

An underwater photograph showing a large whale swimming towards the left. To the right of the whale, a clear plastic bag floats in the blue water. The text is overlaid on the upper part of the image.

**Summary Report
Info Day, Greece
6th November 2019**

PREPARED BY

**THE INTERREG MED
PLASTIC BUSTERS MPAS PROJECT**

<https://plasticbustersmpas.interreg-med.eu>



**PLASTIC BUSTERS
MPAs**

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This document (Deliverable 2.5.1.b) is the report of the Info Day held in Greece. It provides the context and information delivered to the public, as well as the feedback received.

Approvals

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1. Objectives and approach

A productive and effective Plastic Busters MPAs Info Day meeting was organized in Greece by the Hellenic Centre for Marine Research (HCMR) and the Mediterranean Environment, Culture and Sustainability Office (MIO-ECSDE). The meeting was held on the 6th of November 2019 at the Ionian Center (11 Lysiou str., Athens) and lasted from 10 am to 4:30 pm.

The main objectives of the meeting were:

- To raise awareness of the marine litter issue and ways to address it across all societal layers,
- To initiate discussion between marine litter teams with local authorities, private companies, NGOs, and other stakeholders as well
- To present 'good practices' in tackling marine litter at regional, national and Mediterranean levels
- To communicate and disseminate information on the project activities implemented at local, national and regional level
- To create synergies with related initiatives at local, national or regional level.

Invited speakers were representatives of HCMR, MIO-ECSDE, the General Secretariat for Natural Environment and Water (Hellenic Ministry of Environment and Energy), the Mediterranean Action Plan of the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP MAP), the Zakynthos National Marine Park Management Authorities, and the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. The Scientific Coordinator of the Plastic Busters MPAs project from the University of Siena gave also a speech. The majority of the audience were members of the Greek academic and research community, international, national and regional bodies as well as non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Approximately 80 people attended the meeting.

The points made by the speakers were plenty and informative in relation to actions involving the whole cycle of marine litter management, from monitoring and evaluating the marine litter issue, to preventing and addressing it. Data from previous studies were discussed, as well as solutions, initiatives and legislation towards the better management of the problem. Public participation was great, with pertinent questions about the Plastic Busters MPAs project and the selection of protected areas within the project, the establishment of thresholds for marine litter, and possible remedial measures.

The Mediterranean Sea has been regarded as one of the world's most polluted seas by marine litter. The threats posed to biodiversity by marine litter through entanglement or ingestion, the risk of transferring adsorbed pollutants or plasticizers to marine organisms, and the potential impact on their health were thoroughly discussed. Finally, the growing scientific literature on plastic litter and its effects on the marine environment was also reported.

The role of Plastic Busters MPAs project as an integrated, multifaceted and coordinated approach to investigate marine litter detection and effects in the Mediterranean pelagic and coastal marine protected areas with the ultimate goal of healthy marine ecosystems was greatly emphasised during the meeting.

2. The agenda

10.00-10.15 | Registration

10.15-10.30 | Welcome remarks & introduction – **Catherine Tsangaris, HCMR**

10.30-11.30 | The marine litter issue – setting the scene

- ▶ *Mapping the marine litter certainties and uncertainties: a prerequisite for better decision-making* – **Thomas Vlachogianni, MIO-ECSDE**
- ▶ *Marine litter in Greece: a synthesis of processes, initiatives and actors* – **Cristina Zeri, HCMR**
- ▶ *The Marine Strategy Framework Directive and other EU policies to combat marine litter in Greece* – **George Melekis, Hellenic Ministry of Environment and Energy**
- ▶ *Regional Action Plan for marine litter management in the Mediterranean Sea* – **Christos Ioakeimidis, UNEP/MAP**

11.30-12.00 | Coffee break

12.00-13.00 | Tackling marine litter in Med MPAs: the Plastic Busters MPAs showcase

- ▶ *The Plastic Busters MPAs project in a nutshell* – **Maria Cristina Fossi, UNISI**
- ▶ *The Plastic Busters MPAs monitoring and assessment approach and related activities in Greece* – **Catherine Tsangaris, HCMR**
- ▶ *The Plastic Busters MPAs prevention and mitigation approach and related activities in Greece* – **Thomas Vlachogianni, MIO-ECSDE**
- ▶ *The Plastic Busters MPAs activities in the National Marine Park of Zakynthos* – **Drosos Koutsoumpas, NMPZ**

