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Progress report on the activities carried out to implement the Biodiversity and Ecosystems core theme since the Thirteenth meeting of SPA/BD Focal Points

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Progress report on the activities carried out to implement the Biodiversity and Ecosystems core theme since the Thirteenth meeting of SPA/BD Focal Points

Reporting period: May 2017 – April 2019

I- GOVERNANCE:

Strategic Outcome 1.1: Contracting Parties supported in the implementation of the Barcelona Convention, its Protocols, Regional Strategies and Action Plans

Governance meetings:

1. UNEP/MAP-SPA/RAC organized the Fifth SAP BIO National Correspondents meeting (Marseille, France, 13-14 February 2019) and the Sixth one (Portoroz, Slovenia, 18 June 2019), with a view to allow Parties representatives to have a direct involvement and provide eventual further inputs to be included in the Draft evaluation document of the Strategic Action Programme for the Conservation of Biological Diversity in the Mediterranean Region (SAP BIO), after 15 years having passed since its adoption. A fluent exchange has been followed for this process, with National Correspondents providing relevant information of SAP BIO implementation at national level to feed the evaluation document. The Conclusions and recommendations of the consultation process of such evaluation, including a concept note highlighting the importance and added value of SAP BIO for all countries and providing options for a new post-2020 SAP BIO structure, elaboration steps and timeline recommendations for the Mediterranean region, are herein presented to the 14th SPA/BD thematic Focal Points meeting.
2. The Fifth SAP BIO National Correspondents meeting also allowed the delegates to exchange on the content and eventual information update regarding relevant documents on biodiversity topics led by other RACs: the SoED 2019 chapters on Marine and Coastal Biodiversity, presented by Plan Bleu; and the Draft methodology for the analysis of coherence between regional documents adopted under the SPA/BD Protocol and provisions of the ICZM Protocol, presented by PAP/RAC. The relevant RACs are presenting also to this Focal Points meeting their respective advances on those documents for
3. Following the approval of the integrated monitoring and assessment Programme (IMAP) in the Mediterranean at COP 19, SPA/RAC supported the national integration process (review of existing monitoring and assessment programmes at national level, adequacy with the IMAP principles and common indicators) particularly through the harmonization of monitoring protocols that were discussed with national experts during meetings of the Correspondence Group on monitoring (CORMON) (Marseille, France, 12-13 February 2019; Rome, Italy, 21 May 2019).
4. During the CORMON meetings, national experts discussed the monitoring protocols for the common indicators related to biodiversity cluster, as well as the data compilation tools that will lead to the publication of the 2023 Mediterranean Quality Report (2023 MED QSR).
5. In line with Decision IG.22/7, the MedPol and ACCOBAMS prepared a proposal of the Guidance Factsheets for Common Indicators 26 and 27 of Ecological Objective 11 that was considered and welcomed by the Meeting of the Ecosystem Approach Correspondence Group on Pollution Monitoring (Podgorica, Montenegro, 2-3 April 2019). The following Guidance, will be further discussed during the Meeting of MED POL Focal Points (Istanbul, Turkey, 29-31 May 2019):

6. -The Guidance Factsheet for **Common Indicator 26 (EO11)**: “Proportion of days and geographical distribution where loud, low and mid-frequency impulsive sounds exceed levels that are likely to entail significant impact on marine animals”.

7. -The Guidance Factsheet for **Common Indicator 27 (EO11)**: “Levels of continuous low frequency sound with the use of models as appropriate”.

Resource mobilization:

8. During the reporting period, SPA/RAC has signed eleven (11) financing agreements (external funds) focusing on implementing 2018-2019 PoW activities with a total amount of more than 3 285 000 €; Following is a summary of the relevant external fund projects:

- Conservation of Marine Turtles in the Mediterranean:

9. SPA/RAC coordinates the implementation of the project's activities with the following partners: ARCHELON, DEKAMER, MEDASSET, MedPAN, NMPZ, WWF Greece, WWF Turkey, WWF North Africa and IUCN Med; The project aims to support the creation of monitoring networks and tools and a sustainable management plan for marine turtles and their habitats in the Mediterranean, through the implementation of harmonized monitoring protocols based on a participatory and integrated approach that consider both local socio-economic and environmental contexts. The beneficiary countries are Albania, Egypt, Greece, Lebanon, Libya, Spain, Tunisia and Turkey. The project started on July 2017 (will end in May 2020) with a total fund of 1.500.000 EUR from the MAVA Foundation, from which SPA/RAC has received 460.000 EUR.

