

# "Let the Dead Sea live"

## Concept Document :

### Moving Towards a Dead Sea Basin Biosphere Reserve and World Heritage Listings

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## **1 Introduction**

The Madaba Mosaic - shown on the front cover - depicts the area of the Near East of the 7th Century AD with its human settlement and activities. It is no coincidence that the Dead Sea Basin (DSB) appears at the center of the mosaic. For thousands of years the resources of the DSB have not only been a source of economic development for the region but the natural beauty of the Basin has been a source of religious and cultural inspiration for the many civilizations that have lived around its shores. It is the unique characteristics of the Basin, topographical, climatic and biotic that have been the reason for the basin's importance. Today, however, we are nearing a point of no return, where we risk losing key characteristics of this unique basin. Due to past unsustainable development patterns, uncoordinated planning between Israeli, Jordanian and Palestinian governmental authorities and unchecked competition between the various economic sectors that exploit the DSB's resources, the uniqueness of the Dead Sea Basin's risks irreversible degradation.

An integrative concept for regional sustainable development is urgently needed for the Dead Sea Basin. FoEME believes that the most practical and internationally accepted approach for a balanced relationship between man and nature is UNESCO's Man and Biosphere Programme (MAB). Through the registration as a Biosphere Reserve with UNESCO the Dead Sea Basin would be internationally recognized as a site of global significance and thus in need of protection. A transboundary Biosphere Reserve would provide the framework for regional cooperation in order to protect and to promote the sustainable use of the Basin's shared resources; the Dead Sea Biosphere governance framework would also become a basic, evolving instrument for implementing and testing tri-national cooperative methods for addressing issues which transcend national boundaries.

With support of UNESCO, the Yad Hanadiv Foundation, the Nathan Cummings Foundation and the Dorot Foundation, Friends of the Earth Middle East (FoEME) undertook research, held site visits and presented initial findings to relevant stakeholders culminating in this concept document for a transboundary Dead Sea Basin Biosphere Reserve. This report will be presented to the public and to political decision makers both regionally and internationally in order to gain further support for the concept and to lobby the Israeli, Jordanian and Palestinian authorities to register the Dead Sea Basin as a Biosphere Reserve with UNESCO. The report also highlights the exceptional status of several natural and cultural sites and routes of the region like the palaces of King Herod, the city of Jericho, the desert monasteries, and the Nabatean trade routes. These sites in addition to their inclusion in the Biosphere Reserve, are proposed for nomination as direct World Heritage Sites with UNESCO.

It is noteworthy to stress the already existing wide interest and support for a Biosphere Reserve at the governmental level as expressed by the Israel Ministry of Science, and by Jordanian and Palestinian officials. Local community stakeholders on all sides of the basin have likewise expressed their support for the concept. It is the common effort generated through the actual implementation of the Biosphere concept, however, that will help keep the Dead Sea Basin as a source of livelihood and inspiration.

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## **2 The Uniqueness of the Dead Sea Basin**

The many unique characteristics of the Dead Sea Basin include:

- The Dead Sea, located in the Syrian - African Rift Valley, is the lowest place on earth; its surface is 414 meters below sea level.
  - The Dead Sea is the world's saltiest large water body -- its salt concentration ten times higher than the Mediterranean.
  - The entire basin is a spectacular landscape characterized by high mountain cliffs, deep canyons, and green oases, which are in stark contrast to their dessert surroundings.
  - The basin is the home of rare plants and wildlife including leopards (already greatly diminished), Ibex and hundreds of bird species (including the globally threatened Lesser Kestrel and Griffin Vulture).
  - It is a cradle of human culture with sites of high value for the three monotheistic religions Islam, Christianity and Judaism such as Mount Nebo, the Qumran caves, the Baptism site of Jesus and Islamic fortress of Karak.
  - The region is a unique, world-recognized location for medical and health treatment due to the Dead Sea's mineral composition, the medicinal mud, the hot springs, and the climatic conditions.
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### **3 The Challenges at the Dead Sea Basin**

