

**Regional Input of UN Environment/MAP-Barcelona Convention Secretariat
into the Concept Paper of the Secretary-General of the Conference for the Partnership Dialogues
in relation to themes 1 and 2**

a) Status and trends

The Mediterranean Sea is home to a large diversity of ecosystems and species subject to considerable pressures. Its coasts account for 30 per cent of global tourist arrivals. Development of large and mega-cities is increasing pressures from the rising population levels and the accumulation of economic activities in coastal zones. Mediterranean agricultural products and diet have a global reputation, but depend on the sustainability of rural landscapes, resources and decent working conditions. Global shipping routes through the Mediterranean make the density of maritime traffic exceptional for a semi-closed sea. The recent surge of interest in the exploitation of hydrocarbons and minerals under the Mediterranean seabed poses also increased risks for the environment.¹

The total population of the Mediterranean countries was estimated at 466 million in 2010, and is predicted to reach 529 million by 2025². More than a third of the Mediterranean region's population lives in coastal localities in less than 12% of the surface area of the Mediterranean countries. The population of the coastal areas of the Mediterranean could reach 174 million by 2025.³

Recent assessments show Mediterranean habitats, ecosystems and living resources to be far from good environmental status, as a result of a combination of the inherent characteristics of the region and the human pressures described above. There is an increasing recognition of the existing cumulative threats and the need to address them in a coordinated manner, in order to preserve the ecosystems while maintaining the livelihoods and cultural heritage of coastal communities.

b) Challenges and opportunities

The State of the Mediterranean Marine and Coastal Environment Report (UN Environment/MAP, 2012) highlights the following as the major issues requiring coordinated policy and management responses in the coming years in order to stem the tide of degradation of the Mediterranean ecosystems:

- Coastal development and urban sprawl;
- Chemical contamination of sediments and biota;
- Eutrophication (mostly of local concern);
- Marine litter, concentrated mostly in bays and shallow waters;
- Over-exploitation of coastal and marine resources beyond sustainable limits;
- Sea-floor integrity affected mainly by bottom fishing, but also by dredging and offshore installations;
- Invasive non-indigenous species;
- The impact of marine noise on biota, especially on marine mammals;
- Changed hydrographic conditions caused by local disruption of circulation patterns, due to humans-made structures;
- Marine food webs affected by fisheries pressures;

¹Decision IG 22/2 Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development 2016-2025, Part 1

²The total population grew from 276 million in 1970 to 412 million in 2000 (a 1.35% increase per year).

³Decision IG 22/1 UNEP/MAP Mid-Term Strategy 2016-2021, Part 2, The General Picture and the MAP System. The population grew from 95 million in 1979 to 143 million in 2000

- Unsustainable patterns of consumption and production as upstream drivers of the above mentioned pressures and impacts on marine and coastal ecosystems;
- Pressures on biodiversity;
- Climate change impact.

Adopted within the framework of the Mediterranean Action Plan, the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols are the major regional legally binding agreements applicable to all Mediterranean coastal states and to the European Union. For more than four decades, the Convention has been providing a framework for the protection of the marine and coastal environment and sustainable development in the Mediterranean region and for addressing its key challenges.

In their recent 19th Meeting (COP 19, February 2016), the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention adopted a Mid-Term Strategy for the period 2016-2021, with the vision of “A healthy Mediterranean with marine and coastal ecosystems that are productive and biologically diverse contributing to sustainable development for the benefit of present and future generations.”⁴ The strategy aims to guide the path for the protection of the Marine Environment and Coastal Region of the Mediterranean and contributes to sustainable development of the Mediterranean Region. ,

In addition, COP19 adopted a number of decisions that specifically address the regional challenges described above and implement Agenda 2030. Those include:

