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**Comments following the meeting of the  
Preparatory Committee  
Trilateral Wadden Sea Forum  
Leeuwarden 30th January 2002**

WWF was pleased to attend the PrepCom meeting and participate in the formation of a Wadden Sea Forum. We believe that the future of our marine areas can not be secured without the participation of the people involved in its management and those who have an effect on the areas' natural environment.

WWF is pleased that all members of the WSF will be expected to act trilaterally. We feel that it is important to make all efforts to ensure a balanced representation not only from all interest groups but also all of the four regions.

We are pleased it was stated at the PrepCom that the Final Report will be submitted directly to trilateral governments as the common view of the Wadden Sea Forum. We feel that important unresolved differences of opinion between members of the Wadden Sea Forum should be recorded in the Report, along with suggestions for further work to help reach consensus in the future.

We also recommend that the Report include the Forum's evaluation of stakeholder involvement, i.e. the representation of interests in terms of time, involvement and recording their views.

The Wadden Sea Forum can be seen as an important further step towards Integrated Coastal Management for the entire Wadden Sea Region. The value of Integrated Coastal Management (also known as ICZM - Integrated Coastal Zone Management) for protection of important habitats and the sustainable use of coastal resources is already proven through the EU's Life-funded ICZM Demonstration Programmes, including a Socio-economic study. ICZM also supports implementation of the Aarhus Convention, and will be essential to implement the emerging ICZM Strategy for Europe (to be completed this year). The EU Council's Common Position on the 6th Community Environmental Action Programme also supports ICZM for the purpose of "sustainable use and management of land and sea taking account of environmental concerns".

We believe that the valuable process of producing a Report by the WSF and the WSF as such should result in:

- productive recommendations to all three governments
- a strengthened understanding of the Wadden Sea as ONE region with a unique heritage and

common interests

- the existing trilateral decisions such as the Guiding Principle, the Ecological Targets and the Wadden Sea Plan better understood in the Public and better followed at management decisions
- stronger working relationships between stakeholders and a network of contacts
- justification for continuance of a Forum similar to that of the WSF, and maintenance of a stakeholder network to aid managers, decision-makers and those with an interest in the area.

Further comments are set out below and annotated in relation to the PrepCom Agenda:

## **5. Working Method**

In order to ease the workload of the secretariat, some participants could take over jobs such as co-ordinating or chairing certain thematic groups.

### **5.1 Thematic groups/committees**

There must be strong links established between thematic groups in order to reach consensus wherever and as soon as possible, and for an exchange of information and views.

#### **Involving Local Communities**

At the PrepCom meeting it was stated that Local Authorities on the WSF would represent the views of local communities. In the long term, local communities should be more directly involved in management of the Wadden Sea. However, to enable widespread involvement of local communities is a major challenge, and if they are to be involved, thought must be given to:

- Facilitating sufficient dialogue - half a job may be worse than none.
- Commitment to accepting and incorporating their views in the work of the WSF.

The only feasible ways for local communities to actively participate at this stage may be by developing a discussion forum on the Internet, through mailings, and by holding regional meetings.

The WSF should report on how local communities can be involved in management of the Wadden Sea in the future.

### **5.2 External studies**

Thematic groups and areas of study:

It should be demonstrated that those involved:

- use all available data and information
- identify the gaps in current knowledge
- justify newly commissioned studies

WWF also believe that the WSF should make every effort to make new scientific information widely available when it is produced, in order to aid those who already manage or have an interest in the Wadden Sea.

#### **5.4 Products**

We support the agreement that paperwork should be kept to a minimum. Documents submitted for meetings and the final Report should be of a minimum size. This view should be presented as guidance to the WSF and the Forum should decide on specifics.

#### **6. Financial matters**

The need for core secretariat resources should not be underestimated:

- To set up and maintain the network of the WSF, advisory bodies, thematic groups and possibly a wider mailing list.
- To provide secretariat support to the WSF and the Thematic Groups
- Help to inform the media and wider public
- To co-ordinate an Interreg bid
- If Interreg bid is successful, detailed reporting back and many extra meetings would be required.

In order to ensure the success and smooth running of the WSF, we recommend that the number of secretariat personnel be at least of the size suggested in the preparatory papers.

This is based on Mrs Brown's experience of the Severn Estuary Strategy, where 2 personnel were fully employed over a 5-year period. The operation included a large Steering Group of 50 members and a core Working Group of 12 who met monthly, plus a Stakeholder Group of 25 who met over a 3 month period and then continued to help prepare the final document. A Strategy was produced 5 years after identifying a wide range of issues.

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