Despite its unique features and rich diversity, the Dead Sea Basin's ecological and environmental status is being degraded and seriously threatened by unsustainable economic developments and source-water diversions -- resulting in:

- an alarming rate of drop of the sea level- currently falling at a rate of 80cm to 1m in depth per year. Over the past three decades the water level fell by about 25meters.
- shrinking of the sea's length (north to south) -- from over 75km earlier in this century, to 55 km at present.
- land deterioration (sink holes) along the shorelines.
- water pollution from untreated or inadequately treated domestic, agricultural, tourist facility, and industrial waste.
- destruction of landscape and ecologically sensitive habitats for flora and fauna.

The following economic sectors are the primary competitors for the DSB resources and significantly contribute to the unsustainable development pattern currently in place and/or proposed by various agencies and organizations:

- The water sector and its continuous expansion of water and irrigation projects to supply the demand of domestic, agricultural, tourist and industrial sectors
- The mineral extraction industry and its increased production and mining activities through the Israeli Dead Sea Works and the Jordanian Potash Company
- The tourism industry and its massive planned construction of new hotels
- The transport sector and its proposed construction of new transport infrastructure like the planned Israel Highway 80 through the pristine Judean desert
- Uncoordinated development among the bordering nations and often even among economic sectors and public agencies within the same nation.

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### **4 The Strategy - Designing a Biosphere Reserve**

#### **4.1 Why a Transboundary Biosphere Reserve at the Dead Sea Basin?**

The Biosphere Reserve concept is characterized by a holistic approach to nature protection and human development promoting cooperation at local, regional and international level.

- The Tragedy of the Commons

The Dead Sea Basin is a single ecosystem. The fact that it crosses international borders does not make one particular area independent of the other in an ecological sense. Development undertaken to date has generally ignored issues on the other side of the border. The development model to date is characterized by each side seeking to maximize their efforts to exploit the DSB's resources without

any consideration of the sum total impact or carrying capacity of the Basin as a whole.

The transboundary Biosphere Reserve concept provides the framework for a much needed regional management plan for integrated sustainable development. The concept foresees the creation of a trilateral management authority that would be responsible for developing a regional master plan and coordinating national development patterns so as to achieve optimum benefit to the Basin as a whole. Economically and ecologically infeasible or regionally degrading development (such as the cumulative total of 55,000 new hotel rooms currently proposed around the Dead Sea) could therefore be avoided.

#### • **A Framework for Regional and International Cooperation**

The Biosphere Reserve designation would strengthen cooperation and improve communication at the regional and international levels. The Biosphere Concept encourages cooperative activities in the field of scientific research, conservation measures, education and training between the institutions within a Biosphere Reserve. On the international level all registered sites become members of the World Network of Biosphere Reserves. This network enables exchange of experiences between stakeholders living in similar environments and joint activities between the different Biosphere Reserves. In addition, formation of a tri-national management arrangement could well become a model for addressing issues of other endangered transnational ecosystems and regions.

#### • **Balancing the Needs of Man and Nature**

The Dead Sea Basin is currently characterized by a few nature reserves with little or no connection to each other and no framework of how developments proposed outside declared reserves impact the protected areas. Hence in the proposed tourism development plans for example, hotels are planned in a linear fashion along the Dead Sea, outside reserves but with very probable negative impacts on the habitat of the reserves.

In contrast to individual protected areas with little connection to their surroundings the concept of a Biosphere Reserve aims at a wider ecosystem approach. The DSB Biosphere Reserve would contain several protected core areas surrounded by buffer zones of limited development which themselves are encompassed by -- or linked to -- transition areas where most human development would occur. This idea of gradation and integration of man and nature makes the Biosphere Reserve concept so attractive and effective. The Dead Sea Basin still encompasses highly sensitive areas of rich biodiversity (potential core areas), open spaces with very limited development (potential buffer zones) and concentrated industrial areas and rural and tourism settlements (potential transition areas). Areas and features outside the Basin, but which are critical to its protection and sustainability - such as the Jordan River and other water sources -- will be studied and planned as influences.

