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Third Meeting of the Regional Cooperation Platform on Marine Litter in the Mediterranean

Izmir, Turkey, 11-12 October 2018

Report of the Meeting

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Table of Contents

	Pages
Report of the Meeting	1 - 5
Annex I: List of Participants	
Annex II: Agenda of the meeting	
Annex III: Conclusions and Recommendations	

Introduction

1. The Regional Cooperation Platform on Marine Litter in the Mediterranean was established in September 2016, at the invitation of the UN Environment/Mediterranean Action Plan (MAP). The Regional Cooperation Platform is instrumental in providing coordinated support and guidance to the implementation of the Regional Plan on Marine Litter Management in the Mediterranean, and a forum for consultation, exchange of good practices, and solutions seeking. It is implemented through the establishment, on a voluntary basis, of an open-ended group of regional and international partners with mandates and activities contributing to the environmentally sound management of marine litter in the Mediterranean. During the second meeting of the Platform (Barcelona, Spain, 9-10 November 2017), a joint 2018 work plan was agreed.

2. The third meeting of the Platform was held in Izmir, Turkey, 11-12 October 2018 at the Historical Izmir Coal Gas Factory at the kind invitation of Izmir Metropolitan Municipality. The meeting reviewed the progress achieved in the implementation of the 2018 joint work plan and further explored opportunities for further collaboration and synergies in 2019. For first time, the Secretariat provided the opportunity to the members of the Platform to interact with few Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention, aiming to share experiences, enhance synergies and maximize results.

Participation

3. The following organizations, members of the Regional Cooperation Platform on Marine Litter in the Mediterranean, attended the third meeting: Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans in the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and contiguous Atlantic area (ACCOBAMS); Euro-Mediterranean Center on Climate Change (CMCC); European Environment Agency (EEA); European Topic Centre, University of Malaga (ETC-UMA) - PANACeA project (Streamlining Networking and Management efforts in Mediterranean Protected Areas for Enhanced Natural Conservation and Protection); German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ); Institute for Water of the Republic of Slovenia (IWRIS); International Union for Conservation of Nature Centre for the Mediterranean Cooperation (IUCN-MED); Joint Research Centrum (JRC) - European Commission (EC); Mediterranean Association to Save the Sea Turtles (MEDASSET); Mediterranean Information Office for Environment, Culture and Sustainable Development (MIO-ECSDE); PlasticsEurope; Secretariat for the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM); Surfrider Foundation Europe; UN Environment/Mediterranean Action Plan (MAP) (including MED POL) supported by the relevant Regional Activity Centres (SPA/RAC, SCP/RAC, PlanBleu and REMPEC); and WWF Turkey.

4. The MED POL Focal Points of Italy and Libya also attended the meeting.

5. In addition to members of the Platform and the Country Representatives, a representative from the Regional Organization for Conservation of the Environment of the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden (PERSGA) also attended the meeting.

Agenda Item 1: Opening of the Meeting

6. The meeting was opened by Mrs. Tatjana Hema (UN Environment/MAP Barcelona Convention Secretariat, Deputy Coordinator). She welcomed the meeting participants, pointed out the warm response of the members of the Platform at the invitation of the UN Environment/ MAP and gave a brief overview of the Regional Meeting on Marine Litter Best Practices (Izmir, Turkey, 9-10 October 2018).

Agenda Item 2: Adoption of the Agenda

7. No comments or suggestions were received from the meeting participants. The agenda of the meeting, included under the UNEP/MED WG.453/1/Rev.1, was approved.

Agenda Item 3: New Members and/or Invitees

8. A “tour-de-table” followed with the old and new members of the platform presenting themselves and their respective organizations including brief introduction of their mandates and future plans and actions on marine litter.

Agenda Item 4: Progress Achieved in the Implementation of the Regional Plan on Marine Litter Management in the Mediterranean

9. The UN Environment/MAP MEDPOL representative provided a brief and comprehensive update on the progress achieved in the implementation of the Regional Plan on Marine Litter Management in the Mediterranean, its key obligations, mandates, and future work, as provided for in the working document UNEP/DEPI WG.453/Inf.4. UN Environment/MAP Component representatives (PlanBleu, SPA/RAC, SCP/RAC and REMPEC) supplemented the provided information with more details and information based on their specific mandate related to marine litter management.

Agenda Item 5: Progress Achieved in the Implementation of the Joint 2018 Work Plan

10. Based on the Working Document UNEP/MED WG.453/2, the progress achieved in the implementation of the Joint 2018 Work Plan as agreed by the members of the Platform was presented.

