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19<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the  
Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment  
and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean and its Protocols

Athens, Greece, 9-12 February 2016

### **Agenda item 6: Ministerial Session**

### **Forty Years of Cooperation for Healthy and Productive Mediterranean Sea and Coast: A Collective Journey Towards Sustainable Development**

### **Background Note for Ministerial Discussion at COP 19**

For environmental and economic reasons, this document is printed in a limited number. Delegates are kindly requested to bring their copies to meetings and not to request additional copies.

## **Note by the Secretariat**

Following the discussion at the MAP Focal Points Meeting (Athens, Greece, October 2015) and the endorsement of the theme of the Ministerial session of COP 19, the Secretariat has further elaborated the original note presented in the report of the MAP Focal Point Meeting (document UNEPMED (DEPI) WG.421/26).

The attached document provides the background and suggest questions for the interventions and discussion by Ministers and/or Heads of Delegation during the Ministerial session of 11 February 2016.

***Forty Years of Cooperation for Healthy and Productive Mediterranean Sea and Coast:  
A Collective Journey Towards Sustainable Development***

**Background Note for Ministerial Discussion at COP 19**

1. The 19<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention and the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Mediterranean Action Plan (MAP)-Barcelona Convention come at a defining stage for global sustainable development and at a key moment for the future of the Mediterranean region: integrating agreed universal and transformative global goals and targets into the post-2015 development agenda, transitioning to a green and blue economy, implementing a new climate change agreement, and striving to revive and boost stagnant economies are processes with a profound impact at all levels.

**I. Forty Years of Cooperation and Achievements**

2. The Mediterranean countries, throughout their common history, have shown great success in living and dealing with change, embracing the possibilities and opportunities of the challenges they face. Through the MAP and Barcelona Convention, they agreed on a common transformative agenda for regional cooperation, partnership and solidarity, “to protect and enhance the marine environment of that Area so as to contribute towards its sustainable development” (Art. 4, para. 1 of the Barcelona Convention, 1995). Since its inception, the MAP-Barcelona Convention has been addressing the opportunities and challenges of the environment of the Mediterranean Sea and coasts, and striving to link environmental sustainability with socio-economic development. Over the past forty years, the main objectives of the Convention - assessment and control of marine pollution, protection of the marine environment and coastal zones, sustainable management of natural marine and coastal resources, strengthening solidarity among Mediterranean Coastal States - have spurred much progress.

3. The main achievements of the MAP result from the solidarity and shared commitments of the Mediterranean coastal States and the EU, all of them Contracting Parties of the Barcelona Convention<sup>1</sup>. They are highlighted below.

*a) Establishment of an advanced and comprehensive legal framework to achieve effective regional and sub-regional collaboration and national implementation*

4. The Barcelona Convention and its seven Protocols are at the core of the MAP system, ensuring coordinated action and measures based on legally binding commitments. Over time, their geographical and substantive scope has expanded, thus representing one of the most advanced legal regime worldwide for the protection of marine and coastal environment with an ambitious sustainable development dimension.

5. In addition, the Contracting Parties have adopted a historic body of decisions, strategies, plans of action, ecological objectives and targets, and programmes of measures related to pollution control, biodiversity, integrated coastal zone management, and climate change adaptation, a regional system for integrated environmental monitoring of marine and coastal environment, and an integrated framework for ecosystems-based management. These instruments have provided the guidance and shaped action at regional, national and local level within the scope of the MAP mandate.

6. Through collaboration inside the system and with stakeholders, dialogue, exchange of experiences, financial and technical support, development of guidelines and tools, research, and knowledge-building and sharing, the system has facilitated the establishment of a solid network of cooperating actors and the delivery of positive impacts ranging from the policy- and decision-making dimension to local interventions, in integrated and sectoral fields of action.

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<sup>1</sup> Albania, Algeria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Cyprus, Egypt, France, Greece, Israel, Italy, Lebanon, Libya, Malta, Monaco, Montenegro, Morocco, Slovenia, Spain, Syria, Tunisia, Turkey and the European Union.

7. The entering into force in 2011 of the Integrated Coastal Zone Management Protocol was an important achievement in an area where the MAP system has been a precursor, providing a fundamental instrument for Contracting Parties to better manage their coastal zones, and to deal with emerging coastal environmental challenges, such as climate change in a continuous, proactive and adaptive process of resource management for sustainable development in coastal areas.