#### • **Increasing Public Participation - more public support for conservation**

The Biosphere Reserve concept provides for the involvement of local communities and stakeholders in planning and management of the Biosphere Reserve. Lessons from other Biosphere Reserve show that success can only be secured when interests of different stakeholders in the land are taken into account. The Dead Sea Basin 's sustainable development can only be achieved when all the multiple interests represented through farmers, the tourism industry, local communities etc. are addressed. The flexible and creative approach of a Biosphere Reserve allows for conflict resolution and alternative models of land use and nature protection. The possibility of public support for conservation efforts is higher than in conservative approaches which tend to neglect human interests in access to natural areas and use of

resources.

## **4.2 Objectives and Methodology**

Among the principal objectives in creating a transboundary Dead Sea Basin Biosphere Reserve are:

### **Technical objectives:**

- To develop and implement a management plan for the entire Dead Sea Basin in order to conserve and restore the Dead Sea Basin's unique ecosystems and to foster integrated regional sustainable development; the plan would also address issues of resources and projects which impact or are impacted by the Basin though are outside its geographic boundaries.
- To strengthen the involvement and participation of local communities and other stakeholders in planning and management of the Dead Sea Basin and its resources
- to promote the creation of a trilateral management authority for the DSB
- to promote education, training and research in order to support conservation and sustainable development of DSB Resources

### **Political objectives**

- to promote cooperation between Israelis, Jordanians and Palestinians through coordinated research, planning and management of mutually shared resources in the Dead Sea Basin
- to promote the fair share of benefits and costs resulting of the conservation and use of the Dead Sea Basin's resources
- to promote peace through sustainable development in the Dead Sea region

### **Methodology**

#### **Background**

Since 1996 FoEME has been undertaking research and activities aiming at the promotion of conservation and sustainable development in the Dead Sea Region. Public meetings were held in 1996 in Tel-Aviv and Amman, resulting in the publication of reports, pamphlets and posters. In 1998 a conference in Amman was organized by FoEME bringing together, for the first time, representatives of all the key stakeholders Israeli, Jordanian and Palestinian. The participants called for coordinated and sustainable development of the region, based on an integrated analysis and strategic plan encompassing all relevant issues. The two-day conference explored in depth the interrelationships between physical ecological values, on the one hand, and human activities, needs and aspirations on the other. The following is a chart of some of the key relationships among ecological (biosphere) and other issues (sectorial linkages) -- formulated as an outcome of the Amman symposium and other planning analysis input:

Participants at Amman symposium also strongly supported the idea of the registration of the Dead Sea Basin as Biosphere Reserve, based on the presentations and discussions at the conference and previous studies . Consequently, FoEME hired an expert team of Israeli; Jordanian and Palestinian planners to develop the concept for a Dead Sea Basin Biosphere Reserve.

### **Preparation Process for the Dead Sea Basin Biosphere Reserve Concept**

1 - FoEME presented a first draft report to the experts, which was based on the analysis of available

information. The report followed the given structure of the UNESCO application form for the Registration of the Dead Sea as Biosphere Reserve.

2 - The experts reviewed the draft report and assessed missing information. The experts focus was on technical aspects of their fields of expertise (Flora, Fauna, Water, Cultural Heritage, Management). An itinerary for a study tour in the region was developed.

3 - An in-depth study tour on ecological, archeological and development issues to the Dead Sea Basin was undertaken jointly by the experts between May 23 - 27, 1999. The tour included site visits and meetings with stakeholders from tourism, industry, local municipalities, NGOs, archeology, nature reserve authorities and political decision-makers from all sides.

