mechanisms

35. The Meeting of the Contracting Parties shall regularly review the implementation and effectiveness of the compliance mechanism and take appropriate action.

IX Relationship with Article 28 of the Convention (Settlement of Disputes)

36. These procedures and mechanisms shall operate without prejudice to the settlement of disputes provisions of Article 28 of the Convention.

X Sharing of information with other relevant multilateral environmental agreements

37. Where relevant, the Committee may solicit specific information, upon request by the Meeting of the Contracting Parties, or directly, from compliance committees dealing with comparable matters, and shall report on its consultations to the Meeting of the Contracting Parties.

XI Secretariat

38. The Coordinating Unit shall serve as the Secretariat of the Committee. It shall, inter alia, arrange and service the meetings of the Committee.