

The Mediterranean Climate Change Initiative

Vision Note

Rationale

The Mediterranean has been identified by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) as being especially vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. Many of these impacts (increased risk of drought, longer fire season, reduction in crop productivity) are common across the region yet few Mediterranean countries have produced robust adaptation plans. Despite the increasing support for the Copenhagen Accord, a legally binding international agreement on climate change is not likely to be secured in the short term. It is imperative that the Mediterranean presses ahead with action now, sharing best practice, experience and tools to adapt to changes already being observed and seek solutions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Furthermore, and particularly in the current economic climate, opportunities for common low carbon development strategies in the Mediterranean must be pursued. The region has an unrivalled potential to become a major hub of renewable energy generation for domestic and neighbouring markets. Realising this potential implies increasing the technical strengths to exploit available resources and the creation of innovative large-scale finance mechanisms. It also implies intense collaboration between countries, particularly in the field of grid interconnections, which the Union for the Mediterranean is fostering through the Mediterranean Solar Plan.

As well as large scale renewable energy projects, the development of both climate adaptation and other mitigation solutions could bring significant new opportunities for a 'green economic boost' to the Mediterranean. The potential for the creation of new local businesses and high skilled jobs arising from demand side measures in cities, buildings, transport, industry and tourism have yet to be fully explored.

Finally, the emergence of a strong, action orientated Mediterranean voice will support global efforts to tackle climate change through the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) process. It will also ensure that issues relating to the funding of adaptation measures and low carbon development opportunities for the region are explored at the international level and fed into the longer term post Kyoto-framework.

Proposal

The Greek government proposes to initiate a new Mediterranean Climate Change Initiative in close collaboration with Mediterranean countries strongly committed to climate and energy security. The ambition is for all countries bordering Mediterranean Sea to eventually be active and equal partners in the initiative.

This new initiative is envisaged as both an autonomous Mediterranean political initiative influencing international and regional agreements through common policy positions, as well as an initiative implementing projects under the auspice of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM). The initiative aims to strengthen collaboration on common challenges and opportunities across the Mediterranean and place a greater focus on the implementation of UfM projects in the Eastern Mediterranean region. It will also collaborate with other initiatives in the Mediterranean where value can be added through joint working.

Greece is strongly committed to combating climate change and will lead this initiative by example. Greece has recently set up the Ministry of Environment, Energy & Climate Change with an ambitious remit for promoting green development, biodiversity and energy efficiency, and has a national mandatory target to generate 20% of the energy it consumes from renewables by 2020.

An inaugural announcement regarding the initiative was made by the Prime Minister of Greece within the context of the 3rd Mediterranean Sustainable Energy Summit in Athens on 18th and 19th May 2010. The ambition is to formalise the initiative, secure support from Mediterranean countries and begin work on key priority policy and project areas. A formal launch is planned on 22 October 2010 in Athens ahead of the December UNFCCC COP16 meeting in Mexico. In conjunction with the launch, a Mediterranean Green Development Investors Forum will be held on 23 October for policy-makers, technology providers and investors from across the region to help drive international investment in green development projects in the region.

Vision

The Mediterranean Climate Change Initiative's vision is to contribute to the emergence of low carbon, resource efficient and climate resilient economies in the Mediterranean. The initiative's objectives will be to undertake strategic policy development work on climate change adaptation and low carbon development relevant to the entire Mediterranean region. The initiative will seek to contribute to addressing some of specific challenges faced by the Eastern Mediterranean region. It also aims to initiate and support the

implementation of selected projects in the short to medium term by helping to secure their funding. The initiative will finally develop common Mediterranean positions on climate change demonstrating leadership and strong commitment to action in the international arena.

Proposed Priority Work Areas for the Mediterranean Climate Change Initiative

Mediterranean Climate Sensitive Development Charter

Building on existing UNFCCC, EU and national strategies, this document would outline the roadmap for more sustainable economic growth in the region, providing a greater focus on the Eastern Mediterranean. It would ensure that the full extent of climate change impacts are fully understood and robust adaptation plans, both for the region and at the national level are developed. This work would help establish the Mediterranean as a world leader in providing effective adaptation solutions to the challenges climate change will bring to the region's agriculture sector, tourism and cities.

The Charter's focus on more sustainable economic growth would look to support the generation of renewable energy along with the development of the energy connections required to serve regional and European markets. It would also explore new opportunities to stimulate 'green growth' products and services and job creation that will arise out of responding to the challenges of climate change such as flooding, cooling and urban greening.

Sustainable Mediterranean Cities

Cities are both responsible for close to 80 per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions and extremely vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. Many major cities are at risk of flooding, heat waves and low air quality. In the eastern Mediterranean, recent research shows the increase in heat waves since the 1960s is higher than previously reported. Cities, and how they can be a key part of the solution to climate change, will be a major component of the Mediterranean Climate Sensitive Development Charter above.

Many Mediterranean cities are members of the C40 Cities Group and/or signatories to the Covenant of Mayors. In parallel to the development of the Mediterranean Climate Sensitive Development Charter, and building on best practice and support available through these established initiatives, the Mediterranean Climate Change Initiative could initiate a number of projects based on the common needs and opportunities in Mediterranean cities, including those in the east of the region.

Projects could increase the energy efficiency of buildings, outdoor lighting, transportation systems and logistics, and make better use of resources through advanced waste management. Projects could also increase the contribution of smaller urban decentralised energy systems, including microgeneration, delivering energy directly to consumers. A major way in which the Mediterranean Climate Change Initiative could add value to existing city initiatives is by creating economies of scale in the procurement of technologies and expertise, as well as providing a platform for sharing region-specific experience with implementation.

Mediterranean Climate Change Fund

Key to the delivery of the cities projects listed above as well as the other priorities the Mediterranean Climate Sensitive Development Charter is finance. Unlocking the potential of existing funding mechanisms and attracting new finance to climate change projects implementable in the short term is a key priority for the initiative. The Mediterranean Climate Change Fund would attract funding from existing sources – the UN, EU, central governments, development banks, and sovereign and infrastructure funds – as well as developing innovative funding models for the delivery of adaptation and low carbon projects. The fund would be managed by a multilateral financial institution. The criteria for directing funds to projects would be agreed by participating countries. It is proposed that work on attracting funding to implement projects in the region begins as soon as the Mediterranean Climate Change Initiative is formalised, with a fully-fledged Mediterranean Climate Change Fund taking shape over the next few years.

Mediterranean Climate Change Service Network

Data on climate change impacts in the region needs to be improved – the resolution of existing climate models are ill-suited to smaller geographical scales and data on greenhouse gas emissions is of insufficient robustness. The Climate Change Service Network could build on the work of existing scientific research institutes in the region to offer analysis on environmental, economic and social impacts at the regional and local level, assure fast response and facilitate efficient and timely cooperation.