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**Simplified Peer Review Mechanism (SIMPEER) of National Strategies for Sustainable Development:
Methodological Report**

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UN Environment/MAP
Athens, 2017



**Simplified Peer Review Mechanism (SIMPEER)
of National Strategies for Sustainable Development**

**Methodological Report
(Version 2 – January 2017)**

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List of acronyms

APRM	African Peer Review Mechanism
Barcelona Convention	Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean
BRICS+G	Dialogue about sustainability and growth in six countries - Brazil, Russia, India, China, South-Africa (the BRICS) and Germany
COP	Conference of Parties – Ordinary meeting of the Parties of the Convention of...
EPE/UNECE	Environmental Programme for Europe of UNECE
DAC/OECD	Development Assistance Committee of OECD
EPR	Environmental Performance Review
HLPF	High Level Political Forum
KMS	Knowledge Management System
MAP	Mediterranean Action Plan
MCSD	Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development
MSSD 2016-2025	Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development 2016-2025
NSSD	National Strategies for Sustainable Development
OECD	The Organisation for European Economic Co-operation
PB/RAC	Plan Bleu Regional Activity Centre (UN Environment/MAP)
PRM	Peer Review Mechanism
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SIMPEER	Simplified Peer Review Mechanism
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
UN Environment (UNEP)	United Nations Environment Programme

I. Introduction

Mediterranean countries have committed to achieve sustainable development at national level and are members of most international instruments and agreements concluded at global, regional and sub-regional levels. To implement these instruments and agreements, the Mediterranean countries have been taking a number of political, institutional, technical and operational measures at national level, to translate their commitments into action and ensure the sustainability of their economic and social development.

The approaches for sustainable development policies and actions are diverse and consist of cyclical and interactive approaches for planning, participation and action to foster progress towards sustainability. The elaboration and implementation of national strategies for sustainable development (NSSD) constitute an essential framework to ensure an effective mainstreaming of environmental challenges in economic and social development strategies and programs.

The Mediterranean countries present a broad variety in scope, content, approach and level of implementation of their NSSD, yet they share common challenges in a geographical area marked by the Mediterranean Sea, one of the most vulnerable areas to environmental pressures. The vulnerability is exacerbated by climate change impacts that are already felt and can be expected to worsen in the coming years. They also share the similar objectives of sustainable development and well-being.

The Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development 2016-2025 (MSSD 2016-2025) was adopted by the Contracting Parties¹ to the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean (Barcelona Convention) at their 19th Ordinary meeting (COP19) held in Athens, Greece, 9-12 February 2016. The whole MSSD 2016-2025 approach was based on the review and assessment of the initial MSSD (adopted in 2005), as well as on the recommendations and decisions taken at the global level in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda) and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Therefore, MSSD 2016-2025 is “*an integrative policy framework and a strategic guiding document for all stakeholders and partners to translate the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the regional, sub-regional and national levels*”².

The MSSD 2016-2025 “*provides a strategic policy framework, (...) for securing a sustainable future for the Mediterranean region consistent with Sustainable Development Goals. It aims to adapt international commitments to regional conditions, guide national strategies for sustainable development, and stimulate regional cooperation between stakeholders in the implementation of sustainable development. The Strategy is also expected to boost synergies between the work of key national and regional stakeholders, by providing a commonly-agreed framework, thereby leading to increased efficiency in the implementation of sustainable development in the Mediterranean*”³.

The progress made and the constraints faced by the countries argue for greater sharing of lessons learned and good practices as a means of mutual learning and exchange of expertise between them, since they share similar challenges and development goals. A Simplified Peer Review Mechanism is identified as a tool of mutual improvement and learning through which Mediterranean countries exchange on their respective experiences and share good policies and practices on implementing sustainable development at a national level: a process for learning from other experiences and adaptation of national approaches.

Thus, “*a Simplified Peer Review Mechanism was suggested (...) as a way to upgrade the very useful role of MSSD as a regional platform for experience exchanges*”⁴. Indeed, the Contracting Parties of the Barcelona Convention requested, in their 18th Ordinary Meeting (COP18) in Istanbul, Turkey, in

¹ Namely the 21 Mediterranean countries and the European Union.

² Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (MSSD 2016-2025)

³ MSSD 2016-2025

⁴ COP19 Decision IG.22/17 “Reform of the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development (MCSD) and Updated MCSD Constitutive Documents”, Annex 2: Peer Review.

December 2013, the Secretariat to prepare a proposal for the consideration of the MCSD on how a simplified peer review process could be put in place⁵.

This document aims at proposing a methodology to implement the Simplified Peer Review Mechanism (SIMPEER) process in view to test it at national level.

The proposed methodology is based on one hand on the analysis and comparison of existing peer review processes that are relevant for the Mediterranean context, and on another hand on the specific attributes defined by the COP19 Decisions. The following recommendations and principles have thus guided the elaboration of the methodology:

- The SIMPEER is a framework for mutual learning and improvement from different experiences and national approaches.
- Based on a voluntary basis principle, it aims at engaging a dialogue between two or more Mediterranean countries for a mutual improvement and learning process on development and implementation of the National Strategies for Sustainable Development (NSSD).
- It seeks to establish, within an agreed methodology, the exchange of experiences, policies and good practices on implementing sustainable development at national level, as opposed to creating a scrutiny framework between reviewers and countries under examination.
- The SIMPEER mechanism also aims at identifying how national processes contribute to implement and monitor the MSSD 2016-2025.
- The SIMPEER represents an important tool to enable NSSD review in line with the regional Strategy and the global SDGs specifications reflected in the MSSD 2016-2025. It could also help countries for developing their own national strategic framework on sustainable development in line with the MSSD 2016-2025, which is linked with the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs.
- Existing and relevant Peer Review Mechanisms (PRMs) are an inspiring source for the SIMPEER.

II. Review of existing and relevant peer review mechanisms

Peer review, in this context, can be described as a systematic examination and assessment of the performance of a state by other states, with the ultimate goal of helping the reviewed state improve its policy making, adopt best practices, and comply with established standards and principles⁶. This chapter examines some existing mechanisms to identify the structural elements and main features of a peer review mechanism (see Annexes 1 & 2) in order to propose the SIMPEER's structure in the following chapter.

2.1. Definition of a peer review mechanism

Although there is not a formally adopted and rigorous definition, the term peer review has taken a very specific meaning through the practice in the framework of international agreements.

OECD defines the peer review as “*basically an examination of one state's performance or practices in a particular area by other states. The point of the exercise is to help the state under review improve its*

⁵ COP18 Decision IG.21/12 supporting the reforming of the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development (MCSD), proposed by the MCSD Steering Committee.

⁶ Peer review an OECD tool for co-operation and change, ISBN 9264-09920-4, 2003 <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/10246029.2002.9628141>

*policymaking, adopt best practices and comply with established standards and principles*⁷. The peer review is therefore a combination of the activity of several actors: i.e. the body within which the review is undertaken; the reviewed country; the examiner countries; and the Organization Secretariat. The effectiveness of the process is ensured by a combination of factors among which the value sharing, adequate level of commitment, mutual trust and credibility (OECD, 2003, Op. Cit.). Peer pressure, i.e. the pressure exerted upon the beneficiary country by other countries, is also a key factor. In the case of SIMPEER, although the participating countries are not either reviewers or under review, but have both roles at the same time, as in the BRICS+G process presented hereafter, peers exert pressure through the recommendations they provide and the comments they express.

Countries ready to undergo such an in-depth assessment as the peer review may benefit from taking an increasingly positive attitude in terms of public opinion and civil society, which may also act as an impetus for countries to volunteer. The mere fact that the peer review is undergone on a voluntary basis also contributes to be more effective, as there is a willingness to bring about changes and make improvements⁸.

2.2. Overview of existing peer review mechanisms

Identified existing peer review mechanisms that are relevant and could be taken as source of inspiration for the SIMPEER are: DAC/OECD, BRICS+G, APMR, EPE/UNECE; the UNCTAD's peer review is not related to environmental and sustainable development issues, however it is considered to gain lesson from a process linked to a sensitive and well integrated sector of development.