- Mediterranean Sustainable Development Strategy 2016-2025, which follows the Sustainable Development Goals aiming for their implementation at regional level;
- Offshore Action Plan draft Decision, in the framework of the Offshore Protocol, which addresses the governance framework for the Protocol’s implementation, in addition to the development of regional offshore standards, guidelines and the establishment of a regional offshore monitoring programme and reporting aspects;
- Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme of the Mediterranean Sea and Coast and Related Assessment Criteria (IMAP), which is based on monitoring and reporting obligations under the Convention and its Protocols. It aims to enable a quantitative based analysis of the state of the marine and coastal environment in an integrated manner. It covers pollution and marine litter, biodiversity, non-indigenous species, coast, and hydrography based on common regional indicators to assess Good Environmental Status;
- Regional Strategy for Prevention of and Response to Marine Pollution from Ships, which contains twenty-two objectives to be achieved by 2021 in relation to marine pollution from ships, as well as a set of implementation goals;
- Action Plan on Sustainable Consumption and Production, which identifies goals and actions as well as a common roadmap for all Mediterranean countries to shift to sustainable consumption and production patterns. This Action Plan places the Mediterranean region at the forefront of the global and regional efforts in the development of the 10 Year Framework of Programmes;
- Climate Change Adaptation Framework, which aims to address vulnerability and adaptation needs of the Mediterranean marine and coastal region. It is a very important instrument for all Mediterranean riparian states in their adaptation efforts to climate change;

The above decisions aim to complement the long-standing work of UN Environment/MAP in assessing, controlling and preventing marine pollution, assessing and protecting marine and coastal biodiversity. They also provide direct support and guidance to the Contracting parties to take effective and adequate relevant measures to meet the Ecological Objectives adopted in 2012 and achieve the overall Good Environmental Status of the Mediterranean Sea and Coast.

⁴ Decision IG 22/1 UNEP/MAP Mid-Term Strategy 2016-2021, Part 3, The Mid-Term Strategy Principles and Model

Moreover, the Contracting Parties have adopted 10 Regional Plans addressing issues such as Waste Water treatment, Marine litter, Mercury, Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs), and bathing waters. These Regional Plans address pollution prevention and reduction from several sectors, and include legally binding measures and timetables for their implementation at national level by 2025.

Being the first legally binding regional instrument, the Marine Litter Regional Plan aims to minimize marine litter presence and its impacts in the Mediterranean, by preventing its entering into the marine environment, removing existing litter where possible, and increasing knowledge. Land-based marine litter in the Mediterranean is mainly made of plastics, - floating, on beaches, and on the sea floor - (up to 83.0%) and of textiles, paper, metal and wood (17%).

The Contracting Parties have also agreed on Programmes of Measures and Regional Plans⁵ to protect endangered species, marine vegetation and ecosystems. In addition, over the years the MAP system has developed substantive tools and mechanisms to enhance the Mediterranean regional governance to implement SDG14. These can be categorized in three main groups:

- a. Development and application of management tools such as integrated coastal area management, Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM)⁶, Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP), Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), Specially Protected Areas of Mediterranean Importance (SPAMIs), in addition to the application of ecosystem approach and efforts to introduce Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP) and an integrated monitoring programme for the marine and coastal environment (IMAP); along with strengthening policy science interface;
- b. Development and strengthening of governance institutional mechanisms reaching towards various sectors. These include the mechanisms of the Mediterranean Commission for Sustainable Development (MCSDD), promoting the establishment of inter sectorial national steering committees and enhancing bilateral and multi-lateral collaboration with relevant regional organization including joint strategies, roadmaps or actions plans;
- c. Strengthening implementation of the Barcelona Convention, Protocols and Strategies through the establishment of a Compliance Mechanism and Compliance Committee, MAP reporting system and indicators of effectiveness of measures and enhancing synergies with relevant global conventions to maximize the level of implementation and ensure compliance.

The UN Environment/MAP Barcelona Convention is also one of the few Regional Seas Conventions, which has a specific mandate to agree on and apply management measures to areas beyond national jurisdiction (high seas through the Biodiversity and Offshore Protocols).

With the support of EU funded Projects, UN Environment/MAP has conducted some key consultation meetings on the establishment of SPAMIs, in four out of the twelve agreed priority areas in the Mediterranean: Gulf of Lions, Alboran Sea, the Adriatic Sea and the Sicily Channel/Tunisian Plateau.