4 - Each expert prepared a sectoral draft report in his field of expertise (zonation/water/archeology/ecology/management)

5 - In a joint presentation the results were presented at an international Man and Biosphere Workshop in Zichron Yaakov, Israel, 11-13 July 1999. Comments from the audience, consisting of regional and international nature protection experts and Dead Sea Basin stakeholders were integrated into this final concept document including maps highlighting areas of special importance in terms of Biosphere Reserve zonation.

During the entire process FoEME provided the platform for information exchange between the experts in order to allow for the preparation of a coherent concept.

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## **5 The Concept - Dead Sea Basin Biosphere Reserve**

### **5.1 Boundaries of the Dead Sea Basin Biosphere Reserve Size and Spatial Configuration:**

In defining the proposed boundaries of the DSB reserve the following factors were considered: Hydrology, catchment area and water surface levels, flora and fauna, geomorphology, cultural heritage, industries and agriculture, human settlement, planning functions and visual considerations. The boundaries and sub-boundaries of each factor considered are complex. The water catchment area of the DSB extends into Syria in the north and almost reach Aqaba in the South. From a cultural perspective the Nabatean trade routes that cross the Dead Sea, extend all the way from Gaza to Oman. A compromise therefore had to be reached that would identify an area for the proposed reserve that would be ecologically coherent and practical from a management perspective.

Different boundaries were therefore proposed for different combinations of factors. The northern boundary has been proposed to go as far as Ouja and Sartaba on the basis of cultural and visual considerations. The southern proposed boundary has been identified as Fifa and Neot HaKikar on the basis of ecological uniqueness and visual considerations. The western limit of the Dead Sea's water

catchment area running north-south between Hebron and Jerusalem has been identified as the western boundary of the proposed Reserve. The ridge road making its way from Madaba to Karak has been identified as the eastern boundary on the basis of visual and administrative considerations. Much time was spent discussing the issue of the potash industries and whether it would be proposed to include them into the DSB reserve. The recommendation is to seek to include them into the reserve as they directly exploit the resources of the basin and therefore excluding them would be contrary to basic MAB principles. Clearly strict conditions of sustainability would need to be adopted by these industries should they agree to be included. Another consideration is the extent of inclusion in the transition areas of large urban centers such as Jericho. It was thought that this should be left to the wishes of the local populace. Finally other areas outside the proposed boundaries could be considered as part of a separate but linked Biosphere Reserve or part of a transition zone as defined by the MAB programme.

## **5.2 Functions and zones of the DSB Reserve:**

According to its functions of conservation, development and logistics the Biosphere reserve encompasses a composition of core areas, transition areas and buffer zones. For the Dead Sea Basin several locations were identified which can perfectly fulfill these functions. Some sites need further study in order to identify their potential and status.

### **5.2.1 Biosphere - conservation function and core protected areas**

The conservation of biological diversity and its preservation in a core area is a main feature of the Biosphere Reserve. The Dead Sea Basin (DSB) contains a variety of unique ecosystems that are not found in any other part of the world. The Dead Sea itself is a singular ecosystem with endemic forms of life. Stretching out from the seashores in all directions, a series of unique ecosystems are identified. While semi-tropical marshland, mudflat and wetlands' ecosystems are identified on the northern and southern tips of the Dead Sea; desert and arid ecosystems are identified in the west and north-western areas of the DSB. River and Wadi ecosystems surround the Dead Sea and are adjacent to rocky - mountainous ecosystems that contain a variety of globally unique flora and fauna.

Within the contemplated Dead Sea Basin Biosphere Reserve the following major core areas are identified due to their ecological importance. For some of the listed sites only a part of the area might be declared core areas in order to fulfill the criteria of strict protection with no or minimal human intervention:

#### **Dead Sea Itself**

- highly saline lake with spectacular salt formation located in the lowest depression on earth
- containing species only to be found in the Dead Sea: endemic unicellular green alga (*Dunaliella parva*) and endemic species of halobacteria (*Haloarcula marismortui*, *haloferax volcanii*, *Halobaculum gomorense*, *Halorubrum sodomense*)

#### **Wadi Mujib-(The lower part) :**

- Includes the only designated nature reserve in the eastern part of the basin.
- In ecological and environmental terms the lower parts are most important
- Important species include: Water snake, Tree frog, Kingfisher, Egyptian mongoose, Nubian Ibex, Afghani Fox, Fauna Tristram Grackle, Dead Sea sparrow, Griffin Vulture and three species of fish

endemic to the Dead Sea Basin.