The national reviews at the High Level Political Forum⁹ (HLPF), to assess the implementation of 2030 Agenda, are not a peer review under the strict sense, to the extent that the national report is prepared by the country itself without the intervention of the Secretariat and peer countries. However, it remains a learning process as the report is reviewed by other members, who then issue recommendations and guidance to help the country raising its challenges and promoting its successes, at annual meetings of the HLPF.

These peer reviews (see Annex 1) share the same structural elements, as follows:

- a system of reference (in this case the MSSD 2016-2025);
- an agreed on set of principles;
- standards and criteria against which the performance of the reviewed country is assessed (analytical framework);
- designated stakeholders to carry out the review (organizational chart); and,
- a set of procedures leading to the final result (process phases).

Table 1 in Annex 1 summarizes those elements for each considered peer review mechanisms.

The process is straightforward and kept as simple as possible, with a preparatory phase, a consultation phase and an assessment phase followed by the dissemination of results and outcomes. These phases involve different actors according to predefined and well-known rules.

The BRICS+G platform has a different approach to all other peer review mechanisms: there is no one country under review and other reviewer countries but all involved countries are both, being at the same recipients of learning and providers of guidance. It is also different from the other mechanisms as it is not an institutionalized process with a permanent secretariat and structure (questionnaire, preparatory report, country mission...). Its preparatory phase includes identification and definition of common and

⁷ Peer review an OECD tool for co-operation and change, ISBN 9264-09920-4, 2003 http://www.keepeek.com/Digital-Asset-Management/oecd/economics/peer-review_9789264099210-en-fr#page15

⁸ UNCTAD

⁹ <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf>

approved questions to guide national conferences. This step helps to involve all national stakeholders and constitutes a broad national consultation preparatory to peer review at international level.

2.3. Approach for the SIMPEER

The approach adopted for the design of the SIMPEER is based on the common pattern of existing peer review mechanisms, consisting on three main phases: preparatory, consultation and assessment phases. These three phases are the backbone of the peer review, they are often supplemented by a communication phase of the peer reviews' results and by a process of monitoring of the implementation of recommendations of the assessment phase. The approach adopted for the SIMPEER also focuses on dissemination and knowledge management of lessons learned so that the learning process is as efficient as possible.

To build the three essential phases of the SIMPEER, we rely on the state of the art regarding peer review mechanisms, as briefly presented in the previous paragraphs, and on the guidelines set by the Contracting Parties through the COP19 Decision IG.22/17 and its Annex 2, in particular.

Thus, the SIMPEER represents a way to:

- Build a framework for mutual learning and improvement from other experiences, seeking to identify examples of good practices and policies that could be of interest for other countries;
- Upgrade the role of the MCSD as a regional platform for exchanges of experiences and good practices;
- Engage the dialogue between two or more Contracting Parties for a mutual improvement and learning process on NSSDs.

The principles underlying the SIMPEER are proposed with particular reference to the Contracting Parties' expectations and needs as reported in the COP19 Decision and its Annex 2 cited above. The SIMPEER is therefore based on the following principles:

- **Voluntary involvement:** The involvement in the SIMPEER is voluntary and based on the choice of at least two countries to undertake a collaborative meaningful process of mutual improvement and learning. To do this, the process must present clear and attractive incentives to raising awareness and mobilize countries. Thus, the SIMPEER, in addition to its learning and improvement aspects through the challenges identified by peers and solution proposals they bring, should be an opportunity for the Contracting Party under review to value its assets, knowledge and expertise particularly through the identification of good practices and their dissemination.
- **Equal participation:** Usually, existing assessment mechanisms are based on the assessment of a Contracting Party by other peer Contracting Parties. For the SIMPEER, it is proposed that all Contracting Parties participating in the review are at the same time reviewers and under review. Thus, all Contracting Parties are involved in the same way, in the reflection and discussion with a view to drawing conclusions and producing recommendations. In order to do this, the project team prepare background materials based on a desktop analysis of documents and information provided by the reviewed Contracting Party, gathering also additional information from other documents and stakeholders. These reports, after validation by concerned Contracting Party, will be circulated to all other Contracting Parties, reviewed and discussed during a face-to-face meeting.
- **Learning by doing and sharing:** Contracting Parties engage in constructive and positive joint effort based on gathering and sharing information on respective practices and experiences. The elaboration of countries reports should follow a common template, known by all parties so that they are all on the same level of knowledge and information and convinced that they are addressed in the same way and that the results are comparable from one Contracting Party to another.
- **Participatory and peer-based process:** One Contracting Party is scrutinized not only by peers but also, and especially, by stakeholders from her country. The participation of relevant national

stakeholders (e.g. government departments, economic actors, civil society, academia, donors) at the level of policy-making, experts and/or practitioners, is crucial to the success and credibility of the process. The consultation phase during the country mission constitutes an important opportunity to mobilize various national stakeholders during meetings and/or roundtables, face-to-face interviews, etc. The role of media is also crucial to disseminate information about the process and raise public awareness about the outputs.

- **Flexibility and adaptability based on a common methodology:** The process should be sufficiently flexible so that involved Contracting Parties can agree on thematic scopes, as well as procedures leading to final results. Even if the elaboration of country reports follows strictly a common template under an analytical framework, a degree of flexibility allows the identification of questions or issues of particular interest that should be further elaborated during the country mission and during the face-to-face meetings.
- **Simplicity:** The SIMPEER mechanism should be as simple as possible, first with regard to the limited available resources but also to avoid further disruption of the countries that are challenged by several other review mechanisms, reporting processes to international agreements and conventions, etc. Thus, the SIMPEER builds on the achievements of other existing mechanisms, avoiding “reinventing the wheel” and relying on existing information and data. The simplicity of the process regards also the composition of the review team (maximum 3 to 4 experts), the duration and content of country missions, and the organization of the face-to-face meetings and interviews.

III. Design of the SIMPEER

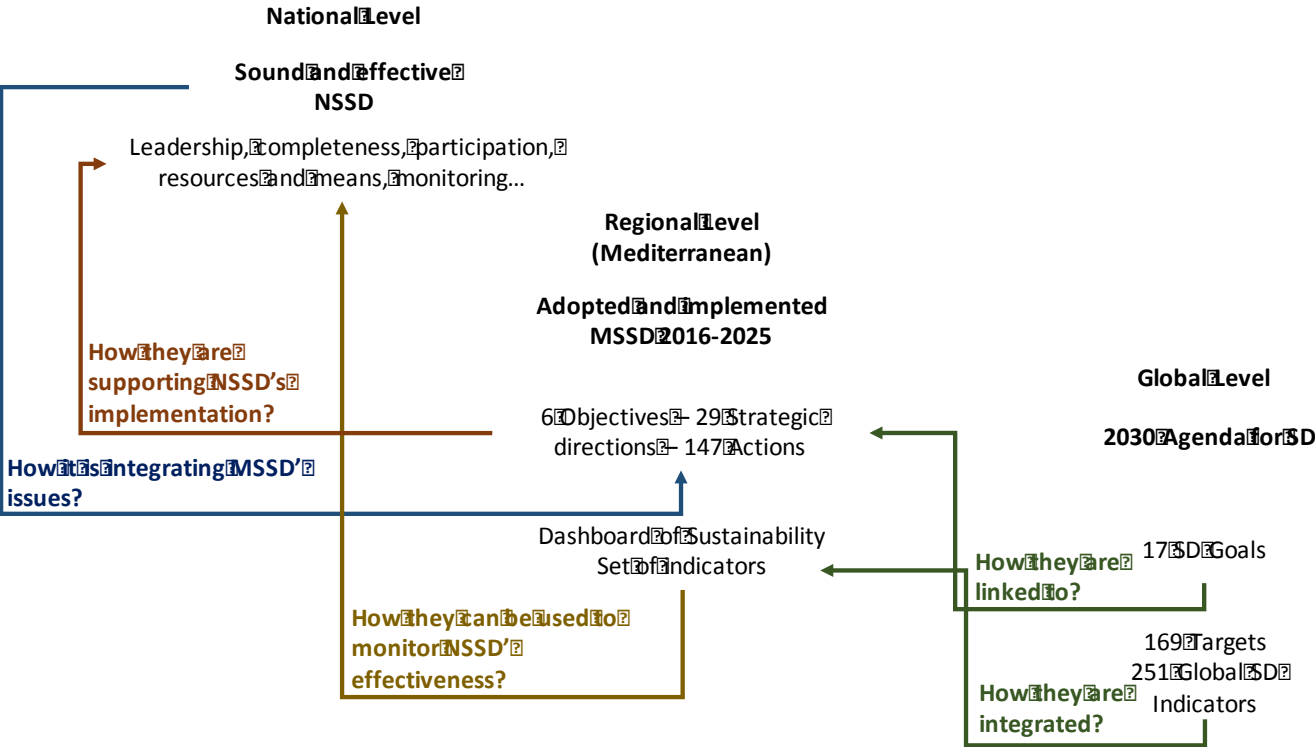
Based on the principles outlined above, and experience gained from existing methodologies and approaches, the SIMPEER is characterized by the following main elements:

