

SAVE THE DATE

Thursday 30 June 2022
10:00-11:15 (Lisbon time)



Venue: Altice Arena, Side Event Room 1



The Regional response for the protection of the marine environment and its marine living resources from plastic pollution – a concrete case from the Mediterranean

Advancing global efforts by showcasing progress and lessons learned from the Mediterranean, based on national and regional activities supported by the UNEP/MAP-Barcelona Convention system.

A side-event organized by the Ministry of Environment and Energy of the Hellenic Republic and the Mediterranean Action Plan of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP/MAP)

#BarcelonaConvention

Concept note

- This side-event is designed as a regional contribution to the global debate on addressing plastic pollution. The interventions and the panel discussion aim to inform the debate hosted by the 2020 UNOC and advance global efforts on addressing marine litter, in particular plastic pollution, by showcasing progress and lessons learned in the Mediterranean, a regional sea where the Contracting Parties to the [Barcelona Convention](#) have made notable strides on establishing a common normative framework on marine litter, including plastics and micro-plastics, well ahead of the adoption of the [landmark resolution](#) for an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution at the UNEA 5.2 (February 2022).
- The side-event will present examples of concrete measures and up-scalable pilot interventions towards preventing and reducing marine pollution from plastics in the Mediterranean. It will also showcase proven national approaches and stimulate the sharing of experiences in meeting existing national commitments¹ and targets to tackle plastic litter. Concrete solutions for a circular blue economy, including targeted actions and common shared solutions anchored to the SDGs, will be presented.
- In addition to offering an overview of the policy response, the side-event will spotlight actions taken by the private sector, civil society and stakeholders at large, to tackle the multi-dimensional challenge of plastic pollution in the Mediterranean. Only through an inclusive multistakeholder approach, with the meaningful participation of all concerned partners, can the challenge of marine litter be tackled effectively.

The Mediterranean region: a pioneer on the normative front

The Mediterranean, a semi-enclosed sea with one of the highest rates of endemism. The scourge of marine litter is a threat to nature and people. With an estimated annual plastic leakage of 229,000 tonnes, made up of 94 per cent macroplastics and 6 per cent microplastics, plastic pollution is particularly acute. Plastics constitute around 95 per cent of waste in the open sea, both on the seabed and on beaches of the Mediterranean. This poses a momentous challenge to important economic

¹ Greece, for instance, has committed to reducing single-use plastic beverage and food containers by 30% by 2024, and by 60% by 2026 compared to 2022; cutting plastic litter at sea by 50% by 2030 and microplastics released into the environment by 30%; as well as to enhancing sorting at source and recycling of plastic waste.

activities upon which Mediterranean economies and societies have relied for a long time, including tourism and fisheries. Small-scale artisanal fishing is particularly affected.

Recognizing the urgency to act, the UNEP/MAP-Barcelona Convention system, encompassing 21 Mediterranean countries and the European Union (the Contracting Parties to the Convention and its Protocols), introduced measures on marine litter monitoring in the 1990s. In 1996 the Contracting Parties adopted the [Amendments to the Protocol for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea against Pollution from Land-Based Sources](#) (LBS Protocol). The [Strategic Framework for Marine Litter Management](#) prepared with the support and under the initiative of the UNEP Regional Seas programme, was adopted in 2012, followed by a trailblazing [Regional Plan on Marine Litter Management in the Mediterranean](#) (2013 Regional Plan), one year after. At their 22nd Ordinary meeting (Antalya, Turkey, 7-10 December 2021), the Contracting Parties approved the updating of the 2013 Regional Plan by introducing additional commitments and reflecting the latest global and regional developments related to plastic pollution and circular economy.² Thus the 2021 Regional Plan ushers-in a new phase in the region's endeavor against marine litter in general and plastic pollution in particular.

Thanks to the momentum initiated by the UNEP/MAP-Barcelona Convention system and the commitment of the Contracting Parties, the Mediterranean was the first Regional Sea to benefit from the adoption of legally binding regional regulations to reduce and prevent marine litter and plastic pollution complete with time-bound implementation targets. This significant achievement offers lessons learned and pathways at a time when the global community contemplates a global treaty on plastic pollution.

How advanced is the Regional Plan on Marine Litter Management in the Mediterranean?

The 2021 Regional Plan on Marine Litter Management (RPML), which builds on the provisions of its 2013 version, is an advanced normative instrument addressing the marine litter challenge in a comprehensive way. Both versions of the Regional Plan on Marine Litter Management in the Mediterranean were adopted in COPs of the Barcelona Convention held in Türkiye, namely [COP 18](#) and [COP 22](#).