- ODYSSEA:

10. With a total budget of € **8.398.700,00**, ODYSSEA (EU-funded project) started in June 2017 and will end in November 2021, with the aim to develop an operational platform that fully integrates networks of marine observing and forecasting systems across the Mediterranean. Simultaneously, 9 regional marine observatories (Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, Israel, Turkey, Greece, Italy, Spain) will be implemented in order to update and increase the spatio-temporal coverage of the database offered by the platform. With a budget of € **305,000.00** SPA/RAC is leading ODYSSEA module WP10 titled “Capacity Building for the North African Countries”, to ensure that ODYSSEA technologies are mastered by North African countries’ partners and to allow them to undertake marine environmental monitoring programmes and produce data by their own.

- Kuriat Project: Supporting the management of the marine and coastal protected area of the Kuriat Islands (Tunisia):

11. The Kuriat project is financed by MAVA foundation for nature and executed by SPA/RAC in partnership with the Coastal Protection and Management Agency (APAL) and Notre Grand Bleu (NGB) NGO (200,000 EUR). The project has started in July 2017 and will end in December 2019. it aims at supporting the management of the Marine and Coastal Protected Area of the Kuriat Islands in Tunisia based on a participatory approach through the involvement of the users, planners, local NGOs and decision makers.

- MedKeyHabitats II Project: Mapping of marine Key habitats and assessing their vulnerability to fishing activities in the Mediterranean:

12. The MedKeyHabitats II Project is also financed by MAVA foundation for nature and executed by SPA/RAC in partnership with IUCN-Med and MedPAN (1,250,000 EUR for SPA/RAC). The

MedKeyHabitats II Project will last 30 months starting from July 2017 till December 2019. It aims at establishing an inventory of marine key habitats and assess their vulnerability to fishing activities, to propose zoning and management measures, and to maintain and update geodatabases on marine key habitats and their sensitivity to fishing activities. The project concerns 6 countries: Tunisia, Malta, Cyprus, Turkey, Algeria, Morocco.

- Med Bycatch Project: Understanding Mediterranean multi-taxa ‘bycatch’ of vulnerable species and testing mitigation- a collaborative approach:

13. The Med Bycatch Project is financed by MAVA (3 483 800 €; 451 013 € to SPA/RAC) and jointly implemented by SPA/RAC, ACCOBAMS, GFCM, IUCN Med, BirdLife International (Project coordinator) and MEDASSET. The project has started in September 2017 and will end in June 2020. It aims to support Morocco, Tunisia and Turkey to identify and test measures to reduce the bycatch of the vulnerable species and to develop and implement standardized data collection protocol of bycatch across the Mediterranean and to identify elements for a regional post-2020 strategy on incidental catch of vulnerable species. SPA/RAC is involved in the project transversal activities targeting all beneficiary countries and manages the activities in Tunisia in collaboration with AAO/BirdLife-Tunisie and the National Institutions INSTM and DGPA.

- Vulnerable species project: Support mechanism for Filling key knowledge gaps for vulnerable and highly mobile species impacted by fisheries in the Mediterranean:

14. The main aim of this project, coordinated by SPA/RAC in collaboration with ACCOBAMS, BirdLife International, MEDASSET and IUCN Med, is to expand the state of knowledge of the vulnerable species’ (marine mammals, sea birds, sea turtles and cartilaginous fish species) distribution, range, migratory routes, habitat use. The project is compiling the existing data sources, to carry out a gap analysis and acquire new data before identifying new important areas for biodiversity for each species. This work will further complement the data and analysis being conducted through the MAVA funded Mutli-taxa Bycatch project. The total budget is 697,000 €, in which 400.000 € will be to support a call for small projects. SPA/RAC budget is 111.375 €. The Project started on 1 January 2018 and will end on December 2021.

- GEF Adriatic Project: Implementation of Ecosystem Approach in the Adriatic Sea through Marine Spatial:

15. The GEF Adriatic project is a sub-regional project, implemented in Albania and Montenegro, which aims to restore the ecological balance of the Adriatic Sea through the implementation of the EcAp and to improve sub-regional management capacity through the MSP. The project is implemented by UN Environment and executed by UN Environment/MAP in partnership with SPA/RAC and PAP/RAC. The project started in September 2017 and will end in Sept 2019, it is financed with USD 1,817,900 from GEF (USD 275 000 to SPA/RAC). SPA/RAC will support the activities related to biodiversity with regards to the implementation of the EcAp and the MSP to achieve the GES (trainings, gap assessment, monitoring programme and field survey).