13.00-14.00 | Lunch break

14.00-15.00 | Sharing experiences and exchanging knowledge on how to curb marine litter

- ▶ *Ingestion of marine litter by loggerhead sea turtles in Greece: the MEDSEALITTER and INDICIT project results* – **Helen Kaberi, HCMR**
- ▶ *Developing and testing marine litter cleaning technologies: the CLAIM project* – **George Triantafyllidis, HCMR**
- ▶ *Marine litter in biota and the seafloor of the Ionian Sea: CoralFish and DeFishGear project results* – **Aikaterini Anastasopoulou, HCMR**
- ▶ *National Stranding Network of Marine Species in Greece* – **Anastasia Komnenou, School of Veterinary Medicine, Faculty of Health Sciences, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, AUTH**

15.00-15.30 | Coffee break

15.30-16.15 | Discussion, wrap up and closure

3. Structure of the Greek Plastic Busters MPAs Info Day

3.1. C1 First session: The problem of Marine Litter – Introducing the framework

Dr Thomais Vlahogianni-MIO-ESCDE

Dr Vlahogianni introduced in her presentation the certainties and uncertainties of the marine litter issue. She highlighted that assessing the relative importance of the different sources is challenging given that a considerable percentage of litter items cannot be attributed to a specific source. She stressed that plastics are ubiquitous in the coastal and marine environment accounting for some 70-90% of all litter items found. A large amount of litter items found in the Mediterranean are single-use plastic items. With regards to the marine impacts she mentioned that uncertainties remain regarding the extent of harm caused to marine species by ingestion of microplastics and their exposure to hazardous chemicals leaching from or adsorbed on microplastics. She closed her intervention by stressing the common misconceptions on various marine litter measures i.e. the fact that substituting 'conventional' plastics with biobased plastics is merely a distraction to the marine litter issue; that biodegradable and compostable plastics pollute our coasts and seas just like conventional plastics, as they behave quite differently in the marine environment than in a terrestrial setting (landfill, composter) where the conditions required for rapid biodegradation are unlikely to occur.

Dr Christina Zeri-HCMR

Dr Zeri conducted a summary of policy decisions and stakeholders' initiatives. The presentation started by determining the reasons of plastic accumulating in the marine environment, such as plastic physicochemical properties, excessive consumption, lack of knowledge and insufficient management. In Greece, 500 kg of plastics are used per person per year, 30% of which are not degradable and only 19% of the plastics are recycled. The scientific community has undertaken the task of developing methodologies to detect plastics, model the distribution, estimate future plastic litter densities and understand their impact on the marine environment. Increasing number of scientific reports are published by Greek research and academic institutions (i.e. HCMR, University of Patras, etc.), following the international trends. The EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) to achieve Good Environmental Status (GES) in EU waters has been incorporated in the Greek legislation since 2011. Regarding GES descriptor 10 of the MSFD, marine litter, its implementation in Greece includes monitoring and management measures such as informing consumers and reducing the number of plastic bags used per person yearly.

Mr George Melekis- General Secretariat for Natural Environment and Water

Mr Melekis presented the policy framework to combat marine litter in Greece. The EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive was first adopted in 2008 and incorporated in the Greek legislation in 2011. Plastic litter monitoring has been undertaken by HCMR and Fisheries Research Institute (FRI), while NGOs (e.g. HELMEPA) have contributed in informing the general public. The Ministry of Environment and Energy has set targets for 2020 that include: better management of municipal waste to reduce marine litter, collection and analysis of data gathered by municipal waste treatment plants and construction of network to monitor coastlines focusing on bathing water quality.

Dr Christos Ioakeimidis-UNEP/MAP

Dr Ioakeimidis introduced the attendees on the measures that have been taken by UNEP/MAP regarding marine litter in the framework of the Regional Plan on Marine Litter Management in the Mediterranean adopted since 2013 and was entered into force in 2014. He stressed the importance to recognise the various land- and sea-based sources of marine litter in order to better manage the problem, e.g. tourism, sea transport and municipal wastes as the main marine litter sources in the Mediterranean Sea. Information was also shared on the development of the national monitoring programmes on marine litter, the national action plans, the policies for phasing out single-use plastic bags, the legislation regarding recycling, control measures towards reducing marine litter, and sharing the information with the general public and making them part of the solution.