The RPML lays out the national and regional infrastructure for marine litter management in the form of regulatory, policy and institutional frameworks, monitoring and assessment and legally binding measures to combat marine litter from both land- and sea-based sources, with a focus on cleanup operations and solid waste management. The Regional Plan also provides for prevention measures such as Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) schemes and Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP).

Prevention is a key component of the 2021 RPML: it urges national authorities to take action to prevent marine litter and plastic leakage, including microplastics from rivers and wastewater treatment plants. The Circular economy principles that are embedded in the 2021 version of the Regional Plan constitute one of its most innovative dimensions. In addition, the Plan includes provisions for the phasing-out of harmful chemical additives used in plastic products, in particular those listed by the Stockholm Convention.

The 2021 Regional Plan also provides for the establishment by the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention of a regulatory framework for compostable plastics, as well as the regulation of informal solid waste management, which represents one of the major root causes of marine litter pollution in the Mediterranean.

On biodiversity, the 2021 RPML includes measures to be implemented by 2025 to prevent and reduce the impact of marine litter on Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) and [Specially Protected Areas of Mediterranean Importance \(SPAMIs\)](#).

² Decision IG.25/9, COP22, Antalya, Turkey, 7-10 December 2021.

Action taken by Greece, co-organizer of the side-event, to address the complex challenges pertaining to plastic pollution

Within the framework of Greece’s new national policy, legislation and planning on waste, recycling and circular economy (National Waste Prevention Plan, National Waste Management Plan and National Circular Economy Action Plan) several provisions and measures on plastics have been introduced.

Beginning with Law 4736/2020, Greece transposed EU Single Use Plastic (SUP) Directive 2019/904 in national legislation in October 2020, earlier than the date of entry into force of the Directive (July 2021) due to the importance given to the reduction of plastic waste generated, at source, and to the promotion of more sustainable and reusable materials. The Law aims to prevent and reduce plastic pollution especially in the sea, to address plastic marine litter and to promote the transition to a circular economy. Certain measures and targets at national level in line with the overall objectives of the EU’s waste policy are set, including specific national reduction targets for the consumption of SUP beverage cups and food containers (at least by 30% and 60%, by 2024 and 2026 respectively, compared to 2022), and the promotion of reusable types of the aforementioned products.

In addition, extended producer responsibility schemes are established for certain categories of SUP products and fishing gear containing plastic. Moreover, a nationwide Deposit Refund Scheme for plastic beverage packaging will be implemented from 5 January 2023 by beverage packaging producers.

Another important initiative introduced in Law 4819/2021, transposing EU Directive 2018/851, is the advanced fee eco-modulation scheme for plastics. Producer Responsibility Organization (PROs) fees are to be modulated taking into account durability, reparability, re-usability, recyclability, recycled content and the presence of hazardous substances. Specific criteria are set for fee modulation regarding plastic packaging with increasing fees for colored PET bottles, multilayer plastic packaging, composite packaging, PVC and expanded polystyrene packaging, and PVC labels.

Furthermore, Greece has environmental fees in place for plastic carrier bags (as of 2018) (excluding biodegradable plastic bags), SUP beverage cups and food containers as of 2022 and for packaging products containing PVC as of 2022, paid by the consumers, in order to promote the use of reusable and easily recyclable alternatives.

Aiming at fostering international cooperation on plastic, the Hellenic Ministry of Environment and Energy has recently joined the New Plastics Economy Global Commitment, launched in October 2018 by the [Ellen MacArthur Foundation](#) and the UN Environment Programme, supporting the [common vision](#) of a circular economy for plastic.

Evidence of progress driven by other Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention to stem the flow of plastic pollution

The Contracting Parties are taking action at the national level to implement their commitments within the framework of the UNEP/MAP-Barcelona Convention system. This section offers **a non-comprehensive compilation** of highlights harvested from presentations made by several Mediterranean country representatives at the [Regional Meeting on Marine Litter Best Practices \(Seville, Spain, 17-18 May 2022\)](#).

Albania	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New National Waste Management Strategy and Action Plan 2020-2035 (encompassing extended producer responsibility (EPR), green procurement and waste prevention); • 5 regions out of 12 in total are equipped with sanitary landfills or incinerators with optimal sanitary conditions; • Dump sites: 2 closed, 6 displaced, 1 rehabilitated; • A national law on banning single-use-plastic bags will be in force as of 1 June 2022.
----------------	--