11. The meeting participants took the floor and presented in detail the main activities and initiatives undertaken by their organizations related to marine litter since October 2018; being part of the Joint 2018 Work Plan.

12. The representative of the ACCOBAMS Permanent Secretariat introduced ACCOBAMS activities related to marine litter. ACCOBAMS is working towards developing a standardized protocol to collect data on ingested litter during necropsy of stranded cetaceans in order to assess the impacts of marine debris on cetaceans and also to gain knowledge on marine debris. A “draft protocol for relevant data gathering and sharing related to the targeted debris” has been presented during the workshop organized jointly by ACCOBAMS/ASCOBANS/SPA-RAC on marine debris and cetaceans stranding in April 2018 in La Spezia, Italy, during the 31st European Cetacean Society Conference (ECS). When available, the ACCOBAMS Secretariat will share this protocol with the MAP Components to ensure coherence and consistency.

13. In addition, the ACCOBAMS Permanent Secretariat presented some preliminary results from the first large-scale cetaceans survey carried out between June and August 2018 within the whole Mediterranean in the framework of the “ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative” project aimed at assessing cetaceans’ distribution and abundance. During this survey, visual sightings of cetaceans, of other megafauna species (seabirds, elasmobranchs, turtles), and of marine litter have been collected by trained observers embarked in dedicated aircrafts. The data collected will be analysed in 2019 and relevant results will be shared with the MAP components. During this presentation, participants showed interest of aerial surveys to collect data in open seas. The importance of creating synergies and joining efforts to take advantage of multidisciplinary surveys was highlighted.

14. CMCC delivered a presentation on modelling marine litter and microplastics in the Mediterranean. The results on how modelling can contribute in the assessment of the effects of marine litter on Mediterranean Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) were presented. To this extent, a comparative analysis for six Mediterranean MPAs and summery findings were presented.

15. EEA presented the activities and related developments carried out in the framework of the Marine LitterWatch application.

16. ETC-UMA, representing PANACeA project, presented the different marine litter products being produced by the Interred MED Biodiversity Protection Community; namely the joint policy brief and

factsheets; the impact of marine litter on aquatic life in the Mediterranean region; and the marine litter pressures in the Mediterranean Sea. Additional information regarding the upcoming planned events and activities were also shared with the meeting participants.

17. GIZ presented its marine litter developments in the Mediterranean region with a particular focus on related work implemented in the Adriatic Countries and specially Albania.

18. IWRS presented the marine litter activities implemented by the Institute, aligned with the Joint 2018 Work Plan of the Platform. Emphasis was given in the implementation of key marine litter best practices in Slovenia.

19. IUCN-MED representative presented the involvement of IUCN-MED in [marine plastics](#), and specifically in the project “PlastiMed BeMed: Closing the plastic tap.”¹ This project is implemented within the initiative Beyond Plastic Med (BeMed) aiming to advance our understanding on plastic fluxes (especially microplastics) from source to sea and to help with the design of local and achievable solutions. The main objective of the project is to develop and test a model (which has already been developed by IUCN at global level and is now being adapted to the Mediterranean region) in order to study and discern the most important primary sources of microplastics dumped into the sea. IUCN-Med is also supporting in the framework of the initiative [BeMed](#) small initiatives aiming at reducing the impact of plastic pollution in several areas of the region. These include on the ground and practical actions already implemented in the pilot sites (public awareness, working on the river basin level with municipalities, working with tourism industries, etc.) for which IUCN-Med participates in the selection of the projects to be granted. IUCN-Med also participates, as associated partner, in the project “Plastic Buster MPAs. Preserving biodiversity from plastics in Med MPAs,” presented to the audience by other partners.

20. The EC/JRC) representative presented the work carried out in the framework of the MSFD Technical Group on Marine Litter; the policy context developments (EU Plastic Strategy, legislative proposal for single-use plastics; the new waste legislation; and the under-review port reception facility directive). Special reference was made to the top litter items, the work related to the development of marine litter baseline and thresholds values; and the update of the Monitoring Guidance Document and its related aspects. The need for quantitative and comparable data for riverine litter was also stressed as well as the important role of marine litter databases and portals.