8. In many instances, the MAP system has shown the way to other regional sea programmes, informing decisions and action of global relevance and contributing to the definition of fundamental aspects of environmental governance and protection beyond the regional scope of the Mediterranean Sea and coast.

*b) A transformative process to translate major sustainable development global milestones that are relevant to the MAP mandate to the regional level*

9. The MAP mandate has evolved over 40 years. In 1975 it covered monitoring and protection of the Mediterranean marine environment from pollution threats while ensuring the integrated development of the natural basin's resources on the basis of multilateral cooperation.

10. Twenty years later, MAP took up new challenges and additional commitments shaped by the results of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 1992). Its focus shifted from a pollution control oriented sectoral approach to an integrated ecosystem and coastal zone management approach. As reflected in the MSSD and in the ICZM Protocol, the goal is still to respond to challenges affecting the marine and coastal environment in a holistic and integrated manner and contribute to sustainable development in the region.

*c) A solid regional and national governance mechanism in place*

11. Guided by the Meetings of the Contracting Parties, the MAP system has built a solid and effective internal governance mechanism at regional and national levels, including collaboration with major actors, programmes and initiatives, local authorities, NGOs, IGOs, socio-economic stakeholders, the scientific community, with the purpose of enhancing the implementation of the Barcelona Convention, its Protocols and coordinated actions towards the delivery of its mandate. It may well be argued that this mechanism has contributed to bridging positions and interests that are at times diverging if not conflicting, and ultimately to peace and cooperation in a profoundly complex and diverse region such as the Mediterranean.

12. The Secretariat services provided by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and coupled with substantive and specialized contributions from thematic regional centers of excellence hosted by several Contracting Parties represent an added value of the MAP system that has generated common trust, professionalism and enhanced dedication to the region-wide long terms interests.

13. The establishment of the MCSD in 1996 as a MAP advisory body, where the Mediterranean Coastal States and partners from civil society and beyond participate on an equal footing as members, was a pioneering institutional development that continues to offer opportunities to promote the sustainable development agenda for the Mediterranean and strengthen the partnership for its achievement.

14. Finally, the MAP was the first Regional Seas Programme to establish compliance procedures and mechanisms that facilitate the implementation of the Convention and its Protocols.

*d) A unique and efficient Trust Fund for the Protection of the Mediterranean environment*

15. The establishment of the Mediterranean Trust Fund based on the ordinary and voluntary contributions of the Contracting Parties is a political achievement of major importance and quite unique

for its dimension that has helped the smooth and efficient running and management of the MAP system. It has also enhanced the ability of the system to mobilize substantial external resources that support the increased needs of the Contracting Parties in meeting their commitments and achieving the common agreed objectives.

- e) Progress towards a healthy Mediterranean with marine and coastal ecosystems that are productive and biologically diverse, contributing to sustainable development*

16. The improvement of the quality of the marine environment remains the priority objective of the MAP system and the Barcelona Convention, confirmed through the adoption and implementation of Protocols and the commitment to achieve Good Environmental Status (GES) of the Mediterranean Sea and its coastal region.

17. The reports submitted by the Contracting Parties on measures taken to implement the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols demonstrate major efforts taken in spite of difficulties and different levels of technical and economic development. Important policy, regulatory, technical and management measures are in place: the number of waste water treatment plants and solid waste landfills in the coastal cities, the use of BAT and BEP including in SME, the number of marine protected areas and SPAMIs have substantively increased over the last 20 years, and the number of pollution hotspots has been reduced.

18. The MAP system has also delivered coordinated marine pollution monitoring programmes to be soon expanded to integrated biodiversity, hydrography, coastal protection and noise monitoring and assessment programmes to assess GES in an integrated manner. Several prestigious regional and sub-regional assessments reports have addressed the state, pressures, drivers and responses at regional and national levels, as well as the main challenges to protect marine and coastal environment - taking into account environment and development interactions.

## **II. To Continue the MAP Collective Journey**

19. Still, much remains to be done in a Mediterranean region that, today more than ever, is characterized by rapid and profound change. The gap to ensure GES is not yet filled and the MAP system needs to focus on enhancing measures to reduce pressures on marine and coastal environment, to stop the decline of endangered species and ecosystem services, to promote resource efficiency and circular economy and to enhance SCP practices and adequate lifestyles.