3.1. System of reference and analytical framework

The SIMPEER is intended to assist Contracting Parties of the Barcelona Convention in their efforts to achieve sustainable development through integrating environmental concerns into sectorial policies, strengthening cooperation with international community, and integrating recommendations and decisions of international agreements into national initiatives.

The SIMPEER is therefore a tool to enable NSSD review in line with the MSSD 2016-2025, which was formulated in line with the outcomes of the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) and the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs. It aims therefore to provide a platform of dialogue between two or more Contracting Parties of the Barcelona Convention on national development structures and processes to engage in a mutual improvement and learning process. While assisting Contracting Parties in their efforts to implement (or define or review) their NSSD and to achieve assigned objectives, the mechanism contributes also to the implementation and monitoring of the MSSD 2016-2025 and its declination at the national level. At the national level, the SIMPEER builds on all the reviews performed by the country in different frameworks, and, in particular, on voluntary review of the implementation of the SDGs submitted to the HLPF.

Figure 1: Linking national to regional and global levels



The SIMPEER’s scope is more on the overall structures and processes that are in place to implement sustainable development at the national level rather than on thematic issues and sectors. The focus is placed on concrete experiences in designing, managing, implementing, and monitoring of national policies and activities to achieve sustainability. The MSSD 2016-2025 Objectives and Strategic directions should be at the core themes of exchanges and dialogue. In addition, as the MSSD 2016-2025 is based on linking the Mediterranean Strategy to the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs, the strategic goals, measures and actions planned at national level are seen under the light of national responses to these global processes.

Thus, the SIMPEER analytical framework has to be built on the common elements characterising a sound and effective NSSD. According to past experiences and current practices reported by several studies (see Annex 2), the main elements of NSSDs’ analysis should refer to:

- leadership, country ownership, and strong political commitments;
- completeness, addressing the linkages among the three sustainable development pillars (i.e. integrated economic, social and environmental objectives across sectors, territories and generations);
- governance, inclusiveness, broad participation, effective and institutionalized partnerships, and building trust;
- resources and means of implementation (clear objectives and responsibilities, developing capacities and enabling environment, focus on outcomes);
- monitoring, evaluation and reporting of the process, the outcomes, and the impacts.

To complete the SIMPEER’s analytical framework, the elements listed above should be put in perspective with MSSD 2016-2025 Objectives and Strategic directions. Translated into a proposed template, the SIMPEER shall set the methodological guidelines, while allowing some flexibility to adapt to the specificities of each Contracting Party.

Such a template is made up of a set of questions that would be considered in drafting the report for each Contracting Party and in identifying specific questions to be raised with the country under review during the consultation phase. These questions should allow answering on how strategic goals, measures and actions planned at national level under the framework of the NSSD respond to the MSSD 2016-2025 – which is the regional strategy integrating the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs to the regional and national level –, putting emphasis on the five elements listed above.

The Annex 3 provides a first draft of such template.

3.2. Process and phases of the SIMPEER

- **Preparatory and planning phase:**

- Volunteer Contracting Parties are identified and involved (at least two – maximum four Contracting Parties per cycle/biennium).
- Methodological approach (report and roadmap) is defined and discussed with MCSD members and volunteer countries.
- Desktop analysis is prepared for Contracting Parties who have to provide full material to the SIMPEER's team project.
- Based on the desktop analysis, questions are elaborated.

- **Consultation phase:**

- Country mission: National meetings where consultations take place using the template of questions. Although national representatives are welcomed to participate in all national consultations of other countries, the process can run without their presence if they have time constraints for travelling or/and in case of limited budget. The methodology, roadmap and set of questions for discussion are known beforehand to all parties participating in the review, so that they can subsequently comment on draft national reports of other countries involved in the process.
- Synthesize national reports combining findings of desktop analysis and answers to template questions.
- All national reports are sent to the volunteer Contracting Parties before the face-to-face meetings (peer review meeting) take place, for completion and comments, asking them to share their experience and lessons learned.

- **Review phase:**

- Face-to-face meeting(s) is (are) organized with all Contracting Parties participating, SIMPEER's team project, and UN Environment/MAP-Barcelona Convention Secretariat to review countries reports and finalize recommendations and lessons learned. The MCSD Steering Committee could also attend this(ese) meeting(s) subject to resources availability. Ownership and participation are ensured by making clear that this is a reciprocal process: all peer Contracting Parties participating receive recommendations and support for completing or/and improving their NSSD only if they provide the same for the other peers.

- **Approval-Dissemination-Presentation of outcomes:**

- Dissemination at national level: Ideally, it should be done rapidly, before momentum and commitment are lost¹⁰. The results of the review and lessons from the process should be disseminated in the reviewed and peer Contracting Parties, reporting also to

¹⁰ PRIME-SD - Peer Review Improvement through Mutual Exchange on Sustainable Development: A guidebook for peer reviews of national sustainable development strategies - 2006

the stakeholders involved in NSSD implementation, the general public, etc. Plan Bleu website could act as a repository for review documents.

- Reports and outputs of the SIMPEER process are first presented to and discussed by MCSD and its Steering Committee, and then to National Focal Points at their Ordinary Meeting (side-event or included in the regular Agenda of the COP) and feed the SIMPEER's knowledge management system for an exchange of lessons among the Mediterranean countries.

3.3. Indicative timeline for a full scale SIMPEER

The SIMPEER is a biennial exercise, which is scheduled to take place during the inter-sessions of COPs. Its actual duration is 18 months to allow time for the implementation of administrative procedures required, before to start the process (preparation of terms of reference, call for experts' applications, selection of experts of the project team, etc.) and, after, to prepare documents for the COP (revision, translation, dissemination to members, project decision, etc.) in the agreed timeframe.

Table 1: The SIMPEER's schedule

	M1	M2	M3	M4	M5	M6	M7	M8	M9	M10	M11	M12	M13	M14	M15	M16	M17	M18
Preparatory Phase																		
Identification of Volunteer CPs																		
Desktop analysis																		
Elaboration of questions																		
Consultation Phase																		
National meeting																		
Synthesis of national report																		
Consultation among reviewed countries																		
Review Phase																		
Organization of the meeting(s)																		
Face-to face meeting																		
Finalization of review reports																		
Dissemination																		
National level																		
Regional level																		

3.4. Organizational chart

The SIMPEER is supervised by the MCSD Presidency in close collaboration with MCSD Steering Committee, who has an oversight role for the whole process. The SIMPEER is implemented by the UN Environment/MAP-Barcelona Convention Secretariat through its Plan Bleu Regional Activity Centre (PB/RAC), acting as technical secretariat for this activity.

The PB/RAC mobilizes a team of experts for the implementation of this activity, which is included in the MAP Programme of Work; the SIMPEER's project team includes a PB/RAC programme officer and two consultants (Peer Review Senior Expert and Sustainable Development Senior Advisor).