- ASI Project: The “ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative”:

16. It’s a pilot initiative aimed at establishing an integrated and coordinated monitoring system for cetaceans, in coordination with the riparian countries and with their participation. The ASI project, coordinates by the ACCOBAMS Secretariat, supports the countries to meet their national and international commitments, in particular as regards to the regional policies related to the monitoring of the marine environment (EU MSFD, Ecosystem Approach implemented by the Barcelona and Bucharest Conventions, fisheries policies...). The ASI is supporting by MAVA, Foundation Albert II of Monaco,

IFAW, the Ministry of Ecological transition of Spain, the French Agency for Biodiversity, the Italian Ministry for Environment and the Government of the Principality of Monaco.

17. As part of the project coordination, SPA/RAC is collaborating to implement the ASI capacity building and training component, the dedicated budget is 70,000 EUR, started since May 2018 and will end on December 2019.

- Depredation project: “Towards solution to the Interactions between the fisher’s communities and cetaceans in Morocco and Tunisia”:

18. The MAVA funded Project addresses the depredation caused by the bottlenose dolphins to the small pelagic purse seine fisheries and will assess the interaction with aquaculture. The coordination of the project is ensured by the Secretariat of ACCOBAMS and GFCM, SPA/RAC is responsible for the management of the pilot action to be carried out in Tunisia. Starting on April 2019 (will end on December 2020) The total budget is 399.000 EUR, the SPA/RAC budget is 89.250 EUR.

- MedREGION: Support Mediterranean Member States towards the implementation of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive new GES Decision and programmes of measures and contribute to regional/subregional cooperation:

19. The key objective of the MEDREGION project is to support the development of effective regional measures with a special focus on biodiversity in relation to pressures exerted on it and to coordinate measures to protect species and habitats. Partners will try to complete gaps in monitoring data in the Mediterranean region/subregions (with a focus on assessing the distribution, intensity and effects of the key pressures), by improving the data/information collection for the regional GES assessment and for the updated monitoring programmes, to be aligned and coherent to the IMAP process. This will take into account INSPIRE, EMODNET and WISE-Marine, as well as the Info MAP platform of the UNEP-MAP. The total budget of the project is 998,997 €, with a SPA/RAC budget of 35,952 €. The implementation period is 1st February 2019 – 31st January 2021.

- QUIETMED 2: Joint programme for Good Environmental Status (GES) assessment on Descriptor (D11)-noise in the Mediterranean marine region:

This EU funded Project aims to support Member States Competent Authorities in the assessment of the extent to which GES on D11 has been achieved in the Mediterranean Region to get an updated, improved and more complete regional assessment by providing practical outcome to implement the 2017/848 Decisions. As partner, SPA/RAC with a budget around 37.000 EUR will implement the planned activities in close collaboration with the ACCOBAMS Secretariat, starting since February 2019 (will end on February 2021). (Total budget:739.055 EUR)

Strategic Outcome 1.3: Strengthened participation, engagement, synergies and complementarities among global and regional institutions:

20. The CBD COP14 took place in Sharm el Sheikh, Egypt (17-29 November 2018) and was attended by a total of 3,800 participants from all over the world. UNEP/MAP-SPA/RAC participated with the organization of a stand where it was displayed communication material presenting the MAP system and the Mediterranean biodiversity under Barcelona Convention and the SPA/BD Protocol. SPA/RAC took this opportunity to present the work currently being done to conserve the biodiversity of the Mediterranean coasts of Egypt, through a dedicated workshop organized in collaboration with the Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency. The CBD COP 14 provided also a perfect opportunity to present SPA/RAC activities related to marine environment data collection and associated services of data processing and modelling, undertaken in the framework of the ODYSSEA project financed by European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme. To this end, a side event was

organized with UNEP-WCMC, RAED and Deltares. SPA/RAC, also, made a presentation in the side event organized by the CBD Secretariat on the SOI Global Dialogue and the organization of a stand to exhibit UNEP/MAP and SPA/RAC outreach material.