21. MEDASSET representative presented the organization’s contribution to the review of existing methods of monitoring marine pollution, and also related to the collection of dead marine turtles found in Greece including the cooperation with the Hellenic Centre for Marine Research on analyzing the tissue samples. Within the framework of MEDSEALITTER project, the stranding network developed by MEDASSET aiming to collect data, was expanded in order to locate more stranding and to increase the dataset. MEDASSET presented the network for collecting stranded animals in Greece and related efforts to increase the network of veterinarians. Through the MEDSEALITTER project, media activities are being implemented including a social media activity strategy. MEDSEALITTER’s communication team has created a Facebook page, where all the partners involved contribute relevant audio-visual material (videos of marine litter monitoring from vessels, photos of marine litter found in the stomach of sea turtles, etc). MEDSEALITTER Facebook page is followed by more than 620 users. Project partners are committed to the communication flow of the project. In response, the project collects and informs the public about useful stories, information, experiences and practices about marine litter mitigation and monitoring as well as the effects of marine litter on biodiversity.

22. The MIO-ECSDE representative provided an update on the main marine litter related projects that MIO-ECSDE is currently involved in: namely the Interreg ACT4LITTER; the EU funded SWIM-

¹ The project is implemented by a consortium formed by, among others, IUCN, IUCN-Med and other IUCN Regional offices, Tara Expeditions Foundation, Surfriders Foundation Europe, MAVA Foundation, with the main financial support of the Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation.

H2020 Support Mechanism; the Interreg Med PlasticBusters MPAs and its LIFE+ operating grant. The two-year long ACT4LITTER project has developed a comprehensive list with showcases of marine litter measures; coordinated three editions of the marine litter watch month (winter, autumn, summer) which were implemented in more than 20 coastal and marine protected areas located in several countries; launched a decision making tool to support MPA managers in their battle against marine litter; and provided technical assistance to nine MPA management bodies to elaborate MPA-specific action plans for marine litter management. Within the framework of the EU-funded SWIM-H2020 SM, MIO-ECSDE supported Algeria, Egypt and Morocco to implement the Regional Plan for Marine Litter Management in the Mediterranean. Through a peer-to-peer process, Algeria, Egypt and Morocco have been trained on how to monitor and assess marine litter on beaches via a standardized methodology and the first datasets have been collected. Within the Interreg Med Plastic Busters MPAs project MIO-ECSDE is leading the studying component of project and has led the elaboration of a report on the state-of-the-art methods to monitor marine litter and its impacts on biodiversity. Finally, and within its annual work programme supported by the LIFE+ operating grand, MIO-ECSDE has launched an initiative for the collection of beach litter data in a harmonized and standardized way in seven Member States in collaboration with Mediterranean environmental NGOs.

23. On behalf of the University of Siena, Lead Partner of the Interreg Med PlasticBusters MPAs, the MIO-ECSDE Programme Officer -leader of the studying and capitalization work packages provided an overview of the project and its state-of-play. The project entails actions that address the whole management cycle of marine litter, from monitoring and surveillance to prevention and mitigation actions. Currently, a report on the state-of-the-art methods to monitor marine litter (macro-litter and micro-litter) in all marine compartments (beach, sea surface, seafloor, biota) and its impacts on biodiversity has been developed. This report aims to take-stock of the marine litter monitoring methodologies applied in the Mediterranean region and to establish a common understanding on the recent advances made with regards to marine litter monitoring in order to select the most mature, relevant and applicable protocols towards defining and testing a harmonized marine litter monitoring approach in Mediterranean MPAs.

24. PlasticsEurope representative presented a comprehensive overview of the [Operation Clean Sweep® \(OCS\)](#) stewardship programme. Its objective is to help every plastic resin handling operation implement good housekeeping and pellet containment practices to work towards achieving zero pellet loss in the environment. In Europe, PlasticsEurope is leading the OCS programme and has taken strong Voluntary Commitment, mainly: i) to have 100% of its member companies (to which OCS is applicable) sign the OCS pledge by the end of 2018; ii) to develop by 2018 a transparent, harmonised monitoring scheme for the collection of relevant and comparable information from all signed members to monitor work progress of the industry (progress reports will be published and made available to the EU institutions and key stakeholders on a yearly basis); and iii) to engage with at least one other major port by the end of 2018.

25. Surfrider Foundation Europe representative presented a brief summary of the [LIFE LEMA](#) and [Ocean Campus](#) projects. The objective of the LIFE LEMA project is to define a management service for local authorities to select sustainable approaches for tackling the problem of floating marine litter (FML) before it reaches the shoreline or sinks. The service, to be initially implemented in two transnational regions in the Southeast Bay of Biscay (Gipuzkoa and Pyrénées-Atlantiques) will include tools and management plans. The replicability of the service will be assessed for the areas of Marseille. The Ocean Campus project is an e-learning platform about marine litter, climate change, water quality, sea shipping and waves protection. The platform offers three sessions in four languages (SP, FR, EN, DE): i) Learning: Educational tools as videos, quizzes games and documents on the issues selected; ii) Contribute: To create educational tools such as tailored quiz or upload videos; and iii) Exchange: The Ocean Campus platform offers option to create streaming training sessions and e-learning tools ad hoc.

