

29 JUNE 2022

[VIRTUAL EVENT]

THE FUTURE WE WANT FOR THE
MEDITERRANEAN SEA AND COAST-DELIVERING
ON THE SDGS WHILE ADDRESSING THE TRIPLE
CRISIS OF CLIMATE CHANGE, BIODIVERSITY
LOSS AND POLLUTION

Event ID: OBZB158

11:30-12:45 [Lisbon time] • Registration is mandatory

LISBON
27 JUNE -
1 JULY
2022

UN
environment
programme

Mediterranean
Action Plan
Barcelona
Convention

This side-event organized by UNEP/MAP and its Regional Activity Centres:

- The Regional Activity Centre for Information and Communication ([INFO/RAC](#))
- The Regional Activity Centre for Sustainable Consumption and Production ([MedWaves](#))
- The Priority Actions Programme Regional Activity Centre ([PAP/RAC](#))
- The Plan Bleu Regional Activity Centre ([Plan Bleu](#))
- The Regional Marine Pollution Emergency Response Centre for the Mediterranean Sea ([REMPEC](#))
- The Specially Protected Areas Regional Activity Centre ([SPA/RAC](#))

This is a virtual side-event

- Representatives of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention, MAP Partners and regional institutions are invited to register to this event no later than 28 June 2022, 13:00 CET. To request the registration link, please contact: [unepmap\(at\)un.org](mailto:unepmap(at)un.org) (**Registration is mandatory**).
- Members of the public can follow the [livestream, which will start moments before the side-event](#), and send questions in the comment section through this [YouTube channel](#) (No registration is required to follow the livestream).

Context in the Mediterranean

Situated at the intersection of three continents, the Mediterranean is the cradle of civilizations that have shaped human history and a unique space for intercultural dialogue. Even when considered through the lens of its biophysical properties, the Mediterranean appears as a unique regional sea. Covering less than 1 per cent of the ocean surface, it holds one in ten of known marine species, 28 per cent of which are found nowhere else on the planet.

In this region, environmental multilateralism is an agent of mutual understanding and cooperation. Since its inception in 1975, the Mediterranean Action Plan (UNEP/MAP)—the pioneer of the UNEP Regional Seas Programme— has set in motion an exemplary multilateral endeavor to tackle the rising tide of pollution. The scope of this endeavor has gradually expanded to encompass all the themes pertaining to land- and sea-based pollution, biodiversity conservation, coastal management and

sustainable development. Today, the MAP-Barcelona Convention system constitutes a unique legal, institutional and implementation framework that underpins sustainability and resilience in the Mediterranean region.

With more than 512 million people living on its shores, immense pressures are being exerted on Mediterranean ecosystems. No less than 24 per cent of global shipping traffic passes through its waters annually. A staggering (estimated) 730 tons of plastic is discharged into the sea every day. The basin, which is also warming 20 per cent faster than the global average, is facing the impacts of the triple crisis of pollution, climate change and biodiversity loss.

The Mediterranean, which is home to both G-5 countries and developing nations, concentrates many of humanity's current challenges and of the issues that undermine the sustainability of the global ocean. Success in this region will reverberate well beyond the basin and send a much-needed signal of hope that humanity can overcome differences and work together for the common objective of protecting and living in harmony with the Ocean and nature in the broadest sense. The regional endeavor within the framework of the UNEP/MAP-Barcelona Convention system, with action by the Contracting Parties (21 Mediterranean countries and the European Union) at its heart, will be key.

How the UNEP/MAP-Barcelona Convention system has hard-wired the SDGs into its endeavor for healthy and productive marine and coastal ecosystems

The [Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development \(MSSD\) 2016-2025](#)¹ provides an integrative policy framework for all stakeholders, including MAP partners, to translate the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs at the regional, sub-regional, national and local levels in the Mediterranean region.