21. UNEP/MAP-SPA/RAC contributed to GFCM Fish Forum 2018 (Rome, Italy, 10-14 December 2018) through the organization of a workshop on “Complementarity among Area based Conservation tools in the Mediterranean Sea”, the participation in the side event organized by the CBD Secretariat on “Cross-sectorial cooperation among Regional Seas Organizations and Regional Fishery management Bodies and added values of SOI Global Dialogue” with the presentation of “the Mediterranean showcase on bilateral cooperation among UNEP/MAP and GFCM secretariats”, the participation in the side event co-organized by UNEP/MAP and GFCM on the sub-regional pilot project on fishery related NIS in the Eastern Mediterranean implemented within the EcAp-MED II project and by holding a stand shared with ACCOBAMS where outreach materials on UNEP/MAP and SPA/RAC were displayed.

22. With the support of UNEP/MAP Secretariat, SPA/RAC was invited by UNEP to attend the 1st Conference on Sustainable Blue Economy (SBEC) held in Nairobi from the 26 to 28 November 2018. SPA/RAC participated in the session focusing on “Cities, Tourism, Resilient Coasts and Infrastructure”, the session about “Management and sustaining of Marine Life, Conservation and Sustainable Economic Activities and a session addressing “Climate Action, Agriculture, Waste Management and Pollution-Free Oceans”

23. SPA/RAC took part of the GEF Adriatic Project Inception meeting that was organized back to back with the first Steering Committee meeting in Tirana (Albania) on 29 and 30 May 2018. The meetings were attended by participants from the eligible countries, i.e. from Albania and Montenegro, and representatives from UNEP, UNEP/MAP, SPA/RAC, PAP/RAC and MEDPOL.

Strategic Outcome 1.4: Knowledge and understanding of the state of the Mediterranean Sea and coast enhanced through mandated assessments for informed policy-making

24. In line with the UNEP/MAP Programme of Work for 2016-2017 and 2018-2019 as well as the Decision IG. 23/6 on the 2017 MED QSR (COP 20, Tirana, Albania, 17-20 December 2017), SPA/RAC have provided support to almost all the non-EU Contracting Parties (namely: Albania, Algeria, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Egypt, Israel, Montenegro, Lebanon, Morocco, State of Libya and Tunisia) in updating their national monitoring programmes aligned with the IMAP of the Barcelona Convention. This was possible mainly through the EU-funded EcAp-MED II Project (2015-2019) and the GEF Adriatic Project (2017-2019).

25. Towards a successful 2023 Mediterranean Quality Status Report (2023 MED QSR) implementation, the Meeting of the Ecosystem Approach Correspondence Group on Monitoring (CORMON) Biodiversity and Fisheries (Marseille, France, 12-13 February 2019) discussed the harmonization and the standardization of the monitoring and assessment methods of biodiversity and non-indigenous species common indicators.

Strategic Outcome 1.5: MAP knowledge and MAP information system enhanced and accessible for policy-making, increased awareness and understanding

26. After having finalized and published the Mediterranean Biodiversity Platform (MBP) online, we started collecting data on various biodiversity components based on the metadata template already

prepared in the framework of the Mediterranean Biodiversity Platform (MBP). New data issued from different collected sources has also been integrated in the MBP catalogue (approximately 16 layer).

SPA/RAC issued during the month of January 2019 a call for tenders to upgrade the Mediterranean Biodiversity Platform (MBP) and redesign the other SPA/RAC databases: the Marine Mediterranean Invasive Alien Species Database (MAMIAS), the Specially Protected Areas in the Mediterranean Database (MAPAMED), and the Standard Data-entry Form (SDF) for national inventories of natural sites of conservation interest Database. The call for tenders has been declared unfruitful for lack of competition. The call for tenders is being updated in order to be relaunched.

Strategic Outcome 1.6: Raised awareness and outreach

27. In order to inform and raise awareness on marine biodiversity, SPA/RAC produced a short film and a leaflet on marine biodiversity for children in Arabic, French and English, as well as a travelling photographic exhibition on Marine Key Habitats and Non indigenous species in the Mediterranean. In addition, SPA/RAC supported environmental events during which the Centre organized workshops to raise awareness of the general public in Tunisia (ENVIROFEST 2018 & 2019, Earth Hour 2018).

28. Within the MAVA Med Bycatch project, SPA/RAC produced an awareness leaflet on bycatch of vulnerable species (AR, FR, EN) in coordination with the project's partners. Additionally, SPA/RAC adapted from French to Arabic the FAO/GFCM-ACCOBAMS-SPA/RAC good practices guides for the handling of vulnerable species caught incidentally in Mediterranean Fisheries and produced a training manual on identification of cartilaginous fishes.

