

Minutes of the 7th MedGOOS Annual Meeting

The MedGOOS Annual Meeting was held in Blanes (Spain) at the Centre d'Estudis Avançants de Blanes (CSIC) on Friday 12th January 2007 from 10.00 a.m. to 13.00 p.m.

Attendance: Silvana Vallerga (MedGOOS Chairperson, CNR-IAMC, Italy), Aldo Drago (MedGOOS Executive Secretary, IOI-MOC, Malta), Mira Morovic (IOR, Croatia), George Zodiatis, (DFMR-OS, Cyprus), Giuseppe Manzella (ENEA, Italy), Kostas Nittis (HCMR, Greece), Enrique Alvarez (Peurtos del Estado, Spain), Sylvie Poliquen (IFREMER, France), Zoran Kljajic (IMB, Montenegro), Dov Rosen (IOLR, Israel).

Observers: Hans Dahlin (EuroGOOS, Sweden), Nadia Pinardi, Giovanni Coppini and Julia Rogers (MOON)

Opening

The MedGOOS chair welcomed the members and observers, and invited them to briefly introduce themselves.

Agenda of the meeting:

1. Adoption of the agenda
2. Approval of the minutes of the last annual meeting
3. Report of the Chair
4. Recent developments and activities by members
5. Election of the new Chair
6. Brief on the EU Green Paper on Maritime Policy and implications for operational oceanography in the Mediterranean
7. Relationship to EuroGOOS and MOON
8. Other matters and next steps

1. The agenda of the 7th meeting was approved without modifications.

2. Approval of the minutes of the last annual meeting

The chairperson, Silvana Vallerga, read the minutes of the 6th annual meeting held at the Africa Hotel in Tunis on Wednesday 09th March 2005. The minutes were approved without revisions.

3. Report of the Chair

Dr. Silvana Vallerga outlined the main activities of MedGOOS in the last year. In her presentation she focused on the EC-funded Specific Support Action entitled GOOS Regional Alliances Network Development (GRAND) which was coordinated by the MedGOOS Secretariat. GRAND brought together all GOOS Regional Alliances (GRAs), with the support of the major international organisations related to GOOS (IOC, JCOMM, I-GOOS). The partnership covered all the oceans on Earth and provided a forum, led by Europe, to harmonise the diverse regional systems within GOOS, to enhance synergies and common practices while advancing the European contribution to the global system.

GOOS Regional Alliances have different capacities, resources and level of activity, but all seek to establish a global sustained system of observation to predict the state of the marine environment to fulfill their duties in international agreements and to gain practical benefits for a variety of end-users and for public good. GRAND targeted to uphold European competitiveness, on ocean monitoring and forecasting, and disseminate expertise and technology to support the participation of developing countries in the GOOS, and to build linkages with the regional initiatives in ocean forecasting and with related international programming, for a coherent implementation of the global system. GRAND furthermore catalysed the role of the EU in GOOS while contributing to the integration and strengthening of the European Research Area.

A survey in GRAND targeted to obtain information on the nature and extent of key marine environmental issues in the various GOOS regions, and to identify the existing regional arrangements and the related activities of institutes/agencies to address such issues. In the second phase of the survey, the focus was to obtain information on the assets and capabilities currently deployed in terms of ongoing initiatives, methodologies and practices, technological infrastructures and equipment, resources and funding to address the key issues in the GOOS regions.

The large amount of metadata collected in the GRAND WP1 survey are synthesized in a web interface developed by the MedGOOS Secretariat. The information is summarized in the form of lists and charts to allow easy viewing and reference. The web interface forms an integral part of the GRAND website (www.grandproject.org/survey/index.asp) and provides free access to all GRA members, the scientific community dealing with operational oceanography, as well as other interested parties.

Two Training Workshops for GRA managers were organized in GRAND. The main focus of these workshops were to define the GOOS Regional Strategy outline and contents; to initiate technology transfer; and to discuss progress on capacity building.