### **Ein Gedi (Parts of):**

- Nature Reserve area, located on the western side of the Dead Sea, fresh water Oasis fed by four fresh springs, resting and breeding area for resident and migratory bird.
- Contains a wide diversity of flora and fauna. Important fauna species include Leopard, Ibex, Hyrax and Wolf.

### **Ein Fashkha:**

- Mudflat-wetland area on the north-western shores, resting and breeding site for migratory & resident birds
- Fauna includes: tropical river fish *Oreochromis aureus*, Red sea interloper *Aphanius dispar richardsoni*, *Aphanius mento*

### **Nahal Hever:**

- Large Wadi bed on the western side of the Basin. Currently declared reserve and no entrance area.
- Contains a variety of unique flora and fauna and important breeding area for mammals.

### **Lisan Peninsula:**

- Unique geomorphologic chalk formations off the eastern shores of the Dead Sea
- ecological values: only location where Rueppell's Fox (*Vulpes rueppelli*) has been sighted in Jordan
- important historical/cultural site: ruins of Byzantine church and historic crossing point of the Sea. Archaeological studies indicate that the Roman Army crossed the Lisan Peninsula on their way from east to west to reach Masada.

### **Wadi Fifa, Neot Hakikar Marshlands**

- Marshland-wetland area in the south of the Dead Sea
- Important bird area, important Flora and Fauna species

### **The Baptism Site:**

- Located north of the Dead Sea, on the eastern side of the Jordan River
- The adjacent wetland and surrounding area contains a variety of fauna such as a large population of wolf and jackal and rare flora such as endemic tamarix, important bird area.
- The Baptism site is of internationally acknowledged cultural and religious importance
- The area (5 km<sup>2</sup>) is proposed as a national park and nature reserve

Buffer - securing the core - providing for research and education

The buffer zone surrounds the core area and protects it from human impacts. For the Dead Sea Basin Biosphere Reserve the buffer zone is recommended as all the non-built-up areas in visual contact with the Dead Sea and to include the non-residential and non-industrial users. The potential activities for the buffer zone should be clarified within the planning of the Biosphere Reserve. According to UNESCO provisions it could include conservation research, recreation - eco-tourism, education, training and monitoring.

## **5.2.2 Man - Development function and transition areas**

In this section sectors and areas of the Dead Sea Basin with potentials for socially acceptable and

environmentally sound development are identified. The transition area of the Dead Sea Basin Biosphere Reserve includes all the human settlement including housing and industrial areas together with areas that have no direct visual connection to the Dead Sea.

### **Industry**

The two major industries in the Dead Sea Region are the Arab Potash Company on the Jordanian side and the Dead Sea Works on the Israeli side. The issue of whether to include the two companies within the Biosphere Reserve's transition zone was briefly discussed above.

The companies' enormous use of fresh water and salt water - contributing to 25% of the Dead Sea water loss, mining activities and other environmentally negative actions -- such as air and water pollution -- cause serious problems to the DSB environment. The companies' adoption of measures of proven effectiveness, to minimize their negative environmental impacts, would have significant positive effects on the Dead Sea's environment.

The industries' environmental commitments should include the introduction of actions and programmes in relation to

- resource conservation - particularly water
- phase out of production of ozone depleting methyl bromide
- reduction of air and water pollution emission
- land, Sea and scenic reclamation/remediation/restoration.

### **Agriculture**

The agricultural areas around the DSB should be considered within two categories: (1) areas not dependent on intervention from outside the area - e.g., grazing, wadi agriculture and areas linked to local springs and (2) areas utilizing piped water or other non-local interventions.