29. In order to enhance SPA/RAC's visibility, the Centre set up a stand during 2 international events: the CBD COP14 (Egypt, 2018), with INFO/RAC, and the Fish Forum (Italy, 2018), with MAP and ACCOBAMS.

30. Promotional material (notebook & 2018 pocket calendar, tote bag, thermos, USB stick, 2019 weekly planner) were produced to increase interest in SPA/RAC activities and mission.

31. A brochure for the institutional presentation of the Centre is being elaborated and will be ready in June 2019.

32. SPA/RAC website is being updated, it will include a permanent online registration form and biodiversity specialists' directory.

II- BIODIVERSITY AND ECOSYSTEMS:

Strategic Outcome 3.1: Strengthening regional implementation of the obligations under the Barcelona Convention, and its relevant Protocols and other instruments

33. In the framework of the EU-funded "MedMPA network" project, SPA/RAC has set up, late 2017, on a pilot basis, the Ad hoc Group of Experts on MPAs in the Mediterranean (AGEM). The first Meeting of the AGEM (Tunis, Tunisia, 22-23 February 2018) allowed to identify the main topics that could be addressed during the one-year period of the AGEM pilot functioning. The second meeting of the AGEM was convened in Tunis, Tunisia, on 15 March 2019. It allowed to review and discuss several technical documents that will constitute the main AGEM deliverables that will be presented to the 14th meeting of SPA/BD thematic Focal Points.

34. In the framework of the Bilateral Cooperation Agreement between UNEP/MAP and the Italian Ministry of Environment, Land and Sea (IMELS), one component relates to the SPAMI Twinning Programme, in which four twinning activity packages are developed among Italian SPAMIs/MPAs and SPAMIs/MPAs from Albania, Algeria, Slovenia and Tunisia. The kick-off meeting took place in Torre del Cerrano MPA, Italy, on 26 February 2019 during which three twinning agreements were signed.

35. A training workshop on standardized adaptive MPA management systems was held in Tunis, Tunisia, on 11-12 March 2019 for the benefit of the SPAMI/MPA managers participating in the SPAMI Twinning Programme.

36. Diagnosis exchange visits among twinned SPAMI/MPAs are organized during March and April 2019.

A call for small projects is launched aiming to the involvement of the local civil society. Seven small projects should be selected in April 2019, it should start from May going up to November 2019.

37. With the support of PAP/RAC an analysis has been made of the coherence and complementarity between the ICZM Protocol and SAP BIO, which is meant to contribute to the process of SAP BIO revision. The findings of the analysis will be presented and discussed at both PAP/RAC and SPA/RAC FPs meetings.

38. Through the IMELS support, during 2019, *discussion among countries of the Adriatic-Ionian sub-region towards coordinated implementation of Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) based on EcAp EOs and integrating provisions set out in the ICZM Protocol, the MSP Conceptual Framework and EU MSP Directive, was initiated, promoting, to the fullest possible extent, transboundary cooperation.*

39. Within the framework of the Cooperation Agreement between IMELS and UNEP, REMPEC and SPA/RAC have been cooperating on the preparation of their respective terms of reference on the provision of guidance on Particularly Sensitive Sea Areas (PSSAs) identification in relation with Specially Protected Areas of Mediterranean Importance (SPAMIs) and the strengthening of the capacity building in enhancing scientific description of Ecologically/Biologically Significant Marine Areas (EBSAs) or PSSAs.

Strategic Outcome 3.2: Development of new action plans, programmes and measures, common standards and criteria, guidelines for the conservation of Coastal and Marine biodiversity and ecosystems

40. SPA/RAC elaborated a practical guide on gap analysis and MPA system planning adapted to the Mediterranean context, to be used by Mediterranean countries' planners and decision-makers and other stakeholders involved in MPA planning processes, based on the most recent available technical tools, literature and best practices developed at international level. This guide is available in English and French.

41. Within the MAVA Med Bycatch project, a standardized protocol "**Monitoring incidental catch of vulnerable species in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea - Methodology for data collection**" was elaborated by FAO/GFCM in close collaboration with SPA/RAC, ACCOBAMS, IUCN Med, BirdLife International and MEDASSET.