3.2 C2. Second session: facing marine litter in the MPAs: The Plastic Busters project

Prof. Christina Fossi-University of Siena, Italy

Prof. Fossi introduced the Plastic Busters MPAs project to the audience. She presented the background and the main actions of the project. Her presentation focused on the impact of marine litter and the fact that 91 marine vertebrate species have been reported to have been affected by it. She mentioned that the Mediterranean Sea is one of the most affected seas by marine litter. The idea of the Plastic Busters initiative has started in 2013 and it has been characterized by its novel perspective. The Plastic Busters initiative, led by the University of Siena and the Sustainable Development Solutions Network, was then formed. This initiative frames the priority actions needed to tackle marine litter in the Mediterranean and was labelled under the Union for the Mediterranean in 2016, gathering the political support of 43 Euro-Mediterranean countries. The Plastic Busters MPAs Interreg MED project deploys the multidisciplinary strategy and common framework of action developed within the Plastic Busters initiative. The Plastic Busters MPAs includes a harmonized diagnosis of marine litter impacts, including marine litter detection in the environment and in biota, as well as potential adverse effects in biota. The Plastic Busters project proposes a threefold monitoring approach (plastics, plastic tracers and biomarkers detection) for the assessment of potential adverse effects of marine litter on marine biota.

Dr Catherine Tsangaris - HCMR

Dr Tsangaris presented the methodological approach for monitoring marine litter followed in the framework of the Plastic Busters MPAs project and its implementation in Greece. She explained that during the first phase of the project all related protocols developed by previous projects were collected and based on them, a toolkit was established for monitoring marine litter and its impacts on biodiversity in Mediterranean MPAs. The methodology presented in this toolkit will be applied by all partners of the project. She particularly referred to the common methodology applied in all the pilot areas of the project to evaluate plastic ingestion by marine animals and the relevant ecotoxicological effects, which forms a major innovative point of the project. In Greece, two marine litter sampling expeditions have been performed already in the National Marine Park of Zakynthos and in Zakynthos coastal areas, where floating macro and micro litter was surveyed and samples of sediment and marine organisms were collected. She mentioned that for the marine organisms sampled, the threefold

approach will be assessed, as explained earlier by C. Fossi. At the end of her talk, similar actions in the framework of other projects were presented (Perseus, MERMAID, Meltemi, DefishGear, MedSealitter, INDICIT I and II) as well as a short description of previous results on microplastic ingestion by fish and invertebrates in Greece.

Prof. Drosos Koutsoubas- National Marine Park of Zakynthos /University of Aegean

Prof. Koutsoubas presented information about the National Park of Zakynthos Island such as: the area, the species, the nesting beaches of *Caretta caretta*, and stressed the high tourist activity within the west part of the Park. He explained that through Plastic Busters MPAs, the beaches, the seabed and the organisms are being monitored. He argued that 4.5 tones of litter and 10,000 cigarette butts were collected during only one year from the beaches of the National Marine Park. Prof. Koutsoubas underlined the importance of the citizen science and the collaboration with the local diving centers for monitoring marine litter in the Park. He stressed the value of a customized management at the needs of each MPA.

Dr Thomais Vlahogianni-MIO-ESCDE

Dr Vlahogianni provided an overview of the Plastic Busters MPAs related activity related to piloting marine litter prevention and mitigation measures for the MPAs. She stressed how the ACT4LITTER results and outputs feed into the Plastic Busters MPAs actions and she presented the upcoming steps with regards to the 10 priority demos foreseen to be setup within the project. The measures to be considered for the demos are: promoting best practices for tourism and recreation, improving solid waste management systems and practices; promoting the replacement of single-use plastics; banning specific items and activities; awareness raising campaigns; improving port reception facilities for the delivery of waste from ships; upcycling and/or recycling; promoting extended producer responsibility schemes; fishing for litter scheme; derelict fishing gear management schemes.