The proposed DSB reserve should seek to promote traditional and environmentally sound agricultural methods (water saving irrigation techniques, methods using less/no chemical fertilizer, herbicides etc).

### **Tourism**

The tourist industry is one of the major demand sectors on the site. Tourism impacts should be categorized according to major issue areas, such as: ecological, culture, health and landscape/aesthetics. To date tourism proposals having been developed independently among the three parties and currently foresee 55,000 new hotel rooms. The Biosphere Reserve provides the framework for a coordinated tourism plan that would consider the carrying capacity of the basin.

FoEME strongly recommends that tourism construction should be concentrated in a transition area on the northern and southern ends of the basin. A free tourism zone concept should be realized - as has been proposed by FoEME for the northern shore of the Dead Sea where tourists could freely move and where joint environmentally sound tourism projects. The free tourism zone would serve as a significant model of cooperation and sustainable development within the transboundary DSB Biosphere Reserve.

### **Human Settlement**

The Jordanian side is populated by Bedouin families in the north, members of the Hamaydi tribe around Wadi Mujib and the urban townships of the Potash City and Safi to the south, all totalling some 33,000 inhabitants. The Israel side of the Dead Sea includes the Regional council of Tamar with no more than 1,300 inhabitants. The Palestinian areas include Jericho and other villages with some 25 000 inhabitants in urban and rural communities, using the more fertile areas north of the Dead Sea for agriculture.

Some of the key questions to be addressed in the proposals of the Biosphere Reserve and its management program are: What will be the interaction of the inhabitants to the employment sources of the region? How will the changes impact the lives of the village tribes of the upper plains above the Dead Sea? What expansion can take place in the existing towns and communities such as Tamar?

### **5.2.3 Culture - World Heritage Routes and Sites**

Part of the uniqueness of the DSB is its impressive range of natural and cultural sites, cultural routes and collections of sites in the Dead Sea region which might qualify for a World Heritage status. The integration of these proposed World Heritage sites into the Biosphere Reserve would highlight the common heritage of the people of the region and of the world community as a whole. The study identified and recommends the following sites and routes for World Heritage Nomination:

#### **World Heritage Routes and Collections**

- the exodus route of the Children of Israel
- the routes and palaces of Herod
- the wanderings of Jesus in the Judean Desert
- the Desert Monasteries of Byzantium
- the Nabatean trade routes

#### **World Heritage Sites**

- Massada: Herodian Winter Palace and Zealot and Byzantine ruins
- Jericho: more than 9000 years old, possibly world's oldest city
- Wadi Mujib
- Karak: proposed as part of a wider inscription including Crusader castles of the Near East.

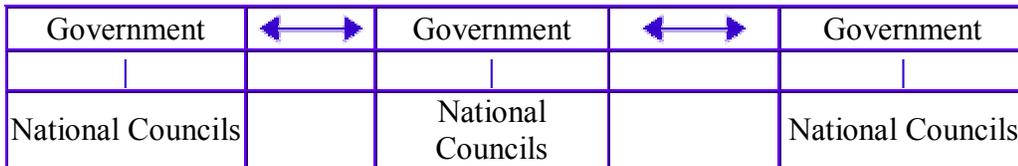
### **5.2.4 Transboundary cooperation- management aspects**

UNESCO in its Seville Strategy, adopted in 1995, recommends the establishment of transboundary Biosphere Reserves as means of dealing with the conservation of ecosystems that cross national boundaries . {Already five Biosphere Reserves are international, with territory in two or more countries. Three of these were created in the last twelve months. Further transboundary Biosphere Reserves are planned for Asia, Latin America, and Africa. }

The following management models have been suggested, along with the potential pros and cons of each.