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the pipeline: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A new law on EPR is under preparation and expected to be introduced by the end of 2023; - Establishment of a database on waste management; - Preparation of local management plans and improvement of local infrastructure; - Construction of two composting areas, specifically in Cerrik and Roskovec municipalities; - Development of composting schemes for households.
Algeria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of the National Action Plan for the Environment and Sustainable Development in 2001 with two programs related to waste (namely, municipal solid waste and special waste); • National targets (by 2035): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Limit the generation of household and similar waste to 1.1 kg/capita/day; - Promote sorting at source so as to recycle or compost 30% of household waste, 30% of special waste and 50% of inert waste; - Increase the role of the private sector in waste management. • Development of the National Strategy for Integrated Coastal Zone Management (Strategic orientation No. 8: "Strengthening the circular economy in maritime and coastal activities"). • The Ministry of the Environment proceeded with the organization of waste recovery sectors, through the promotion of jobs and green entrepreneurship, and by developing training programs on green employment and support for young bearers of green project ideas for the creation of businesses and start-ups.
Bosnia and Herzegovina	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A policy gap analysis for the transition to a circular plastic packaging economy has been developed; • Priority is given to developing relevant instruments, such as incentives for separate collection, taxes and bans.
Croatia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishment of Marine Litter Management System covering environmental protection and waste management; • General prevention of marine litter generation: measures are defined in the existing framework of the Waste Management and Wastewater legislations; • Marine litter management plan: program of measures for the protection and management of the marine environment and coastal area towards achieving Good Environmental Status (GES): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strategic priority 3. Improving the implementation of instruments for achieving good status of the marine environment and the coastal area. - Specific objective 3.3. Improving the marine waste management system / 3.3.1. Development of a national marine litter management plan. • Waste Management Act (July 2021) introduced a ban on single-use-plastic bags (lightweight carrier bags); • Development of an inventory of reduction and prevention measures.
Cyprus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Waste Management Policy and Legislation framework encompasses: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Laws on Waste (2011, 2021 – Directive on Single-Use Plastics); - Laws on Packaging and Waste Packaging (2002) to be followed by a ban on lightweight plastic carrier bags (to be introduced in February 2023); - Regulations on Waste, including Municipal Waste Management by Local Authorities (to be adopted); - New National Municipal Waste Management Strategy (2021 -2027); - New National Waste Prevention Plan (2021-2027). • Investments in increasing recycling of paper, plastic, metal, wood (dry recyclables): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reinforcing recycling (by 2027) - Establishment of Green kiosks (2022 – 2025) - Separate collection from coastal touristic establishments (by 2023) - Upscaling reuse: 2 reuse centers and network of collection shops