The key deliverable of GRAND is the GOOS Regional Prospectus, which comprises a strategy to improve the performance of local marine environmental services exploiting the global products of GOOS. The strategy addresses the related technical and management challenges, and identifies the new technologies that can link the global observations to applications required by customers operating at coastal scale such as in the tourism and leisure industries, in shipping and marine transportation, in marine safety and rescue, in fisheries and other areas.

In her concluding remarks as the outgoing MedGOOS Chair, Dr. Vallerga outlined the successful activities in the nine years since MedGOOS was first established in Malta, November 1998. She was presented with a token gift as a sign of deep appreciation for giving her heart and mind to MedGOOS. With her endeavour, the MedGOOS network has grown to 19 institutions from 16 riparian countries, building north and south linkages in one determined venture to promote ocean observations and forecasts in the region.

4. Recent developments and activities by members

During the meeting, the members present outlined the more recent developments in their own countries. Mira Morovic and Zoran Kljajic gave more detailed descriptions while the other members had already made presentations during the MOON meeting in the previous two days.

This agenda item led also to discussions about the future endeavours of MedGOOS. In the short term the members identified the following most prominent targets:

- To strengthen the capacity in operational oceanography and increase the involvement of the South and Eastern Mediterranean countries in the regional implementation.
- To seek more active links within regional organisations and stakeholders.
- To nurture the regional dimension in EU initiatives related to operational oceanography (such as GMES).
- To give more support to the MedGOOS Secretariat in Malta to enable its important role in binding the network, promote the voice of MedGOOS internationally, giving a wider service to the network, and favouring stronger visibility of operational oceanography.

5. Election of the Chair

The main outcome of the meeting was the election of the new chairman, Dr Kostas Nittis from the Hellenic Centre for Marine Research, who accepted to lead MedGOOS for the forthcoming exciting and challenging moments that operational oceanography will plunge into the coming years. Dr. Nittis was the only candidate for this position, and his election was supported by all the MedGOOS officers.

6. Brief on the EU Green Paper on Maritime Policy and implications for operational oceanography in the Mediterranean

The MedGOOS Executive Secretary launched the debate on the Green Paper on Maritime Policy, which was at the time in its consultation phase. He gave a detailed presentation to outline the elements and scope of this initiative led by EU Commissioner for Fisheries and Maritime Affairs Joe Borg. While it is necessary to spell out the strong role of operational oceanography in the practice of the maritime policy, it is clear that the Green Paper fails to bring out the much needed Mediterranean dimension in this most important European regional sea. It was agreed that MedGOOS should prepare a dedicated response to the Green Paper to voice the regional approach as a specific requisite for the success of the policy in the Mediterranean.

A drafting group was formed to prepare a position paper on the EU Maritime Policy that deals with the specificity of the region, and brings out the regional perspective that draws upon the reality of a conglomeration of countries that are not all EU member states. The members on the drafting team are:

Aldo Drago and Kostas Nittis (MedGOOS); Nadia Pinardi and Julia Rogers (MOON); Dov Rosen (IOLR) and Marco Zavatarelli (UniBo).

7. Relationship to EuroGOOS and MOON

A draft memorandum of understanding between MedGOOS and EuroGOOS was circulated to the members and discussed during the meeting. The main elements of the MoU were approved, but a re-drafting was necessary to spell out the relationship between the two GOOS Regional Alliances in more detail, as well as to describe better the part concerning MOON (the Mediterranean Operational Oceanographic Network). It was agreed that the MedGOOS secretariat would circulate a revised draft of the MoU to include revisions from members and to obtain consensus by all members on a final version. This MoU should be submitted to EuroGOOS before their next annual assembly.

Nadia Pinardi gave a brief overview on MOON, outlining the more recent achievements and future prospects especially in connection with GMES and GEOSS. The importance of MOON as the Regional Ocean Observing System (ROOS) for the Mediterranean was recognized. Initiatives in which MedGOOS and MOON had collaborated in 2005/2006 such as in connection with the project proposals submitted to GCOS (the Global Climate Observing System) were highlighted as examples. The mutually supportive and complementary roles of MedGOOS and MOON will be further exploited in the future.

The meeting was closed at 13.00.