At the national level, the main actors are the Government representatives, usually the Ministry of the Environment, National Focal Points of the Barcelona Convention and the MCSD, and specific contact

person appointed to facilitate and follow-up the process. The Government representatives should ensure the involvement of key stakeholders at national level, notably for the consultation during country mission. Other MAP components will be involved where needed, in relation with specific themes considered.

3.5. Description of expected outcomes and results

The main outcomes of the SIMPEER process are:

- At the national level, of involved countries in the process:
 - Working and technical reports are available for Contracting Parties involved in the process as background documents for the consultation phase, and then finalized after integrating missions and consultations inputs and results.
 - The second version of the working and technical documents are shared, in a second round, among Contracting Parties participating in the process, as background documents of the assessment phase.
 - Final review report for each participating Contracting Party are finalized with assessment phases' results and inputs, and especially, recommendations and proposed actions to address identified weaknesses and challenges. The Final Review report is linked with the methodology and content of the National Reviews at HLPF, where they are applied and available, as to provide more synergy between MCSDD and HLPF, as well as implementation of MSSD 2016-2025 with implementation of the 2030 Agenda.
 - After validation by the considered Contracting Party, the final document should be disseminated at the national level through a national conference, a press conference or other events.
- At the regional level:
 - The master report “Simplified peer review mechanism of national strategies for sustainable development” including the methodological report and the roadmap, as well as the results of the desktop analysis and the consultation meetings in participating Contracting Parties (country and mission reports).
 - Synthesis and fact-sheets for policy-makers and other stakeholders are elaborated to enhance the results and make them available for all Contracting Parties and partners.
 - Dedicated virtual platform or data repository for the SIMPEER is updated with final national reports highlighting national expertise and good practices.

3.6. Knowledge management and capacity building

The SIMPEER is essentially a learning and capacity building process: by evaluating each other on the basis of documents submitted and information provided, Contracting Parties learn from each other and share their knowledge. This can include enhancing skills in relation to certain issues; good practices exchanged between them are a powerful tool of learning-by-doing action.

Regarding knowledge management, the lessons learned from the SIMPEER shall refer more to the process in itself. A Knowledge Management System (KMS) should be as simple as possible, complementary to existing systems, and providing an added value, not a redundancy. It should be a “showcase” for the achievements, experience, knowledge and good practices of reviewed Contracting Parties, and thus constituting an incentive for Contracting Parties of join the process and take chance to enhance their overall achievements. Thus, the SIMPEER’s KMS could be a dedicated and user-friendly page of the Plan Bleu website where the main outputs of the process shall be posted, by each cycle, for example:

- Country fact-sheet with the key sustainable development indicators;

- The expertise of Contracting Parties (experts and institutions);
- Good practices identified during the assessment and face-to-face meeting(s);
- All SIMPEER deliverables (methodological report, desktop analysis results, mission reports...);
- Specific indicators that are not available in other KMSs.

IV. Implementation of the SIMPEER process at the national level

The process is based on a voluntary commitment of the reviewed Contracting Parties. Two Contracting Parties are a minimum to initiate the process, but three Contracting Parties would be ideal. Regional balance would allow for involvement of Contracting Parties at different levels of development and different environmental and development cultures and practices, representing one Contracting Party from each sub-Mediterranean region (North, South and East) / UN Environment/MAP Groups.

As far as Contracting Parties are identified and committed, the SIMPEER's implementation will follow phases described above according to the following framework.

Table 2: Overview of the SIMPEER's illustrative timeline

Months	M1	M2	M3	M4	M5	M6	M7	M8	M9	M10	M11	M12	M13	M14	M15	M16	M17	M18	
Phases	Preparatory Phase																		
					Consultation Phase														
Stakeholders						Review Phase								Dissemination Phase					
MAP Secretariat	Mobilize Contracting Parties and attract their involvement					Identify opportunities to organize face-to-face meetings back-to-back with bodies meetings, invite participants, provide logistic arrangements									Include related items into Meetings of the MCSD and its Steering Committee, COP's agenda				
MCSD Steering Committee																			
Plan Bleu (PB/RAC)												Face-to-face meetings							
SIMPEER Project Team	Elaborate methodology & roadmap – Perform in desk analysis – Identify specific questions					Prepare background documents, Power Point presentations, list of participants, etc.							Elaborate background documents and Power Point presentations, and knowledge management products						
					Prepare country missions, elaborate second version of national report and circulate it				Moderate discussions, note outcomes and review reports										
RACs	Provide scientific and thematic support when and where needed																		
Volunteer Contracting Parties (Countries)	Provide information and documents – Engage stakeholders in discussions – Finalize questions					Organize SIMPEER's project team mission – Review reports and provide recommendations and propositions				Attend meetings, introduce, discuss, and review country reports		Validate final version of the report		Organize wide stakeholder event					
Mediterranean Countries (MAP NFPs – COPs)	Express willingness to be involved into exercise														Discuss and review assessment results, improve the process, providing recommendations and expressing needs and expectations for future cycles				

V. Conclusion

The adoption of MSSD 2016-2025 by Contracting Parties of the Barcelona Convention at their 19th Ordinary meeting (COP19) in February 2016 shows their willingness to translate the commitments made at international level, including those related to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs into concrete actions and programs integrated both at the national and the regional levels, and addressing institutional, legal and operational issues.

The successful MSSD 2016-2025 implementation depends heavily on the degree of involvement and adherence of Contracting Parties of its principles and orientations. This is why the Contracting Parties have proposed a mechanism of peer review to consolidate their efforts towards sustainable development, through mutual learning, sharing successful experiences, taking lessons from the successes and foreseeing solutions for bottlenecks and challenges.

The SIMPEER is therefore a tool to enable NSSD review in line with the MSSD 2016-2025 and its contribution to the global SDGs specifications. It aims therefore to provide a platform of dialogue between two or more Contracting Parties on national development structures and processes to engage in a mutual improvement and learning process.

It seeks to establish within an agreed methodology the exchange of experiences, policies and good practices on implementing sustainable development at national level, as opposed to creating a scrutiny framework between reviewers and Contracting Parties under examination. This peer review mechanism aims also at contributing to the MSSD 2016-2025 implementation and monitoring. The SIMPEER represents an important tool to enable NSSDs review in line with the regional Strategy and as a contribution to the global SDGs specifications.

In line with COP18 Decision IG.21/12 requesting the Secretariat to “*prepare a proposal for the consideration of the MCSD on how a simplified peer review could be put in place*”, UN Environment/MAP-Barcelona Convention Secretariat supported by its Plan Bleu Regional Activity Centre (PB/RAC) has launched a consultation process to test a pilot on such simplified peer review mechanism; terms of reference were developed, two consultants have been identified and a methodological road map was elaborated (Annex 4).

This test is performed on three main phases:

- 1) Literature review of existing peer review mechanisms and analysis of their performances and constraints;
- 2) Design of a simplified peer review mechanism in line with MSSD 2016-2025 Vision and Objectives, and test application with the involvement of two to four volunteer Contracting Parties;
- 3) Review of the mechanism by MAP’s system bodies (MCSD Steering Committee and ad-hoc meetings) and National Focal Points, then submission to COP20.

To avoid reinventing the wheel, existing peer review mechanisms relevant for the SIMPEER were analysed (Annexes 1 and 2). While based on the common pattern identified, consisting of three phases (preparatory, consultation, and assessment), the SIMPEER is characterized by its own specificities: Simplicity being a central aspect regarding the need for resources mobilized; Adaptation to the needs and expectations of the Contracting Parties of the Barcelona Convention; Reference on the MSSD 2016-2025 and the Mediterranean context. In addition, no reviewer / under review relation is established between Contracting Parties since they are all at the same level, through equal participation, providing and getting recommendations, information, advice, good practices, and lessons learned.

The SIMPEER is designed to link national level to regional and global levels. The MSSD 2016-2025, which was developed taking into account the need to streamline the 2030 Agenda and SDGs process in the Mediterranean, is at the core of the mechanism: NSSDs are analysed according to its system of reference and the dimensions recognized as necessary to ensure the relevance and effectiveness of a sustainable development strategy (leadership, governance and participation, resources and means of

implementation, monitoring). The components of the analysis are defined in terms of Objectives, Strategic directions and Actions of the MSSD 2016-2025, which are themselves linked to the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs. The indicators are also strongly linked to the indicator set for monitoring the implementation of the MSSD 2016-2025 to stay in the same logical framework and to avoid burden Contracting Parties with other logical framework and set of indicators.

