

COUNCIL OF EUROPE

COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS

RESOLUTION (73) 29

ON THE PROTECTION OF COASTAL AREAS

*(Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 26 October 1973,
at the 225th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies)*

The Committee of Ministers,

Aware that a considerable part of Europe's coasts is in a critical condition owing to the extremely serious biological degradation and aesthetic disfigurement caused by the indiscriminate siting of buildings, industry and tourist facilities in coastal areas ;

Whereas the situation is liable to deteriorate still further in the future, having regard on the one hand to the scarcity of coastal areas and the vulnerability of the seashore, and on the other to the increasing concentration of human activities in those areas (urbanisation, the growth of tourist and leisure activities, the development of ports, maritime industries etc.) ;

Whereas protection of the coast can only be effective if multiple interests and problems are taken simultaneously into account (maintenance of the ecological and biological balance, preservation of the beauty of landscapes and conservation of natural resources, promotion of economic and tourist development, safeguarding of the hinterland) ;

Whereas the present dispersal of responsibilities in regard to coastal belts among numerous public authorities without any co-ordination between them is in some countries an obstacle to all coherent and concerted action to protect the coasts ;

Considering the need for joint international action at world as well as at regional level, having regard to the indivisibility of the marine environment ;

Considering also the particular need for concerted bilateral action where two countries have adjoining coastlines ;

Recommends that the governments of the member States of the Council of Europe base their policies in this field on all or some of the measures set out below :

1. deal with the problems of protecting the seashore in the context of the national coastal heritage as a whole and, in order to do so :
 - draw up an inventory and make a comprehensive study of all their country's coastline
 - and, if necessary, set up appropriate scientific bodies, of a consultative nature, to assist the public authorities in this work ;
2. endeavour to divide their coastline into homogeneous zones within which the land use is rationally planned with respect to the effects of adjacent zones and the various elements making up the environment ;
3. institute appropriate machinery to co-ordinate the various actions concerning the coastline whether they are initiated by the State or by local authorities ;
4. make and distribute a systematic review of all existing legal provisions of a nature to facilitate the protection of the coasts, whether they relate specifically to coastal belts or to the national territory as a whole ;
5. regulate development in coastal areas :
 - by issuing development bans applying to appropriate strips of land along the seafront ;
 - by subjecting the granting of development permits to particularly stringent conditions ;
6. proclaim the principle of free public access to the coast and give effect to this principle as required :
 - by creating adequate means of access to the various beaches ;
 - by establishing the necessary rights-of-way through private property situated on the seafront ;
 - by purchasing, if need be, the land required to give free access to the beach ;
7. review systematically the uses to which public land in coastal belts is put, in order to further the policy of protecting and improving those areas ;
8. adopt general measures to protect and conserve wild flora and fauna and coastal biotopes, such as :
 - regulations governing sea fishing, including underwater fishing ;
 - the control of power boating ;
 - the limitation of traffic to levels commensurate with the carrying capacity of the area ;
9. create nature reserves along the coast with a view to :
 - the conservation of natural, historic, scenic and archeological sites ;

- the protection of flora and fauna and ecosystems, particularly marshes and intertidal wetlands, such as proposed in Project MAR ;

10. adopt special measures to protect coasts from erosion and landslips :

- by stabilising sand-dunes ;
- by regulating excavation and the removal of sand ;
- by prohibiting the cutting and uprooting of vegetation ;

11. regulate, imposing the necessary precautions, the dumping on the coast or into the sea of any waste products or harmful substances liable to impair or pollute the coastal environment ;

12. institute regular inspections of the cleanliness of beaches and the quality of coastal waters ;

13. place considerable stocks of materials (especially cleansing materials which do not disturb the marine ecological balance) in advance at appropriate points along the coast, so that any accidental pollution of the beaches can be dealt with rapidly ;

14. undertake a vigorous campaign to inform and stir public opinion in regard to the protection of the seafront and encourage all public and private initiatives to safeguard the coastline, especially in the form of the creation and management of protected areas ;

15. sign and/or ratify the existing world and regional conventions on the protection of the marine environment ;

16. co-operate closely with one another where their coastal areas adjoin, with a view to :

- harmonising their various sets of regulations and co-ordinating action with regard to the protection of sites, flora and fauna and to pollution control;

- undertaking where appropriate joint action such as the management of international parks or the pooling of supervisory and pollution control services.