26. WWF Turkey provided a brief overview and stressed the importance of the awareness raising campaigns focusing on the potential hazards of single-use plastics. WWF-Turkey's pledge campaign

“1 Nice Act”, were referred as a successful example which could serve as a model for the development of campaigns in the future. WWF Turkey made also a reference about the need to stop the use of single-use plastics in our workplaces.

27. The UN Environment/MAP (MEDPOL, Plan Bleu, SPA/RAC, SCP/RAC and REMPEC) representatives gave a brief overview on the progress achieved in the marine litter-related activities implemented in the framework of the Regional Plan on Marine Litter Management in the Mediterranean.

28. MED POL representative provided comprehensive information with regards to the implementation of the EU-funded Marine Litter MED project and the progress in the implementation of the cooperation agreement with the Italian Ministry for Environment, Land and Sea Protection. Preliminary results, and related information were provided with regards to the “Adopt-a-beach” and “Fishing-for-litter” measures. Additional elements were shared with the meeting participants related to the preparation of the marine litter metadata templates and the MEDPOL info system.

29. SCP/RAC provided specific information with regards to the enhancement of the regulatory framework related to non-single-use plastic bags and other single-use items around the Mediterranean, as well as on the technical assistance provided to the beneficiary countries to the EU-funded Marine Litter MED project.

30. REMPEC provided additional information with regards to the better management of sea-based litter in ports, as provided for under Articles 9 and 10 of the Regional Plan on Marine Litter Management in the Mediterranean. In addition, information was shared with the meeting participants related to the specific pilots designed and currently implemented in the framework of the EU-funded Marine Litter MED project and the Cooperation Agreement with the Italian Ministry for Environment, Land and Sea Protection, in selected ports and marinas around the Mediterranean.

31. SPA/RAC provided supplementary information with regards to the work carried out for the development of the IMAP Candidate Indicator 24 and the way forward towards the upcoming CORMON meetings on Biodiversity and Marine Litter Monitoring.

Agenda Item 6: Priorities and Opportunities for Synergies and Partnerships in 2019

32. The UN Environment/MAP Deputy Coordinator brought to the attention of the meeting participants a series of issues of common interest that should be further discussed at the present meeting building on the good work done during 2018 to maximize respective synergies. She highlighted the need for a more regular exchange of information throughout the year with regards to calendar of events among the members of the Platform. It was obvious from the information provided at this meeting that several members of the Platform work on marine litter monitoring and assessment. Therefore, there is room for increased cooperation. Visibility, awareness and campaign were also issues to be considered with strong potential for enhanced synergies among all Regional platform members. The Mediterranean Node on Marine Litter was suggested as one option in that direction.

Agenda Item 7: Mediterranean Node on Marine Litter

33. The representative of UN Environment/MAP Secretariat presented to the members of the platform a detailed presentation of the Mediterranean Node on Marine Litter being under development from the UN Environment/MAP with the support of the UN Environment Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities (GPA), in the framework of the Global Partnership on Marine Litter (GPML). The objectives of the Mediterranean Node on Marine Litter along with the identified content of the node were presented in detail. The Mediterranean Node on Marine Litter will be part of the [Marine Litter Network](#) Platform.

34. The MAP Secretariat encouraged members of the Platform to provide input such as any relevant reports, communication material and any related document or material as appropriate to include in the Mediterranean Node on Marine Litter.

Agenda Item 8: Conclusions and Recommendations

35. Under this agenda item, the meeting reviewed and adopted the conclusions and main elements of the joint 2019 work plan as prepared by UN Environment/MAP after reflecting the discussions held under Agenda Item 6.

Agenda Item 9: Any other business

36. No issue was raised by the meeting participants under this Agenda Item.

Agenda Item 10: Closure of the Meeting

37. Following the customary exchange of courtesies, the meeting was declared closed at 12:00 noon on 12 October 2018. The UN Environment/MAP Deputy Coordinator in her closing remarks, pointed out the importance of the innovative mechanism established in the Mediterranean with the contribution of all members of the Regional Cooperation Platform on Marine Litter to join forces towards a marine litter free Mediterranean, and encouraged all members to continue working together towards this goal.