3.3 C3. Third session: Exchange of knowledge and experiences on the issue of marine litter

Dr Eleni Kaberi-HCMR

Dr Kaberi presented MEDSEALITTER and INDICIT projects' results. She focused on sea turtles and why this organism can be used as an indicator of marine litter. Sea turtles in other countries have been included as indicators of marine litter in the MSFD monitoring as they have the tendency to ingest marine litter, they are found in a variety of different habitats, they can be found stranded at adequate numbers and therefore provide an opportunity for collection of plenty of data. HCMR in the framework of MEDSEALITTER and INDICIT projects, organized a study on marine litter ingestion by sea turtles in collaboration with the NGOs Arion, MEDASSET and Archelon and a network of specialized veterinarians who collected stranded sea turtles along the Greek coastline. The gastro-intestinal tract of the stranded sea turtles was extracted and analyzed for plastic litter. More information can be found in Digka et al. (2020, in prep).

Dr George Triantafyllidis-HCMR

Dr Triantafyllidis presented the project CLAIM (H2020) that focuses on ways to collect and prevent marine litter from entering the sea. He presented the 5 new marine cleaning technologies that will be developed and applied by the project. These include a prefiltering system and a photocatalytic device used for removing or degrading microplastics at wastewater treatment plants; floating booms placed at river mouths to withhold macro and micro litter; a pyrolyzer for transforming solid waste into a combustible gas and a recyclable solid residue and ferryboxes that are autonomous systems installed in commercial vessels and ferryboats for continuous monitoring of larger plastic pieces, microplastics and environmental parameters.

Dr Aikaterini Anastasopoulou-HCMR

Dr Anastasopoulou focused on marine litter recovered from organisms and the seabed of the Ionian Sea, Greece, in the framework of the projects CoralFish and DeFishGear. She presented the results of these projects. CoralFish, 1,502 deep sea fish were collected in total and 1.9% of these fish had ingested plastics, while on the sea-floor, monitored using an ROV, the plastic litter (30 %) exceeded in quantity litter of other material (e.g. metal or glass). In DefishGear project, litter ingestion was assessed in a total of 614 fish of 11 species from the Adriatic and North Ionian Sea. She mentioned the presence of marine litter on the deep sea floor of the E. Ionian Sea based on some results from other previous projects e.g. INTERREG, RESSIO. She also referred to the MSFD monitoring programme in Greece as regards marine litter ingestion and marine litter on the seabed showing the importance of the MEDITS framework on this monitoring. Furthermore, she highlighted the importance of airborne contamination, which can lead to false results.

Prof. Anastasia Komnenou- School of Veterinary Medicine, Faculty of Health Sciences, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki AUTH, Greece

Prof. Komnenou presented the "National Stranding Network for Marine Species" (i.e. sea turtles, cetaceans and the Mediterranean monk seal) that she is coordinating in Greece. The network's purpose is to rescue and rehabilitate the live stranded animals, as well as to do necropsies, collect samples and information about their health and ecology. The animals' rescue and rehabilitation is driven by medical and welfare reasons; however, collection of samples and data is of major scientific interest for the health screening of marine populations, as well as for public health and awareness. The Network also aims to raise the public awareness while the National Stranding Network is supported by a Governmental Scientific Committee of the Ministry of Environment, constitution of a scientific committee is needed in order to better which puts the guidelines and protocols for the sample collection, analysis and utilization of information. She also explained the reasons why marine animals are stranding e.g. because of wounds, sickness, being orphan, noise disturbance, naval exercises, pollution, climate change, and presented the instructions and guidelines for management of live or dead stranded animals.

3.4 C4. Last session: Discussion, conclusions and closure of the meeting

A very constructive discussion took place at the end of the meeting. Many questions and interesting comments were made. Some of the issues discussed were related to the establishment of threshold values for marine litter ingestion as well as potential remedial measures were raised. During the discussion the threats posed by marine litter to biodiversity were thoroughly reviewed; these vary from entanglement and ingestion, to bio-accumulation and bio-magnification of toxics released from plastics, to damages to benthic habitats and species.