⁵ Action Plan for the management of the Mediterranean Monk Seal, Action Plan for the Conservation of Mediterranean Marine Turtle, Action Plan for the conservation of cetaceans in the Mediterranean Sea, Action Plan for the conservation of marine vegetation in the Mediterranean Sea, Action Plan for the conservation of bird species listed in Annex II of the Protocol on Specially Protected Areas and Biological Diversity, Action Plan for the conservation of cartilaginous fishes in the Mediterranean, Action Plan for Coralligenous and other Calcareous Bio-Concretions and the Dark Habitats Action Plan

⁶ UN Environment/MAP-Barcelona Convention is the only Regional Sea Convention (RSC) which has developed and adopted in 2008 a Protocol on ICZM thus enhancing the governance of coastal zone, through a dynamic process for the sustainable management and use of coastal zones, taking into account at the same time the fragility of coastal ecosystems and landscapes, the diversity of activities and uses, their interactions, the maritime orientation of certain activities and uses and their impact on both the marine and land parts at the level of international/regional law.

For all priority sites, thematic reports with compiled and new scientific data have been developed⁷ and draft roadmaps were set for each respective area on the way forward to establish and declare SPAMIs in the open seas.

c) Existing partnerships

The Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development is the key structure for the implementation of the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development 2016-2025 and as such Agenda 2030 in the Mediterranean. It is a partnership and cooperation platform among governments, intergovernmental organizations active in the Mediterranean and key stakeholders, such as businesses, non-governmental organizations and academia for the regional implementation of the SDGs.

Specific partnerships have also been formed around the implementation of its 11 flagship initiatives, which are as follows:

- support the Trust Fund for Mediterranean marine protected areas;
- promote the “Green list” (IUCN World Parks Congress) in riparian states to assess the efficiency and effectiveness of parks managing bodies created;
- promote the “Environment Friendly City” Award recommended by COP18 (Istanbul Declaration, December 2013) and approved by COP19 (Istanbul Environment Friendly City Award);
- create a sustainable urban toolbox for the Mediterranean, with a view to planning cities, in order to make them inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable;
- undertake regional assessments, as well as knowledge exchanges, of high- and low-tech solutions, that have been successfully implemented to achieve waste reduction;
- establish a regional science-policy interface mechanism, including the social and behavioural sciences, endorsed by all the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention, with a view to prepare consolidated regional scientific assessments and guidance on climate change trends, impacts and adaptation and mitigation options;
- create and promote a Mediterranean business award for environmental innovation;
- integrate sustainability principles into public procurement at national and local levels;
- encourage the adoption and implementation of the Aarhus Convention on Public Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters;
- develop capacity building programmes on issues related to implementation and compliance with environmental obligations and agreements, including environmental impact assessments and strategic environmental assessments;
- Establish a publicly accessible Mediterranean integrated information system through a triumvirate of national governments, international institutions and the private sector to collate and transparently display information on the state of the environment.

In parallel to the work streams, partnerships, existing within the framework of the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development, various bilateral partnerships have been established at regional level.

UN Environment/MAP-Barcelona Convention has been working with other key regional organizations, dedicated partners, active in the Mediterranean, on the implementation of SDG14.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) has been established⁸. Joint work has been intensified through the application of the ecosystem approach of UN

⁷ specifically thematic reports on Cetaceans, Seabirds and Fisheries, with emphasis in elasmobranchs; as well as overall ecology reports

⁸ For more information please refer to the Joint Regional Input of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) and UN Environment/MAP-Barcelona Convention Secretariats into the Concept Paper of the Secretary-General of the Conference for the Partnership Dialogues theme 1 and 4 building on their joint regional efforts to implement SDG14

Environment/MAP, the development of the IMAP, to which both the Secretariats of GFCM and of the Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans in the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and contiguous Atlantic area (ACCOBAMS) were key contributors.

A specific work is also underway, with ACCOBAMS, International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and GFCM, open to other key partners, on how to address areas of common interests. As a first step, focus is on three priority sites (Adriatic Sea, Alboran Sea and Sicily Channel/Tunisian Plateau) and as a second step, focus is on a strategic sense, addressing relevant key areas of common interest for regional ocean governance.

Memoranda of Understanding have been signed also with ACCOBAMS and the Union for the Mediterranean.