42. In the framework of the MedKeyHabitats II project, SPA/RAC started the implementation of marine key Habitats mapping and the elaboration of the distribution and sensitivity maps in Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia. The first phase, the diagnostic phase is validated. The second phase including the field work with mapping activities is underway in Morocco and will start soon in Algeria and Tunisia. For Turkey, SPA/RAC launched the call for tender for mapping of marine key habitats and assessing their vulnerability to fishing activities in Foça Special Environmental Protection Area. The call for tender concerning Malta is being prepared and should be launched by the end of April 2019. For Cyprus, several activities will be implemented and concerns (i) the deployment of the Mediterranean Biodiversity platform with Cypriote data on marine and coastal biodiversity (ii) the assessment of the vulnerability of marine key habitats to fishing activities in the capo greko MPA and (iii) the elaboration of the national Action Plan for the conservation of marine vegetation.

43. The MED POL programme continues to support the Contracting Parties with regards to the development of the IMAP Candidate Indicator 24¹, with a particular focus on reducing the impact of marine litter and micro litter in biota with a particular focus on endangered species. The SPA/RAC in consultation with UN Environment/MAP MED POL is implementing a number of concrete activities in the framework of the EU-funded Marine Litter MED project.

44. A specific Protocol on monitoring the amount of marine litter ingested by or entangling the selected species to harmonize methods and data collection has been developed in both English and French language. Cooperation and synergies have been established between MED POL and several EU-funded projects (e.g. INDICIT, MEDSEALITTER, Life Euro Turtles projects) with the scope to ensure coherence between the different protocols that are under development from the respective projects. To this extent, an agreement has been agreed between the EU-funded Marine Litter MED and the INDICIT projects in order to develop a single unified consistent protocol for the Mediterranean. The specific Protocol describes the most suitable methods for monitoring the ingestion of marine litter by marine turtles in the Mediterranean, dead or alive. It also describes the methodology intended to assess in a harmonized way rates of entanglement of marine turtles in marine litter, as back-up to the pilot monitoring approach. The specific Protocol on monitoring the amount of marine litter ingested by or entangling the selected species will be reviewed during this Meeting.

45. In accordance with the Decision IG.23/8, SPA/RAC held a Meeting of Experts on the finalization of the Classification of benthic marine habitat types for the Mediterranean region and the Reference List of Marine and Coastal Habitat Types in the Mediterranean (Rome, Italy, 22-23 January 2019). The meeting was organized thanks to the kind invitation of the Government of Italy and financial support of the MAVA Foundation for Nature. The Draft Updated Classification of benthic marine habitat types and the Draft Updated Reference List of Marine Habitat Types for the Mediterranean region are presented as working documents to the 14th SPA/BD thematic Focal Points meeting in view to be submitted to the MAP Focal Points meeting and COP 21 for adoption.

SPA/RAC has also updated the following Action Plans and Strategy:

1. The Action Plan for the conservation of cartilaginous fishes (Chondrichthyans) in the Mediterranean Sea;
2. The Regional strategy for the conservation of monk seal in the Mediterranean;
3. The Action Plan for the conservation of marine turtles in the Mediterranean; and

¹ “Trends in the amount of litter ingested by or entangling marine organisms focusing on selected mammals, marine birds and marine turtles (EO10)”.

4. The Action Plan for the conservation of marine vegetation in the Mediterranean.

46. The draft updated Action Plans and Strategy are presented as working documents to the 14th SPA/BD thematic Focal Points meeting in view to be submitted to the MAP Focal Points meeting and COP 21 for adoption.

47. As provided for in the Action Plan for the conservation of the coralligenous and other calcareous bio-concretions in the Mediterranean Sea, SPA/RAC launched the elaboration of the guidelines for the assessment of environmental impact on coralligenous/maërl assemblages.

48. SPA/RAC launched the updating of the Marine Mediterranean invasive Alien Species database (MAMIAS) and the elaboration of the first Mediterranean report on the status of non-indigenous species as provided for in the IMAP. The draft report is planned to be ready by the end of July 2019.

49. In the framework of the GEF Adriatic project, a new methodology for assessing cumulative impacts of activities on the marine biodiversity, based on IMAP indicators, has been developed in order to be tested in Montenegro, for the purpose of the preparation of the Marine Spatial Plan.

50. REMPEC presented the outcome of the assessment of the level of implementation of the Mediterranean Strategy on Ships' Ballast Water Management (BWM), including its Action Plan and Timetable (hereinafter referred to as the Mediterranean BWM Strategy) to the Twelfth Meeting of the Focal Points of REMPEC in document REMPEC/WG.41/7. The Meeting supported the specific recommendations listed under each Strategic Priority of the Mediterranean BWM Strategy and each measure identified in the Action Plan as well as the general conclusions presented in the Synthetic Report on the said assessment, as set out in the Appendix to the above-mentioned document.