#### **1. The Bottom Up Model**

Adopting the bottom up approach, a clear stress is to be on the local (direct) stakeholders and levels of management. The degree of involvement in the management of the reserve (three sub-reserves in each country) is to depend on proximity to the local (direct) levels of stakeholders and levels of management in each of the three countries. Unified management councils (or forum) for the Dead Sea Basin are to be formed in each country. Existing management structures are to play a supportive and backing role. Interactions among involved countries are to happen at the higher governmental levels rather than on the local ones and are to include exchange of information, data, and joint decision making on the Regional-International Level.



Pros	Cons
Involves all stakeholders depending on their proximity to the local (direct) level. Allows the direct implementation of recommendations and decisions. Puts more power in the hands of the local stakeholders. Suggests a more decentralized approach with lesser ties with central governments.	Potentially perceived as being in conflict with the sovereign powers of the central governments. Contradictions with existing management structures. Does not allow for direct interaction at the bottom levels.

#### The International-Regional Model (Up-down Approach)

This model suggests the establishment of an overall unified management body (council) for the Dead Sea Biosphere Reserve. Representatives of the three countries are to be part of these councils and their unified decisions are to be binding on all parties. The internal management within each country is to be the responsibility of each of the involved parties.

Pros	Cons
Powerful management structure as it allows for the use of the governments' powers of enforcement. Internationally acceptable.	Politically sensitive and most probably unacceptable to the regional governments - who may perceive it as an infringement on their national sovereignty. Minimizes the role of

	local and within country stakeholders and management levels.
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**DEAD SEA INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL**

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**3. The Interactive Model**

This model suggests the utilization of existing levels of management in each country. These levels include the local, within country, regional-local, regional-international, and international levels. Interaction and cooperation between involved countries is to happen depending on the "level of management". Regular meetings should provide a vehicle for frequent interaction. An overall "Dead Sea Conservation Council" that includes representatives of all "management levels" in each country is to be formed and regularly meet. All its decisions and recommendations are to be subject to the final approval of involved governments.

<b>Pros</b>	<b>Cons</b>
Involves all stakeholders Allows for the direct implementation of recommendations and decisions.Utilizes existing management structures and levels	Very difficult to achieve from a managerial point of view.Could be politically sensitive.

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**6 Conclusions and future tasks**

From the outset FoEME has taken the role as a catalyst, calling for the Dead Sea to be allowed to live, be protected from irreversible environmental degradation, and developed only in a sustainable manner; and most recently in promoting the registration of the Dead Sea Basin as a Biosphere Reserve and World Heritage listings.. In this time, FoEME has succeeded to bring tremendous local and international media attention to the current fate of the Dead Sea and the need for action.

This concept document is not the end product but the means to lobby and influence decision-makers, the media and the public at large to support the concept. Supported by the European Commission FoEME will in the year 2000 launch a major media campaign including the production of posters, stickers, banners and other materials to publicize key aspects of the Dead Sea Biosphere Reserve / World Heritage concept. A Dead Sea music festival is also planned for the year 2000.

FoEME is confident that Dead Sea will indeed be registered with UNESCO as a site of world significance, on the basis of the Man and Biosphere and World Heritage listings. Even these listings are not however an end in themselves but just the means to achieve the desired result. After many

years of research and study on the Dead Sea, and based on a unique and intimate knowledge of the all the political cultures of the peoples that live by its shores, FoEME is confident that the Man and Biosphere approach and concept has the best chance to achieve the goals of promoting sustainable development around the Dead Sea - "letting the Dead Sea live".

On the technical side, moving towards UNESCO registration will require however incremental steps to be taken. FoEME firmly believes that agreement on pure technical issues such as planning and management by the respective environment and nature authorities would be an important first step in building trust and confidence. Initial discussion and agreement on the following issues is suggested:

- Dead Sea Basin planning guidelines
- management guidelines for the Basin
- discussions on further research requirements on Biosphere / World Heritage listing

In concurrence with FoEME lobbying work in support for the concept, FoEME will undertake workshops during the year 2000 to advance expert technical discussions.