The MSSD encompasses six objectives that feed into the pursuit of the SDGs:

MSSD Objectives	SDGs		
1. Ensuring sustainable development in marine and coastal areas			
2. Promoting resource management, food production and food security through sustainable forms of rural development			
3. Planning and managing sustainable Mediterranean cities			
4. Addressing climate change as a priority			
5. Transition towards a green and blue economy			
6. Improving governance in support of sustainable development			

¹ The MSSD 2016-2025 was adopted at the 19th Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention (COP 19) (Athens, Greece, 9-12 February 2016) ([Decision IG.22/2](#))

What the latest MAP-led assessments tell us about the SDGs in the Mediterranean

Two reports backed by the UNEP/MAP– Barcelona Convention system –namely the [State of the Environment and Development in the Mediterranean \(SoED\)](#), produced by Plan Bleu, a Regional Activity Centre of UNEP/MAP, and the [First Mediterranean Assessment Report \(MAR 1\)](#) released by the network of [Mediterranean Experts on Climate and environmental Change \(MedECC\)](#) – shed new light on the hefty toll that the global triple crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution is taking on Mediterranean ecosystems, and provide insights on the progress made on and the outlook for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

The SoED report, which was released in October 2020, found that the region is not on track to achieve the SDGs by 2030. Unless urgent and resolute action is taken to halt current trends, the report warns, environmental degradation could have serious and lasting consequences for human health and livelihoods in the region.

The MAR 1 report, which was produced under a flagship Initiative of the [Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development \(MSSD\)](#), indicates that more effective policy responses to climate and environmental changes will require both strengthened mitigation of the drivers of environmental change, such as greenhouse gas emissions, as well as enhanced adaptation to impacts. Poverty, inequalities and gender imbalances presently hamper the achievement of sustainable development and climate resilience in Mediterranean countries.

Several SoED findings will feature prominently in the side-event:

- Mediterranean countries have committed to achieve Good Environmental Status (GES) of the Mediterranean Sea and coast and more largely, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) under the United Nations 2030 Agenda. A fundamental reorganization of economic and social systems, including changes in paradigms and values, is required to achieve these commitments.
- Global goals for 2030 and beyond may only be achieved through transformative changes across economic, social, political and technological factors.
- Urgent and collective efforts for transformative change are required to safeguard the Mediterranean environment, while simultaneously fostering human development, taking into account differences between Mediterranean countries.
- Despite achievements in designing and agreeing on common commitments, critical gaps remain in implementing and enforcing those decisions. The shift from national and international commitments to concrete action at the local level is challenging and requires further capacity building and support, while recognizing needs for local adaptations. The profile of environmental institutions and stakes, in local, national and regional systems, still needs to be raised for effective environmental integration.
- Swift improvement is needed in adopting efficient policy instruments that leverage the use of economic tools, land tenure instruments, stakeholder awareness and involvement. This is crucial to the upscaling of promising technical and social innovations that can deliver the required transition towards sustainability underpinned by circularity across the blue economy and land-based pursuits.
- Knowledge and understanding of all aspects of sustainability are key to support evidence-based action for transition. Evidence-based policy is essential to alleviating pressure on the coastal zone on both sides of the land-sea interface, as highlighted in the Common Regional Framework for ICZM² adopted by the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention.

² Common Regional Framework for Integrated Coastal Zone Management ([Decision IG.24/5](#))

- The transformation of coastal and marine areas, activities and landscapes needs to be further anticipated in policies and actions. The sustainable management of biodiversity, including in protected areas, is dependent on adequate funding.
- The transitions that are required in all production and consumption systems cannot be brought about by policymakers alone. Changing development pathways is a responsibility shared by all stakeholders, and requires dialogue and partnership among government actors, civil society, the private sector, and the scientific community. Judicial systems increasingly deal with environmental and climate litigation and support the enforcement of sustainability regulations. The private sector's central role in funding and promoting sustainable lifestyles is increasingly acknowledged.
- Significant progress in addressing sustainability issues in the Mediterranean has been achieved and the Barcelona Convention system has largely contributed to these achievements. However, gaps in implementation and enforcement require attention and action.
- The Barcelona Convention system plays a major role in fostering sustainability transitions. However, this requires national action on closing gaps in implementation on the ground and effective enforcement, in collaboration with local authorities and relevant stakeholders, including relevant private sector and funding mechanisms.