51. The Centre provided technical assistance to the Government of Malta on the ratification and effective implementation of the International Convention for the Control and Management of Ships' Ballast Water and Sediments, 2004 (BWM Convention) prior to its entry into force on 8 September 2017.

52. REMPEC also facilitated the dialogue between Italy and Malta in the margins of the Seventy-first Session of the Marine Environment Protection Committee (MEPC 71) (London, UK, 3-7 July 2017) with a view to, possibly, mutually granting exemptions under the BWM Convention and making use of the same risk area concept for short sea shipping trade between the two neighboring countries in specific areas of the Mediterranean Sea.

53. The Centre, as Regional Coordinating Organization (RCO) for the implementation of the Global Environment Facility (GEF)-United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)-IMO GloBallast Partnerships Programme in the Mediterranean region in collaboration with SPA/RAC, disseminated a hard copy of the last publication of the said project, namely the GloBallast Story: Reflections from a Global Family (GloBallast Monograph Series No. 25), to all Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention, in December 2017.

54. Further to the informal discussions held in the margins of MEPC 71 and MEPC 72, REMPEC contacted the interested parties for the implementation of a pilot on mutually granted exemptions under the BWM Convention, making use of the same risk area concept for short sea shipping trade between two neighboring countries in specific areas of the Mediterranean Sea, with a view to specifying the type of assistance and timeframe to support the process.

55. Following the Call for Expressions of Interest to become a Lead Partnering Country or a Partnering Country of the GEF-UNDP-IMO GloFouling Partnerships submitted by REMPEC to all Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention in September 2017, the Centre was informed by IMO that, due to lack of interest expressed by Mediterranean coastal States, the Mediterranean region would not be one of the regions directly benefiting from the said programme. However, as experience is gained, and tools developed through the project, REMPEC and the Mediterranean region will be associated to some of the awareness-raising activities to be carried out at a later stage.

56. REMPEC secured additional funding from IMO's ITCP to complement the funds available under MTF and initiated the necessary coordination with IMO to organize the Regional Workshop on the International Convention on the Control of Harmful Anti-fouling Systems on Ships and the Biofouling Guidelines to be held in Valletta, Malta, from 12 to 14 November 2019.

57. REMPEC disseminated the following documents to the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention pursuant to the UNEP/MAP Programme of Work and Budget for 2016-2017 and presented them during the Twelfth Meeting of the Focal Points of REMPEC (St Julian's, Malta, 23-25 May 2017):

- the 2011 Guidelines for the control and management of ships' biofouling to minimize the transfer of invasive aquatic species ("the 2011 Biofouling Guidelines"), as set out in the Appendix to document REMPEC/WG.41/INF.7; and
- the Guidance for minimizing the transfer of invasive aquatic species as biofouling (hull fouling) for recreational craft, as laid down in the Appendix to document REMPEC/WG.41/INF.8.

58. The Centre also disseminated IMO Circular Letter No.3768 dated 30 August 2017 to all Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention with regard to the Call for Expressions of Interest to become a Lead Partnering Country or a Partnering Country of the GEF-UNDP-IMO GloFouling Partnerships that focuses on building capacity in developing countries for implementing the 2011 Biofouling Guidelines.

59. REMPEC disseminated the Guidelines for the reduction of underwater noise from commercial shipping to address adverse impacts on marine life to the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention pursuant to the UNEP/MAP Programme of Work and Budget for 2016-2017, as set out in the Appendix to document REMPEC/WG.41/INF.9, and presented them during the Twelfth Meeting of the Focal Points of REMPEC (St Julian's, Malta, 23-25 May 2017).

60. As a result of a second call for proposals for the development of the common offshore standards and guidelines on i) the disposal of oil and oily mixtures, the use and disposal of drilling fluids and cutting and analytical measurements, ii) Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) from offshore activities, and iii) Special restrictions or conditions for Specially Protected Areas (SPAs), published on 8 May 2017 a company was hired by REMPEC. A consultation process with Contracting Parties and Stakeholder was launched in September 2017 with a view to gather comments on the initial drafts of offshore common standards and guidelines. Considering the level of response, limited to the contribution of SPA/RAC and only four (4) Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention, the consultation process was extended to May 2018.