A large part of the discussion focused on the lack of threshold values for microplastic ingestion and on the approach these can be established. It was well acknowledged that baseline levels of microplastic ingestion need to be established. The scarcity of information on effects of plastic ingestion was pointed out, especially in field collected organisms, as well as the need for data on levels of plastic ingestion inducing adverse effects in laboratory exposed animals that can contribute in setting threshold values. It was also pointed out that long term effects of plastic ingestion are difficult to observe. Whether toxicity of plastics is predominantly related to leaching of plastic additives was discussed.

Regarding the spatial scale at which threshold values are to be set, it was pointed out that one common threshold for the whole Mediterranean Sea is proposed for beach litter, and one or maximum two spatial thresholds for the Mediterranean Sea are considered for litter ingestion by seaturtles.

The ubiquity of plastics was also discussed. It was pointed out that plastics are everywhere, for example, microplastics can be found in table salt or water and in the air. It was also mentioned that plastics cannot be globally banned, for example, they are very useful and non replaceable in the medical sciences. Plastics are manufactured to be stable; it is in the environment that they start to degrade. It was also highlighted that although the Mediterranean Sea is a highly polluted sea, the efforts made for the management of marine litter is at a very good level.





4. Outreach

Information on the Plastic Busters Info Day has been shared via the HCMR official website <https://www.hcmr.gr/el/news/%ce%ad%cf%81%ce%b3%ce%bf-plastic-busters-mpas/>

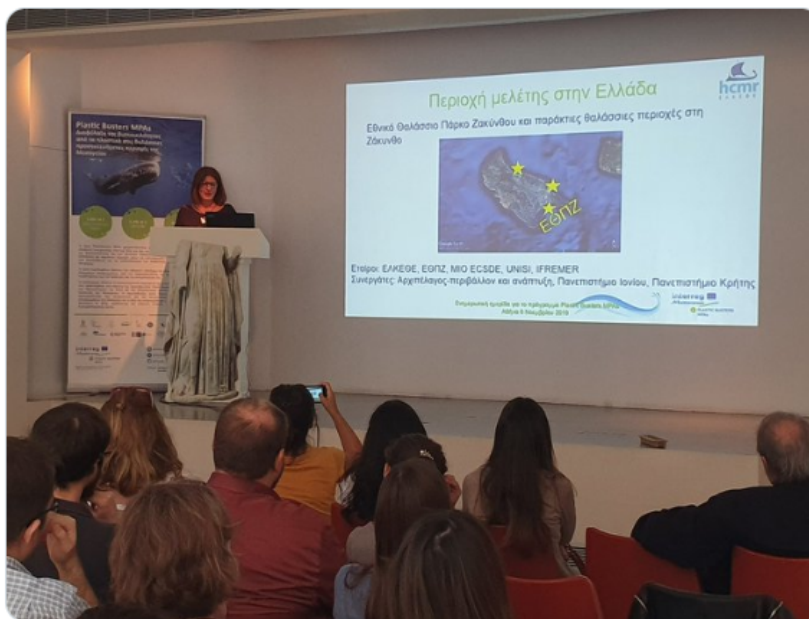
and the related Facebook and Twitter accounts.

The screenshot shows the HCMR website with a news article. The article title is "Έργο Plastic Busters MPAs: Ενημερωτική Ημερίδα στις 6 Νοεμβρίου 2019 στην Αθήνα". The article text describes the event, mentioning the participation of scientists from the Institute of Oceanography (Hellenic Centre for Marine Research - HCMR) and the presentation of actions taken so far in the project. It also mentions the description of two cruises within the Zakynthos Nation. The article is dated Tuesday, 26 November 2019. There are two images: one showing a group of people in a meeting and another showing a presentation slide.

The screenshot shows a Facebook post from the page "Τομέας Βιολογικής Ωκεανογραφίας Ελκεθε - Biological Oceanography, HCMR". The post is dated 8 November at 12:07. The text of the post reads: "Last Wednesday, 6th November 2019, the Plastic Busters MPAs Info Day took place at the Ionic Centre in Athens. The event was co-organised by the scientists of the Institute of Oceanography (Hellenic Centre for Marine Research - HCMR) participating in the Plastic Busters MPAs Interreg Med Project and MIO - ECSDE. Dr Catherine Tsangaris presented the actions taken so far by HCMR in the project. The presentation included the description of two cruises within the Zakynthos Nation... See more". The post includes a large image of the event and a video thumbnail. The post has 1 comment and 4 shares. The Facebook interface shows the page name, navigation menu, and related pages.