In addition, the SIMPEER is not meant to add to the burden of processes, commitments and compliance obligations of countries. To the contrary, it aims at becoming an incentive that will allow the collection and synthesis of all work done by a country, not only in relation to the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs, but also in relation to thematic conventions and agreements (e.g. Climate, Biodiversity, Desertification, Pollution etc.). In doing so, it shall reflect how this work done by the country affects the progress it is making towards integrating those thematic policies in its overall development strategies, policies and action. In this way, the SIMPEER wishes to be a tool that does not add to the workload of national administrations, but rather becomes an effective tool of integration and awareness.

As experience with applying the SIMPEER shall develop over-time, the process proposed in this document will be reviewed, improved, and continually adapted to changing context at national and regional level.

The success and effectiveness of the SIMPEER process is largely dependent of the combination of a number of factors, which include: value sharing, adequate level of commitment, mutual trust, openness and credibility. Thus, it is important that Contracting Parties of the Barcelona Convention are fully aware of the process and strongly committed in its implementation, and that all participants put in place enabling conditions, in particular adequate resources to perform the process.

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Annex 1: Overview of existing peer review mechanisms relevant for the SIMPEER

OECD Development Assistance Committee peer review

The DAC/OECD groups together the world's main donors, defining and monitoring global standards in key areas of development¹¹. Since 1962¹² and in order to promote its learning process, the DAC undertakes periodically, every five years, reviews and assessments which critically examine policies and programs of each DAC members, once every four or five years.

The peer review is prepared by a team, consisting of representatives of the Secretariat working with officials from two DAC members who are designated as "examiners", it comprises three major phases:

- The preparatory phase: The first phase of the review often consists of background analysis and of some form of self-evaluation by the country under review. This phase includes work on documentation and data as well as a questionnaire prepared by the Secretariat;
- The consultation phase: The examiner countries and the Secretariat conduct the consultation by maintaining close contact with the competent authorities of the reviewed country, and in some cases, they carry out site visits. At the end of this phase, the Secretariat prepares a draft of the final report;
- The assessment phase: The draft report is discussed in the plenary meeting of the body responsible for the review. The examiners lead the discussion, but the whole body is¹³ encouraged to participate extensively. Following discussions, and in some cases negotiations, the final report is adopted, or just noted, by the whole body.

The DAC/OECD's peer review process is a unique experience for learning about the characteristics of effective development co-operation systems, in the light of internationally agreed standards, commitments and principles (the Paris Declaration and Accra Agenda for Action). It is a process that seeks a common understanding of aid practice and provides regular feedback on innovative ways in which donors have made progress towards more effective aid management. Key lessons from peer reviews have been developed and are available in OECD's website¹⁴.

BRICS+G - Dialogue about sustainability and growth in six countries - Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa (the BRICS) and Germany

This is a platform for exchange among experts (government, economic actors and civil society) of the countries involved about their experiences with sustainability and growth; it was initiated and organized, in 2005, by the German Council for Sustainable Development (RNE) and the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ) GmbH.

The dialogue was conducted in two stages: in the first instance, six national conferences were held, after which representatives from these conferences came together for an international dialogue¹⁵.

The connection between sustainability and growth was discussed with emphasis on: (i) examples from thematic areas such as energy, resource management and the social dimension, and (ii) concrete experiences with designing, managing and implementing national strategies for sustainability or comparable approaches. Four lead questions were identified to guide national and international discussions:

- What is the current state of the NSSD (overview/stocktaking)?

¹¹ <http://www.oecd.org/dac/>

¹² <http://www.oecd.org/dac/peer-reviews/50yearspeerreviews.htm>

¹³ <http://www.oecd.org/dac/peer-reviews/lessons-peer-reviews.htm>

¹⁴ <https://www.oecd.org/site/peerreview/peerreviewataglance.htm>

¹⁵ BRICS+G Sustainability and Growth, Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa and Germany in Dialogue on Sustainability Strategies, A Conference Report

- How is the NSSD linked to Sector Policies? (evaluating experiences from at least two exemplary sectors: Energy, Natural Resources and/or the Social Dimension)
- What were factors for successes and failures of the NSSD and why? What conclusions are being drawn?
- What are the conclusions regarding the relation of the NSSD, sustainability and growth?

Participants at the international conference expressed their belief that the dialogue that had initially been started with the BRICS+G project should continue in some form or other¹⁶. The outcomes of the several dialogue sessions organized at national and international levels were reported by RNE and GTZ in a booklet.

African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM)

The APRM was initiated in 2002 and established in 2003 by the African Union in the framework of the implementation of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD)¹⁷. It has been put in place with the mandate to ensure that the policies and practices of participating countries conform to the agreed values in the following four focus areas: democracy and political governance, economic governance, corporate governance and socio-economic development. As part of the APRM there are periodic reviews of the participating countries to assess progress being made towards achieving the mutually agreed goals.

The primary purpose of the APRM is to foster the adoption of appropriate laws, policies, standards and practices that lead to political stability, high economic growth, sustainable development and accelerated sub-regional and continental economic integration. This is done through sharing of experiences and reinforcement of successful and best practices, including identifying deficiencies and assessing the needs for capacity building.

Structurally the peer review mechanism is constituted as such:

- The Committee of Participating Heads of State and Government (APR Forum) is the highest decision making authority in the APRM;
- The Panel of Eminent Persons (APR Panel) oversees the review process to ensure integrity, considers reports and makes recommendations to the APR Forum;
- The APRM Secretariat provides secretarial, technical, coordinating and administrative support for the APRM; and,
- The Country Review Mission Team (CRM Team) visits member states to review progress and produce an APRM Report on the country;
- The national commission, focal point and governing council ensure, at national level, participatory and transparency of the process.

Country review reports as well as annual progress reports elaborated by reviewed countries are disseminated through the APRM's website¹⁸.

Peer review of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)

The voluntary peer review of competition and policy (PRCs) are one of the core activities of the UNCTAD, it aims to provide technical assistance in the implementation and formulation of competition law and policies. Peer reviews are conducted by competition policy experts from both developing and developed countries with a focus on developing countries. The peer review is delivered, since 2005, on the occasion of the annual session of the Intergovernmental Group of Experts (IGE), held in Geneva.

¹⁶ Op. cit.

¹⁷ <http://aprm-au.org/pages?pageId=history>

¹⁸ <http://aprm-au.org/publications?nXerGdt=10>

The process has three major steps:

- Consultation phase which involves the production of a peer review report after analysis of the reviewed country's competition law and policies;
- Assessment phase during which the under review country and a formal panel of reviewers work together to shed light on the issues at hand. The reviewing panel has an advisory role and assists the beneficiary country to address the weaknesses pointed out by the peer review report. Dissemination events held in the under review country;
- Post assessment phase to highlight areas and issues for possible improvement.

The overall level of implementation of the recommendations made in the framework of UNCTAD's Peer Review is rather satisfying – approximately 50% of the recommendations were taken on board by the various reviewed countries and their competition agencies.

Environmental Performance Review (EPR) / United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE)

The EPR is a program of the UNECE to assist UNECE member States that are not part of the Organization of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in assessing their environmental performance through the analysis of progress and challenges and provision of advice to help countries move towards environmental sustainability.

The main stages to carrying out an EPR include preparation, review mission, expert review, peer review, publication and dissemination of the EPR report in the reviewed country. Each stage consists of a number of activities to be completed by various actors: i.e. the government of the country under review, the EPR Program Secretariat, the EPR review team, the expert group and the Committee of Environmental Policy. Each review is managed on the basis of an implementation plan prepared by the Secretariat in cooperation with the country under review.¹⁹

EPR process can support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda by integrating a review of progress in achieving SDGs into the methodology. Also, as countries move forward with the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and monitoring of the SDGs, the lessons learned from the EPR methodology can be very useful in designing peer-learning processes for reviewing the achievement of the SDGs.