20. Nowadays, time calls for further implementation of the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols at national level and action on the ground coupled with the application of the ecosystem approach as an overarching principle to achieve the Mediterranean Ecological Objectives and related targets towards a healthy Mediterranean with marine and coastal ecosystems that are productive and biologically diverse for the benefit of present and future generations.

- a) The Global Framework: 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development – and its implementation in the Mediterranean*

21. The global framework of the 2030 Agenda to end poverty and pursue a sustainable future commits every country to take an array of actions that would not only address the root causes of poverty, but would also increase economic growth and prosperity and meet people's health, education and social needs, while protecting the environment.

22. The 2030 Agenda is a plan of action for people, planet and prosperity. Through the 2030 Agenda, countries have committed to bold and transformative steps to shift the world on to sustainable and resilient path. The 2030 Agenda acknowledges the importance of the regional and sub-regional dimensions, regional economic integration and interconnectivity in sustainable development. Regional

and sub-regional frameworks are recognized as facilitating the effective translation of sustainable development policies into concrete action at the national level.

23. The 2030 Agenda recognizes that the world is facing immense challenges, ranging from widespread poverty, rising inequalities and enormous disparities of opportunity, wealth and power to environmental degradation and the risks posed by climate change. The 17 SDGs and 169 targets of the new agenda are meant to stimulate action. While the SDGs constitute an indivisible and universal body to be targeted in its entirety, the following ones are directly linked to the MAP system's mandate, objectives and work:

- Goal 14. Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development
- Goal 11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable
- Goal 12. Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns
- Goal 13. Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts
- Goal 17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development

*b) The Regional Framework for Sustainable Development: MSSD*

24. The 2030 Agenda welcomes the cooperation of regional and sub-regional commissions and organizations for follow-up and review providing useful opportunities for peer learning, including through voluntary reviews, sharing of best practices and discussion on shared targets and encourages states to identify the most suitable regional forum in which to engage. The 2030 Agenda also encourages states to develop ambitious national responses to its overall implementation supporting the transition to the SDGs and build on existing planning instruments, such as national development and sustainable development strategies, as appropriate and to conduct regular and inclusive reviews of progress at the national and sub-national levels which are country-led and country-driven.

25. The Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development 2016-2025 (MSSD) links to the above Agenda and its SDGs, and provides a strategic policy framework, built upon a broad consultation process, for securing a sustainable future for the Mediterranean region consistent with the SDGs. It aims to harmonise the interactions between socio-economic and environmental goals, adapt international commitments to regional conditions, guide national strategies for sustainable development, and stimulate regional cooperation between stakeholders in the implementation of sustainable development. As highlighted in its subtitle ("Investing in environmental sustainability to achieve social and economic development"), the Strategy is underpinned by the conviction that investment in the environment is the best way to secure long-term sustainable job creation and socio-economic development. It ensures that the Mediterranean region remains a frontrunner in the area of environmental and sustainability governance, and builds on synergies between the MSSD and other regional initiatives.

26. National implementation of the 2030 Agenda and of the MSSD is directly relevant to the several National Action Plans (ICZM, Pollution Reduction and Prevention, Biodiversity) developed by the Contracting Parties in the framework of MAP. Their implementation can also be closely linked to SDG targets at national level.

### **III. Suggested Questions for the Ministers' Statements**

27. The Ministerial Session of COP 19 will provide the opportunity for Contracting Parties to:

- Discuss their individual and collective achievements within the framework of the MAP-Barcelona Convention; and

- Renew their commitment and determination to address together the emerging challenges related to environmental protection and sustainable development of the Mediterranean Sea and coast, in the global framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development adopted by the UN General Assembly.
28. Ministers are invited to make their interventions around the following questions:
- a) Based on national experience, what are the main achievements of the MAP system and the challenges for achieving its mandate?
  - b) What are the priorities that the MAP system should respond to in the framework of the MSSD, to contribute to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development?
  - c) What would be the best way at national level to ensure the achievement of SDG 14 through the implementation of the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols?
  - d) How to make more effective the regional cooperation and governance mechanisms (in particular those established by the MAP system) and revitalize a Mediterranean partnership for Sustainable Development involving Contracting Parties and stakeholders?