Annex I
List of Participants

List of Participants

MEMBERS OF THE REGIONAL COOPERATION PLATFORM ON MARINE LITTER IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

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Annex II
Agenda of the Meeting

Agenda of the Meeting

Thursday, 11 October 2018

- Agenda Item 1:** Opening of the Meeting
- Agenda Item 2:** Adoption of the Agenda
- Agenda Item 3:** New Members and/or Invitees
- Agenda Item 4:** Progress Achieved in the Implementation of the Regional Plan on Marine Litter Management in the Mediterranean
- Agenda Item 5:** Progress Achieved in the Implementation of the 2018 Joint Work Plan
- Agenda Item 6:** 2018-2019 Priorities and Opportunities for Synergies and Partnership

Friday, 12 October 2018

- Agenda Item 7:** Mediterranean Node on Marine Litter: A Tool to Enhance Cooperation and Synergies
- Agenda Item 8:** Conclusions and Recommendations
- Agenda Item 9:** Any Other Business
- Agenda Item 10:** Closure of the Meeting

Annex III
Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions and Recommendations

1. The Third Meeting of the Regional Cooperation Platform on Marine Litter in the Mediterranean, coordinated by UN Environment/ MAP Secretariat, was held in Izmir, Turkey on 11 and 12 October 2018, at the Historical Izmir Coal Gas Factory at the kind invitation of Izmir Metropolitan Municipality.
2. The Meeting noted the work undertaken by all members of the Platform to address marine litter management in the Mediterranean, in particular on monitoring, assessment, Marine Protected Areas (MPA), measures, and support to Mediterranean countries through different projects and initiatives.
3. The meeting reviewed the implementation of the joint activities that were agreed during the 2nd meeting of the Platform held in Barcelona, Spain in November 2017. The meeting noted that there is room for a more coordinated approach among different members in the implementation of activities that would allow joint contribution from the very early stage of implementation.
4. While discussing the priorities for 2018-2019 of each member of the regional platform, the meeting agreed on the following common points and activities to be implemented in a coordinated manner:
 - i. Share among the members of the Platform, the calendar of events of each member, at least twice a year;
 - ii. Make use of existing harmonized efforts for the application and development of common monitoring methods and tools on marine litter among members of the Platform in order to deliver fit-for-purpose data to ensure cost effectiveness; and to provide information on the next meeting of the Platform (including aerial surveillance methods);
 - iii. Share assessment reports between members of the Platform, with an emphasis to those including data on marine litter from monitoring activities and on the implementation of prevention and reduction best practices around the Mediterranean; thus enabling their presentation to the upcoming CORMON meetings on marine litter monitoring; other marine litter best practices meetings; as well as to relevant meetings organized by members of the Platform, as appropriate;
 - iv. Contribute to the extent possible the work of MAP for the preparation of the State of Environment and Development Report and the evaluation of the Regional Plans;
 - v. Invite members of the Platform to contribute as appropriate to the development of an Action Plan to address marine litter, mainly plastics, generated from ships by the International Maritime Organization (IMO);
 - vi. Enhance the visibility of the Regional Cooperation Platform on Marine Litter at national, regional and global levels, and make every effort to organize together joint side events in international events such as UNEA-4 (11-15 March 2019), aiming to present the work carried out in the framework of the joint workplan;
 - vii. Acknowledge the Mediterranean Node on Marine Litter as a useful information and communication tool that would allow members of the Platform to share information on their and their partners' work on marine litter around the Mediterranean. All members of the Platform are encouraged to use and provide links and information to the Mediterranean Node on Marine Litter. However, the meeting noted the need for adequate human resources to contribute to this process in a sustainable manner;
 - viii. Ensure all members of the Platform who have not done so, to avoid the use of Single-Use-Plastics; to promote Green Procurement in their institutions; and to work together to develop common standards or guidelines to be submitted for review by the next meeting of the Platform. All partners committed to promote such policies in the Mediterranean taking into account items proposed to be banned in European and International policies;

- ix. Agree to plan, design and implement joint action/s by the partners including a strong component on awareness raising and education (initiated by December 2018 at the latest by MIO-ECSDE, JRC, EEA and Surfrider Foundation Europe), to the extent possible; involving their network, and to report back by the next meeting of the Platform.
- x. The forth meeting of the Regional Cooperation Platform on Marine Litter in the Mediterranean will be held back-to-back to a regional or global event (e.g. back-to-back to MAP Focal Point in September 2019, PlasticBusters MPA Project, Western Balkans, or in the framework of other events proposed by members of the Platform before December 2018). The final decision on the venue and the host of the meeting will be made by end of February 2019.