Through the peer review mechanism, the reviewed and reviewing countries learn from each other and share experiences and best practices. The reviews also contribute to the implementation of many international environmental agreements.

National review at High Level Political Forum (HLPF)²⁰

Meeting at a special summit at the United Nations in September 2015, world leaders committed themselves to an ambitious global agenda, “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”, with the overarching goal of eradicating poverty and achieving sustainable development. All States and all stakeholders recognized their respective responsibilities for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. In paragraph 72, Governments also emphasized that a robust, voluntary, effective, participatory, transparent and integrated follow-up and review framework would make a vital contribution to implementation.

One of the core elements of the follow-up and review framework of the 2030 Agenda is volunteer national reviews by the HLPF, when it meets under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council.

¹⁹ UNECE, Information paper, 20 years of Environmental Performance Reviews: Impacts, lessons learned and the potential to integrate the Sustainable Development Goals, Submitted by UNECE and UNEP, 27 May 2016, ECE/BATUMI.CONF/2016/INF/5

²⁰ United Nations, 2016- Critical milestones towards coherent, efficient and inclusive follow-up and review at the global level- Report of the Secretary General- A/70/684
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As with the Forum's thematic reviews of SDGs and its examination of the report on global progress towards the SDGs, these reviews will assess progress in implementing the universal goals and targets, including the means of implementation. Their focus should be the whole of the Agenda 2030.

It is critical to engage major groups and other stakeholders throughout the review process, including at the national and subnational level. It will thus be beneficial to the review that Governments ensure inclusiveness and participation through the appropriate mechanisms. Progress in doing so could also be highlighted in national reviews at the HLPF.

The success of the review system will ultimately be determined by its ability to help translate the 2030 Agenda into a nationally owned vision and related objectives, leading to transformative action. This can only happen if reviews building on existing structures draw on contributions from all stakeholder groups.

Volunteer national reviews aim to enable mutual learning across countries and regions and help all countries, in particular those being reviewed, to enhance their national policies and institutional frameworks and mobilize necessary support and partnerships for the SDGs implementation.

Country-level reviews and preparations are, in and of themselves, useful, as they can reveal challenges at the domestic level and enhance cooperation across ministries and institutions. They can help to reduce silos and identify gaps and areas where support is needed.

Table 3: Synthesis of existing peer review mechanisms

	OECD/DAC	African Peer Review Mechanism	BRICS+G	UNCTAD	Environmental Performance Review / UNECE
Referential	Paris Declaration Busan Partnership The Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation, the OECD development strategy and the DAC Program of Work and Budget (PWB)	African and international Treaties and Declarations	NSSD	Set of Multilaterally Agreed Principles and Rules for the Control of Restrictive Business Practices, UN/GA, 1980	Environmental treaties and declarations Principal goals of the European Environmental Strategy
Analytical framework	Seven key dimensions essential for delivering effective development co-operation and humanitarian assistance in various development contexts For each dimension, a series of components of analysis is proposed with corresponding indicators	Four Focus areas - For each area, key objectives, standards, criteria and indicators	Set of agreed questions discussed at national level, then at international level		Three standard chapters and two specific topics chosen by the reviewed country Set of indicators
Scope / Aim / Objectives	To improve the quality and effectiveness of development co-operation policies and systems, and to promote good development partnerships for better impact on poverty reduction and sustainable development in developing countries	To foster the adoption of policies, standards and practices that lead to political stability, high economic growth, sustainable development and accelerate sub-regional and continental economic integration through sharing of experiences and reinforcement of successful and best practices,	To offer a platform for an open exchange among experts drawn from government, business, academia and civil society of the participating countries. To create a favorable atmosphere for comparing the countries' respective policies for sustainable	To provide technical assistance in the implementation and formulation of competition law and policies To assist developing countries in adopting and enforcing effective competition law and policy that are suited to their	To assist European-non-OECD countries in improving their environmental situation and promote the harmonization of environmental policies in the UNECE region Improving environmental governance and financing in a green economy context, strengthening cooperation

	OECD/DAC	African Peer Review Mechanism	BRICS+G	UNCTAD	Environmental Performance Review / UNECE
	To promote continually improved development co-operation practices in a complex and rapidly changing environment	including identifying deficiencies and assessing the needs of capacity building	development, exchanging experiences and evaluations, and drawing conclusions regarding NSSD	development needs and economic situation	with the international community and environmental mainstreaming Assessment of the progress towards achievement of the SDGs
Organizational chart	Role of DAC Chairman's, DAC Secretariat, Examiners, Examined member's	National Commission, Focal point and Governing council, National Secretariat, Technical Research Institutes APRM's Secretariat APR's panel of eminent experts	Project document		Government of the reviewed country, the EPR Programme secretariat, the EPR review team, the Expert Group on EPRs and the Committee on Environmental Policy
Processes / Phases	Preparation, visits in the field, Mission to the capital, Peer review meetings, Editorial session, Publication, Follow-up	Five stages: Constituting national structures and country self assessment (Questionnaire), Mission in country, drafting report, submission draft report to APRM Secretariat, launch of the report	Six national conferences were held, Organization of an international dialogue in Germany with representatives from national conferences	Three major steps: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation phase (Peer Review Report) • Assessment phase • Post assessment phase • Preparation of a technical assistance and capacity building project proposal to fulfil the recommendations of the Peer Review Report. 	Kick-off, review mission, peer review by the Working Party on Environmental Performance (WPEP) Launch, Follow-up and monitoring
Dissemination	Publication in DAC Journal	Edited report	Report		Edited report

	OECD/DAC	African Peer Review Mechanism	BRICS+G	UNCTAD	Environmental Performance Review / UNECE
Monitoring / Follow-up	Six to eighteen months after publication, visit in the country to discuss adoption of the recommendations made at the time of the peer-review meeting	Review once every five years			Voluntary report of the reviewed country
Timeline	6 months	6 months	One year (2005)		12 to 18 months
Financial aspects	DAC budget	APRM Trust Fund (African contribution = 73%)	Germany + BRICS contribution	UNCTAD Budget	Funded mainly by voluntary contributions from UNECE member countries, which in some cases provide experts in kind

Annex 2: Identification of common elements to characterise a sound and effective NSSD according to a brief literature review

IISD, 2004	EC/DG Env, 2006	ESDN, 2015	OECD, 2001	UNEP, 2014	OECD, 2006
Leadership	Country ownership and commitment	Long term principle	People centred	Country ownership and commitment	Policy integration
Planning		Integration	Consensus on long term		Intergenerational time frame
Implementation	Integrated economic, social and environmental objectives across sectors, territories and generation, and policies designed to achieve them	Participation	Comprehensive and integrated	Integrated economic, social and environmental objectives across sectors, territories and generation, and policies designed to achieve them	Co-ordination and institutions
Monitoring, learning and adaptation		Reflexivity	Targeted with clear budgetary priorities Based on comprehensive and reliable analysis		Local and regional governance
Co-Ordination	Broad participation and effective partnership	Vertical integration		Broad participation and effective partnership	Stakeholders participation
Participation	Developing capacities and enabling environment	Horizontal integration	Incorporate monitoring, learning and continuous improvement	Developing capacities and enabling environment	Indicators and targets
	Clear objectives and responsibilities	Monitoring processes	Country lead and nationally owned	Focus on outcomes and means of implementation	Monitoring and evaluation
	Focus on outcomes and means of implementation	Review processes	High level government commitment and influential lead institutions		
		Participation processes	Building on existing processes and strategies		
			Effective participation		
			Link national and local levels		
			Develop and build on existing capacity		

Annex 3: Analytical framework and template

NB: The main issues for the framework and review template are included in the table below