Excellent presentation of strategies followed to monitor macro- and [#microplastics](#) effects at Zakynthos island marine protected area by Dr Cathrine Tsangaris
[@BiologicalHcmr](#) [@PlasticB_MPAs](#)
[#beatplasticpollution](#) [#cleanseas](#)

Μετάφραση Tweet



1:17 μ.μ. · 6 Νοε 2019 από [Ιωνικό Κέντρο \(Ionic Center\)](#) · [Twitter for Android](#)

|| Προβολή δραστηριότητας Tweet

1 Retweet

MIO-ECSDE also disseminated information on the Plastic Busters Info Day via its communication channels (website, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn):

<https://mio-ecsde.org/plastic-busters-mpas-actions-to-combat-marine-litter-featured-at-an-info-day-held-in-athens/>

The screenshot shows the MIO-ECSDE website with a green header bar containing contact information and a navigation menu. The main content area features a news article with a large photograph of an audience at a meeting. The article text describes the event and its objectives.

Recent News

- Moving forward on EU measures to ensure a circular design of fishing gear for the reduction of environmental impacts 21/02/2020
- La Convention de Berne approuve pleinement les plaintes de MEDASSET concernant les habitats majeurs des tortues marines 12/02/2020
- Bern Convention fully embraces MEDASSET's complaints about important sea turtle habitats 12/02/2020
- Call for applications for piloting marine litter prevention and mitigation measures in Mediterranean MPAs 28/01/2020
- Les ONG environnementales lancent un nouveau plan de lutte contre la pollution marine en Méditerranée

Plastic Busters MPAs actions to combat marine litter featured at an info day held in Athens

Nov 10, 2019 | News

More than 80 representatives from Greece of the academic and research community, international organizations, national and local authorities, management bodies of coastal and marine protected areas, the private sector as well as NGOs, came together at the Plastic Busters MPAs Info Day, held on November 6th in Athens. The event was organized by two of the project partners, the Hellenic Centre for Marine Research (HCMR) and the Mediterranean Environment, Culture and Sustainability Office (MIO-ECSDE).

The main objectives of the meeting were to raise awareness on the marine litter issue, inform about the activities of the project, initiate discussion between marine litter research groups and local authorities, private companies, NGOs, other stakeholders, as well as to present good practices implemented at regional, national and local levels in tackling marine litter. Invited speakers were representatives of HCMR, MIO-ECSDE, the General Secretariat for Natural Environment and Water (Greek Ministry of Environment, Energy and Climate Change), the Mediterranean Action Plan of the United Nations Environment Program (UN Environment/MAP), the Zakynthos National Marine Park and the Aristotle University of

The screenshot shows a Facebook post from the MIO-ECSDE page. The post includes a photo of the event and a text description. The Facebook interface elements like the navigation bar and search box are also visible.

MIO - ECSDE
@MIOECSDE

85 dedicated marine litter practitioners and other stakeholders joined the Plastic Busters MPAs Info Day, held on November 6th in Athens, to share experiences and exchange knowledge on issues addressing the whole management cycle of marine litter, from monitoring and assessment, to prevention and mitigation in coastal and marine protected areas. On behalf of the organizers, MIO - ECSDE and Hellenic Centre for Marine Research - HCMR, thank you all for coming! 🙌
If you would like to keep track of the Plastic Busters MPAs advances subscribe to the newsletter <https://bit.ly/2O20XXR>






5. List of participants

	Όνομα	Name	Institution/ Organisation	Position	Address	Phone number	email	Signature
1	Αργυρώ Αδαμοπούλου	Argyro Adamopoulou	HCMR/NTUA	PhD Student				
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10	Χριστίνα Ζέρη	Christina Zeri	HCMR					

	Name	Surname	Institution/ Organisation	Position	Address	Phone number	email	Signature
11	Χρίστος Ιωακειμίδης	Christos Ioakeimidis	UN Environment / Mediterranean Action Plan	Marine Litter Expert	Vas. Konstantinou 48, Athens		christos.ioakeimidis@ un.org	
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