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Measures for recycling and re-use: Regulations for the establishment of mandatory separate collection systems for municipal waste and pay-as-you-throw schemes by the local authorities (expected to be introduced in 2022).
Egypt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A decree of the Red Sea Governor (as of June 2019) limits Single-Use Plastic products and determines the minimum thickness of 25 microns for Single-Use Plastic (SUP) bags. A decree of the Governor of South Sinai (as of March 2020) sets minimum thickness of 50 microns for SUP-bags. Waste Management Law (2020): introduction of an article addressing the manufacturing, sale, or circulation of SUP bags. Ministerial decision for the establishment of a national committee to reduce the consumption of SUP bags to coordinate and initiate the preparation of the necessary strategies and plans. Guidance Strategy on Reducing SUP Bags Consumption in Egypt (2021 – 2030) was issued in 2022: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Banning of free distribution in stages Setting minimum thickness Measures to mitigate the social impact Capacity building for relevant stakeholders
France	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2019-2025 Zero Plastic Waste at Sea Action Plan, which aims to significantly reduce the leakage of macro and micro waste, particularly plastic, into the seas and oceans by 2025, through the following workstreams: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Combating waste in waterways and networks; Prevention of plastic pollution upstream /on land; Combating plastic waste on the coast and at sea; Awareness-raising, information and education. Roadmap for “beaches without plastic waste”; Launch of a participatory science platform: to promote operations for the collection of marine litter and data collection carried out by associations at the national level; Anti-waste law for a circular economy (adopted January 2020): ban single-use plastics, combat litter and set up waste streams, including Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR); Strategic approach to phase out single-use plastic packaging by 2040, through five-year decrees, for which consultations are ongoing with stakeholders, industries and non-governmental organizations; National Act on plastic packaging: manufacturers and distributors have made strong commitments in terms of eliminating unnecessary packaging; National circular economy roadmap (FREC), including the decree titled “3R” for Reduce, Reuse and Recycle.
Israel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clean Coast Programme, aiming to minimize and mitigate the impacts of marine litter in Israel, by improving knowledge, prevention and actions taken, for the benefit of the environment and the public in Israel; A National Action Plan on Marine Litter Management is in place since 2015 ; After Israel's Plastic Bag Law went into effect, plastic bag consumption at large supermarkets dropped significantly (80%) in 2017-2018; Source reduction: (i) recycling of large drink bottles through the point of sale; (ii) waste collection from municipal drainage.
Italy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 22% of the material resources used in Italy come from recycled products and recovered materials (Eurostat); A ban on lightweight Single-Use Plastic (SUP) bags is in force since 2021. New measures:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 2020: National legislative measure: ban of microplastics in cosmetics, soaps, creams, toothpastes. - 2022: (a) Study, design and creation of the process for reusable fishing boxes, facilitating the transition from the use of disposable polystyrene boxes to washable boxes; (b) Study, design and creation of the marine litter recycling chain; (c) Experimental prototypes on purification plants for the removal of microplastics; (d) Evaluation of tools for the reduction of litter from river sources also through experimental sustainable prototypes for their interception; (e) new law on the recovery of the marine litter (“SalvaMare”).
Lebanon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishing a collaborative platform to coordinate on-going activities related to marine litter in Lebanon; • Developing relevant communication and outreach tools for improving coordination of marine litter information and activities at the national level; • Ensuring the engagement of all stakeholders on key policy reforms needed for preventing marine litter; • Ensuring the integration of marine litter in the strategy and action plan for Integrated Solid Waste Management of the Ministry of the Environment; • Developing and implementing priority regulatory framework for marine litter prevention; • Developing economic instruments aimed at sustainable consumption and production, including Extended Producer Responsibility; • Supporting knowledge sharing and engagement of a broad range of stakeholders in the development and implementation of the policy reform agenda for marine litter prevention.
Morocco	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A National Sustainable Development Strategy (2030) with the circular economy as a strategic axis of intervention has been devised to enable the country’s transition towards a green and inclusive economy. • Measures: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increase the recycling rate and minimize the volumes of waste sent to landfills; - Strengthen the approach to recycling and recovering waste (waste managed as a flow of materials); - Promote, in pilot districts, the sorting of household waste at source, adopting as a first step the separation between organic waste and inorganic waste; - Define new financing methods (Ecotax/Extended Producer Responsibility) to structure waste sorting and recovery channels. • National Waste Reduction and Recovery Strategy: institutional, legal and tax reforms have been launched to establish a viable circular economy model; • “Plastic-free coastline” Strategy: reduce the deposits of plastic waste likely to be delivered at sea by promoting value chain and circular economy and blue economy approaches; • A Public-Private Partnership Program is being introduced with the aim of setting up a green ecosystem that will ensure financing and support to circular economy sectors for various products, including plastics.
Spain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updated Programme of Measures on Marine Litter (2022-2017): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Initiatives aimed at preventing marine litter from sea- and land-based sources; - Initiatives for removal of marine litter; - Initiatives for awareness and dissemination. • Plastics and circular economy (National Law, 2022): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Market restrictions: ban for all oxo-degradable plastics, EPS food containers and drink cups - Consumption reduction: 50% in 2026 and 70% in 2030 - Product design: caps and lids fixed to the bottle (volume lower than 3 litres) - 25% recycled PET bottles in 2025; 30% in 3030 - Labelling: includes tobacco products - Targets for separate collection of priority single-use plastic items: 70% in 2023; 77% in 2025; 85% in 2027; 90% in 2029 • Microplastics (National law, 2022):

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bans the introduction in the market of intentionally added plastics microbeads (less than 5 mm), with the details and exemptions to be approved under European REACH Regulation (i.e., pellets production and commercialization); - Voluntary commitments from the industry to avoid pellet loss along the entire value chain. • Rainwater management measures legislation to reduce riverine input: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - New urban areas must install independent pipe systems for rainwater and sanitary water; - The overflow systems used in episodes of intense rain must include elements to limit macro-litter input to the rivers.
Tunisia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Strategy on a “plastic-free coastline”; • Through the ECOLEF system a new economic, social and environmental plastic waste management sector has been developed including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 175 collection micro-enterprises; - 65 approved recycling micro-enterprises in operation; - 35 “ANGed” collection and storage centers and points. • National law on reducing light-weight plastic carrier bags and national communication campaign.
Türkiye	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plastic bag fee (2019): approximately 65% reduction in plastic bag use in 2019, 2020 and 2021; • Technical Assistance Project for the Evaluation of Potential for Transition to Circular Economy; • Development of provincial Marine Litter Action Plans for all coastal cities.

For more information:

- Visit the side-event’s web page: <https://bit.ly/GR-MAP-event>
- Contact Jihed Ghannem, Public Information Officer, UNEP/MAP-Barcelona Convention Secretariat: [ghannem\(at\)un.org](mailto:ghannem(at)un.org)