Fundamental dimensions	Components of analysis	Core questions	Attempted answers	MSSD 2016-2025 related provisions (SD: Strategic direction; A: Action)
I. Leadership and ownership	1.1 Strong political commitment	<p>Is the NSSD developed in the context of MSSD 2016-2025 implementation? What (other) political context is there for the development of the NSSD (or other national strategy)?</p> <p>Is this part of a national policy process (e.g. national/regional development, economy, environmental policy etc.) or is it isolated / self-contained?</p> <p>To which extent the NSSD' vision and objectives are coherent with MSSD 2016-2025 Vision?</p>		<p>Decision IG 22/2, COP19, commits to the implementation and follow-up of the MSSD 2016-2025, with the view to translate global sustainable development aspirations and goals into action at the regional, sub-regional and national levels in partnership with relevant institutions..</p> <p>To be compared with MSSD 2016-2025 Vision and guiding principles.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>the importance of an integrated approach to environmental and development planning;</i> - <i>an openness to a plurality of future development models; a balanced approach to territorial development;</i> - <i>the precautionary and polluter pays principles;</i> - <i>a participatory approach to policy and decision-making;</i> - <i>the importance of evidence-based policy;</i> - <i>the reconciliation of long- and short-term in terms of planning and evaluation;</i> - <i>transparency; and,</i> - <i>the partnership between the MAP system and other international and regional organizations.</i>

Fundamental dimensions	Components of analysis	Core questions	Attempted answers	MSSD 2016-2025 related provisions (SD: Strategic direction; A: Action)
	1.2. Sound leadership and ownership of the process	<p>What level of national authority/ies lead the NSSD development process?</p> <p>What are the different parts of government involved?</p>		
	1.3. Shared strategic and programmatic vision	<p>Do the national sectorial policies take into account the NSSD process?</p> <p>Is the NSSD reflected within the national sectorial policies?</p> <p>What about inter-ministerial coordination and dialogue?</p>		<p>A-2.1.5. Achieve a sustainable balance between production of food, use of water and use of energy, through improving energy and water use efficiency, promoting the use of renewable energy sources, as well as through the introduction of institutional and legal reforms.</p> <p>SD 6.3. Promote implementation and compliance with environmental obligations and agreements including through policy coherence based on inter-ministerial coordination.</p>
	1.4 Approach for the process	What is the methodology and process agreed for the NSSD development?		
	1.5 Demonstrating commitment and focus	<p>At what level is the national administration committed to completing and implementing the NSSD?</p> <p>How this commitment is legally established?</p>		A-1.1.1. Strengthen the implementation of the Barcelona Convention and its Protocol and other regional policy instruments through enhanced prioritization and result-based management through ministries with environmental and budget portfolios and implementing line agencies.
	1.6 Leadership for the implementation of the NSSD	<p>Who is responsible to lead the implementation?</p> <p>Which parts of government participate and in what capacity?</p>		A-6.3.1. Ensure ratification, compliance and implementation of global and regional agreements related to environmental sustainability, to guide actions at national and regional levels.

Fundamental dimensions	Components of analysis	Core questions	Attempted answers	MSSD 2016-2025 related provisions (SD: Strategic direction; A: Action)
	1.7 Integration of regional and international commitments into NSSD	Do the NSSD integrate MSSD 2016-2025 Objectives, strategic directions and actions?		SD 1.1. Strengthen implementation of and compliance with Protocols of the Barcelona Convention and other regional policies.
II. Completeness, integrated economic, social and environmental objectives	2.1 Linking different sectors	<p>Are the different sectors for national economic, social, and environmental policy effectively connected within the NSSD?</p> <p>Are there key sectors particularly emphasized in the NSSD? Which are they?</p> <p>Are the priority sectors identified in the NSSD consistent with the strategic directions of the MSSD 2016-2025? What are they?</p>		<p>A-2.1.5. Achieve a sustainable balance between production of food, use of water and use of energy, through improving energy and water use efficiency, promoting the use of renewable energy sources, as well as through the introduction of institutional and legal reforms.</p> <p>About Green Economy: To be put in perspective with the 4 Strategic objectives of the SCP AP (Food and agriculture; Industry and good manufacturing; Tourism, Housing).</p>
	2.2 Effectively addressing SDGs	Which are the relevant SDGs addressed by the NSSD?		MSSD Table 1. Linking the objectives of the MSSD 2016-2025 to the Sustainable Development Goals MSSD Table 3. Targets in the MSSD 2016-2025
	2.3 Linking the short-term to the medium and long term	<p>What is the timeframe of the NSSD? Is there a medium-term and long-term vision?</p> <p>How are they reflected in the Objectives and Actions of the NSSD?</p> <p>Are they consistent with MSSD 2016-2025 Objectives and SDGs?</p>		A-6.1.1. Strengthen preparedness prevention and cooperation plans and alert mechanisms in case of (natural and human-made) disaster, as well as adaptive actions

Fundamental dimensions	Components of analysis	Core questions	Attempted answers	MSSD 2016-2025 related provisions (SD: Strategic direction; A: Action)
	2.4 Intergenerational principles for Sustainable Development	What are the principles in the foundation of the NSSD setting the basis for long-term, inter-generational sustainable development?		A-2.1.4. Put in place participative cross-sectorial resource management strategies to ensure that renewable natural resources are extracted in ways that do not threaten the future use of the resources, and without exceeding their maximum sustainable yield
III. Governance and inclusiveness - stakeholder participation and ownership, good governance of the process	3.1 Appropriate inclusion of civil society, academia, media in the process	Are the non-government stakeholders (civil society, academia, media, etc.), appropriately included in the process of developing and implementing the NSSD?		A-7.1.1. Ensure a wide participation of relevant organizations in sustainable development management at the national level through the setting up of sustainable development commissions, councils, fora, and networks as appropriate.
	3.2 Mechanism in place for broad consultation and stakeholder involvement	Do stakeholders play an active role throughout the development process or are they only included as comment providers at specific stages?		SD 6.2. Promote the engagement of civil society, scientists, local communities and other stakeholders in the governance process at all levels, in order to secure inclusive processes and integrity in decision-making A-6.2.1 Set up, where relevant, and strengthen the capacity of national governments and local authorities for public participation in terms of legal frameworks and human and financial resources
	3.3 Timing and regularity of consultation process	What are the specific benchmarks for the NSSD development process? What is the role of stakeholders in each of those stages?		A-6.2.2. Support and strengthen the organizational capacity of local, national and regional stakeholders in terms of legal frameworks and human and financial resources.
	3.4 Participation in the NSSD implementation	What is the role of stakeholders in the NSSD implementation? Are there implementation activities specifically regarding the involvement of stakeholders, or is the NSSD government-centred?		

Fundamental dimensions	Components of analysis	Core questions	Attempted answers	MSSD 2016-2025 related provisions (SD: Strategic direction; A: Action)
		Is there a specific role for development/financial institutions?		
IV. Resources and means of implementation	4.1 Coherence between budgets and strategic priorities	<p>Does the NSSD have a budget for implementation and description of the sources of financing / resources?</p> <p>Is there an analogy between the objectives/actions and the resources committed for the NSSD implementation?</p>		A-2.3.3. Set up financial mechanism to support policies ensuring the provision of environmental and social services
	4.2 Integration of SD objectives and action plans in Ministries strategies and budgets	<p>Is the implementation of the NSSD reflected in the budgets and action plans of the ministries and other administrations involved?</p> <p>Is there a specific identification of actions and resources for the ministries?</p>		
	4.3 Participation of non-government stakeholders (banks, private sector, NGOs) also in provision of resources and implementation process	<p>What is the role of non-government stakeholders in the provision of resources (financial, human, know-how, etc.) for NSSD implementation?</p> <p>Is there a specific plan for mobilizing the private sector and the financial/development institutions?</p>		A-2.3.3 Set-up financial mechanisms (national funds, payment for ecosystems services, compensations) to support policies ensuring the provision of environmental and social services
V. Monitoring	5.1 Methodology for monitoring put in place	<p>Is there a methodology in place for monitoring implementation of the NSSD?</p> <p>How many MSSD 2016-2025 and SDGs targets and indicators are integrated into national Sustainable Development monitoring devices?</p>		A-6.5.1 Establish or strengthen support for data monitoring processes including through survey information as well as national centres providing integrated and publicly accessible information

Fundamental dimensions	Components of analysis	Core questions	Attempted answers	MSSD 2016-2025 related provisions (SD: Strategic direction; A: Action)
	5.2 Public information provided on the results of monitoring	<p>Is there a mechanism for dissemination the outcome of monitoring? Who is responsible and what are the target audiences and channels of dissemination?</p> <p>What is the regularity of monitoring cycles and information provision?</p>		<p>A-6.5.2 Foster joint knowledge-creation and knowledge-sharing initiatives between stakeholders (...)</p> <p>A-6.5.5. Establish a publicly-accessible Mediterranean information system through triumvirate of national governments, international institutions and the private sector to collate and transparently display information on the state of environment</p>

Annex 4: Methodological roadmap following COP19 Decision IG.22/17 – Annex 2

I. Background

This annex provides the methodological road map based on the COP19 Decision IG.22/17 – Annex 2 related to the implementation of the Simplified Peer Review Mechanism (SIMPEER) of the National Strategies for Sustainable Development (NSSD) in Mediterranean countries.