Furthermore, close cooperation and work was carried out to collaborate with the International Maritime Organization (IMO) for identifying potential Particularly Sensitive Sea Areas from the SPAMI list including on the high seas.

One of the most long-standing collaboration is with IMO to address the challenges of combating pollution from maritime transport in view of facilitating the implementation of MARPOL Convention in the Mediterranean through the implementation of the Prevention and Emergency Protocol of the Barcelona Convention.

In accordance with the specific provisions of the Regional Plan on Marine Litter Management on Regional and International Cooperation (Article 18), the UN Environment/Mediterranean Action Plan has established the Regional Cooperation Platform on Marine Litter to ensure contribution of all regional partners and actors. It aims to provide coordinated support and guidance to the implementation of the Regional Plan and to act as an informal forum for consultation, exchange of good practices, and solutions seeking with all relevant stakeholders present (key regional organizations, civil society, business).

A Mediterranean platform for networking and knowledge exchange on Sustainable Consumption and Production among businesses, civil society, entrepreneurs, policy makers, and members of public administrations has also been recently established under the SwitchMed Project. This platform includes several tools, one of which is an on-line community, a database of stakeholders and successful case studies, networking events and training activities that presents a unique tool through which promoting links between all mentioned stakeholders can boost sustainable services and products and eco-innovation in the Mediterranean.

Noting science-policy interaction challenges and the great variety of scientific projects that are ongoing in the Mediterranean, which could benefit more the regional policy processes and SDG14 regional implementation, a Science-Policy Interface work-stream has been established through the support of the EcAp-MEDII EU funded Project. It aims to ensure more interaction between policy makers and researchers, with the common aim of achieving the Good Environmental Status of the Mediterranean Sea and Coast.

Furthermore, specific partnerships exist at regional level between REMPEC, the relevant component of UN Environment/MAP and the industry⁹. As such, in 2008, REMPEC and the relevant industry sector prepared a Mediterranean Government Industry Action Plan (MGICAP), with short, medium and long-term joint programmes of work, to support the planning and implementation for jointly organized activities. REMPEC is also working closely together with the global oil and gas industry association for environmental and social issues (IPIECA) with a focus on oil spill preparedness and response capacity for marine spills. As another example on cooperation with industry, a regional agreement was also signed between REMPEC and the chemical industry (National Federation of the Chemical Industry) in the context of the Mediterranean Assistance Unit (MAU).

⁹ In line with Article 11 of the Prevention and Emergency Protocol and Resolution 5 of the Conference on International Co-operation on Oil Pollution Preparedness and Response and Cooperation of 1990, which calls governments to cooperate with the oil and shipping industries, to enhance oil spill preparedness and response capacity for marine spills, as part of the Global Initiative (GI).

In addition to the above, the Mediterranean has also benefited a large project funded by the Global Environment Facility, UN Environment large Marine ecosystem Programme that enabled UN Environment/MAP to strengthen collaboration and work together with UN sister agencies, and other partners to enhance the Mediterranean Sea governance.

d) Possible areas for new partnerships

The strengthening of the existing partnerships, building on existing cooperation platforms, such as on the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development, on the Science-Policy Interface Platform, on the Regional Cooperation Platform on Marine Litter could be envisioned, with a specific focus on SDG14 targets.

Bringing together representatives of the Parties and stakeholders involved with sustainable development on a broad level, the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development would need to be further enlarged and revitalized to strengthen partnerships necessary to implement the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development ¹⁰, and the Agenda 2030 and thus SDG14.

Guiding questions for the dialogue

At the regional level, Apart from the respective Regional Seas Offices and Regional Fisheries Management Organizations that are the key players, whose cooperation is necessary to achieve SDG14 and specifically its targets 14.1, 14.2 target 14.4 in a coordinated manner?

How can stakeholder cooperation be increased to input existing regional processes relevant to SDG14 implementation in a coordinated manner?

How can coastal citizens and consumers be more engaged in the implementation of SDG14?

How can area based management measures (such as MPAs, SPAMIs, FRAs, PSAs) be more coordinated, with the common aim of achieving SDG14?

¹⁰Decision IG 22/2 Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development 2016-2025, Part 3, Ensure the implementation and monitoring of the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development 2016-2025