It is based on the following recommendations and principles:

- The SIMPEER is a framework for mutual learning and improvement from past experiences and other national approaches;
- Based on a voluntary basis principle, it aims at engaging a dialogue between two or more Mediterranean countries for a mutual improvement and learning process on NSSD;
- The SIMPEER seeks to establish within an agreed methodology the exchange of experiences, policies and good practices on implementing sustainable development at national level, as opposed to creating a scrutiny framework between reviewers and countries under examination;
- This peer review mechanism aims also at contributing to the MSSD 2016-2025 implementation and monitoring;
- This SIMPEER represents an important tool to enable NSSD review in line with the regional Strategy and as a contribution to the global SDGs specifications;
- Existing and relevant Peer Review Mechanisms and Environmental Performance Review should be an inspiring source for the SIMPEER;
- This mechanism could also help countries for developing their own national strategic framework on sustainable development in line with the MSSD 2016-2025 and/or SDGs;
- The methodology is based on two main kinds of activities: in-desk review and analysis, and participatory consultation process.

II. Methodology in phases

Phase 1: In-Desk Review (Q3, 2016)

1.1. Analysis and synthesis of existing and relevant peer review mechanisms (Jul. 2016)

- Existing mechanisms, source of inspiration for the SIMPEER: OECD, Africa Union, BRICS+G, UNCTAD, EPR of the UNECE, national review at HLPF;
- For each existing mechanism, qualitative and brief analysis: Identification of Referential, Analytical Framework, Scope and Aim, Organizational Chart, Indicators, Process/Implementation-Main Phases, Results and Approval Process, Dissemination, Monitoring, and Financial aspects;
- Comparison of existing mechanism putting them into perspectives of the SIMPEER: need for identification of parameters to be taken into account.

1.2. Collect, review, analyse, and synthesize National Background documents (Jul. 2016 – Feb. 2017)

- Identification of volunteer Contracting Parties to participate to the 2016-2017 exercise;
- Elaboration of Country reports (2, max. 3) based on collected and available materials (NSSD, state of environment, annual reports, specific reports, EPR...). They should be used to steer the

discussions during missions in countries and other brainstorming meetings. They could be structured as follows:

- Analysis of the institutional framework, plus implementation and monitoring/follow-up (indicators);
- Focus on specific theme(s) (not necessary the same for all countries), taking into account good practices and lessons learned from experiences;
- Focus on questions and observations that will set the basis for the discussion with the Peer Reviewer/Reviewed countries, based on countries' reports;
- The referential should be the MSSD 2016-2025: in NSSD, what is in line with regional Strategy (good practices of interest for another country) and what is missing (gap analysis)?

Phase 2: Design and test of the SIMPEER (Q3 & Q4 2016 – Q1 2017)

2.1. Definition of the SIMPEER (July 2016)

- System of reference: MSSD 2016-2025 and SDGs. While, the SIMPEER should be more modest than existing mechanisms regarding (limited) available resources, it is specific regarding its system of reference (MSSD 2016-2025) and well adapted to the Mediterranean context;
- Analytical framework: from (global and) regional perspective(s) to specific national context;
- Aim/scope of the SIMPEER (adaptable methodology, possibly by focusing down on specific theme);
- Process/phases:
 - Preparatory-planning phase
 - Consultation phase (data and information collection, analysis, memorandum, meetings/round-tables) (see below, test of a pilot at national level)
 - Assessment phase
 - Approval-dissemination-joint presentation of outcomes/monitoring
- Organizational chart: Role of participants (Contracting Parties, MCSD Steering Committee, UN Environment/MAP-Barcelona Convention Secretariat, Plan Bleu...) in each phase. It is worth noting that the innovation of the proposed mechanism is to make all involved countries being reviewer and under review country, in the same time and on equal participation;
- Description of expected outcomes and results;
- Peer review shared platform: knowledge products (guidance notes and working paper) issued from peer-review reports, etc.

2.2. Test of a pilot SIMPEER at a national level (Aug. 2016 – Feb. 2017)

- Identification, with the volunteering countries, of lead questions in line with the methodology that will guide the overall dialogue discussions and related meetings/round-tables (specific themes);
- Identified successes and main constraints ⇒ adapted analytical framework to national context and definition of the national SIMPEER's extent and scope;
- Conceptual note preparing the mission in the country: objectives, expected results, agenda, persons/stakeholders to be interviewed, meetings – round-tables to be organized;
- Consultative and participatory phase (missions, interviews, meetings...);

- Exchanges of reports among volunteer Contracting Parties by emails, feedback and comments;
- Face-to-face meeting with involved countries and review-team to discuss reports and finalize recommendations.

Phase 3: Consultation and approval stage, reporting, dissemination (Q4 2016, Q1, Q2, Q3 2017)

- Review of the SIMPEER by MCSD and UN Environment/MAP NFPs:
 - Submission of the methodological report to MCSD Steering Committee for feedback, comments, and approval;
 - Presentation to involved countries for information and possible comments;
 - Dissemination at the end of the process to all MCSD members & UN Environment/MAP NFPs;
 - Submission to COP20.
- Reporting:
 - Master Report: “MSSD 2016-2025 implementation through the simplified peer review mechanism”;
 - Working documents / technical reports:
 - Methodological report (handbook);
 - Missions reports (analysis and synthesis of missions in countries);
 - Country reports (2-3) (see phase 2 above).
- Dissemination:
 - Synthesis for decision-makers and/or policy paper;
 - Website, flyer, fact sheets, etc.

Table 4: Summary of the Methodological Road Map

Activities	Outputs	Who?	Deadline
Phase 1: In-desk reviews			
1.1. Analysis and comparison of existing and relevant peer review mechanisms putting them into perspectives of the SIMPEER	Draft methodological report	Project team (Plan Bleu and consultants)	29 July 2016
1.2. National background documents	Identification of volunteer Contracting Parties for the test Country reports	Plan Bleu, Secretariat, MCSD Steering Committee Project team (Plan Bleu and consultants)	August- November 2016 September 2016-January 2017
Phase 2: Design and test of the SIMPEER			
2.2. Definition of the SIMPEER	Overview of the “MSSD 2016-2025 implementation through the simplified peer review mechanism” report	Project team (Plan Bleu and consultants)	29 July 2016
2.3. Test of the pilot of the SIMPEER	Missions and reports	Project team (Plan Bleu and consultants) Volunteer Contracting Parties	October 2016- February 2017
Phase 3: Consultation and approval stage, reporting and dissemination			
3.1. Consultation and approval stage Brainstorming, workshop, 18 th Meeting of the MCSD Steering Committee, 17 th Meeting of the MCSD, COP20	Agenda and related preparatory materials, meeting report 2 nd Draft, Revised draft, Final draft, Final master report “MSSD 2016-2025 implementation through the simplified peer review mechanism”	Project team (Plan Bleu and consultants)	Dates tbc
3.2. Reporting Master report “MSSD implementation through the simplified peer review mechanism”	See 3.1 above	Project team (Plan Bleu and consultants)	
3.3. Dissemination	Synthesis for decision-makers Web-site	Project team (Plan Bleu and consultants)	October 2017