61. REMPEC contributed to both, the preparation of ToRs and selection of a consultant/regional expert to assist the UNEP/MAP Secretariat in identifying gaps and needs regarding the integration of Good Environmental Status (GES) and targets and Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) processes in the

Offshore Action Plan implementation. In this context, the draft common standards and guidelines to harmonize regional practices in the Mediterranean region will be reviewed, considering comments received through the consultation processes. The Mediterranean Offshore Guidelines for the Conduct of Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) are submitted for review to the Thirteenth Meeting of the Focal Points of REMPEC (Floriana, Malta, 11-13 June 2019), as document REMPEC/WG.45/13/1.

62. Simultaneously, the 14th Meeting of Specially Protected Areas/Biological Diversity Focal Points (Portorož, Slovenia, 18-21 June 2019) is invited to review the Mediterranean Offshore Guidelines for the Conduct of Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and the Mediterranean Offshore Standards and Guidelines on Special restrictions or conditions for Specially Protected Areas (SPAs). The 2nd Meeting of the Barcelona Convention Offshore Oil and Gas Group (OFOG) planned in collaboration with REMPEC to take place in Athens, Greece, from 22 to 28 June 2019, will be invited to agree upon the revised draft for onward submission to the MAP Focal Point Meeting for final review prior to their submission to COP21 for adoption.

63. The Consultant will also review accordingly the documents submitted to the First Meeting of the Barcelona Convention OFOG Sub-Group on Environmental Impact of Offshore Monitoring Programmes (Loutraki, Greece, 3-4 April 2017) and prepare recommendations for updating the annexes to the Offshore Protocol.

Strategic Outcome 3.3: Strengthening national implementation of biodiversity conservation policies, strategies and legislation measures

64. Within the framework of its assistance to Contracting Parties, SPA/RAC is supporting the elaboration of the NAPs concerning species introduction and invasive species for Libya and Turkey and the preparation of the NAPs for the conservation of Marine Turtles in Libya Lebanon, Spain and Tunisia.

National strategy to reduce illegal trade of marine turtles in Tunisia has been prepared and discussed during a national consultation workshop held on 20 of December 2018.

65. In coordination with ACCOBAMS, GFCM, IUCN Med, BirdLife International and MEDASSET, SPA/RAC organized the Technical launch workshop of the MAVA Med Bycatch project in Tunisia (Monastir, 8 May 2018) and contributed to the technical launch workshop of the project in Turkey (Istanbul, Turkey, 9 July 2018) and in Morocco (Tangier, Morocco, 17 July 2018). Additionally, a regional scientific committee for bycatch was set up by the project partners and the 1st scientific committee meeting was held in Rome on 13 December 2018, at FAO Head Quarters during the GFCM Fish Forum. Furthermore, SPA/RAC set up a bycatch data collection programme (Schedule, port selection, national priorities identification, data collection methodology) and contracted a team of bycatch observers in close collaboration with the Tunisian national authorities (project national partners), the Bycatch project National Focal points and the Project Local NGO partner AAO/BirdLife Tunisie. The implementation of the bycatch observation programme started in Tunisia (Duration: March 2019-June 2020) in collaboration with AAO/BirdLife Tunisie and National Tunisian Partners.

66. Within the MAVA Kuriat Project, SPA/RAC supports the implementation of the management plan of the future MPA Kuriat island in partnership with the NGB NGO and the Coastal Protection and Management Agency (APAL). A joint unit of management and a steering committee was created to strength the process of implementation of the conservation activities through a participatory approach. In the context, two meetings of the key stakeholders were held to discuss and plan the implementation

of the activities of the project. Several other meetings were also organized with the touristic operators to finalize and endorse a charter for proper conduct of ecotourism in the future AMP.

67. Furthermore, a communication strategy is being developed with an action plan to be implemented by the joint management unit to complement the conservation activities provided for in the management plan and to promote the AMP.

68. Within the MedKeyHabitats II project financed by MAVA Foundation, SPA/RAC elaborated an updated report on the coralligenous in the Mediterranean Sea. SPA/RAC is also launching the elaboration of a report on marine caves biocenosis.

69. Within the Deep-Sea Lebanon Project, SPA/RAC elaborated a Management plan for future deep sea MPAs (Jounieh Nature Marine Reserve) that was presented and endorsed by concerned stakeholders during a workshop, held on 11 December 2018 in Beirut. With this activity, a multiyear framework that includes an overall vision, objectives and priorities for conservation towards the proposed Nature Marine Reserve in the bay of Jounieh, was produced and distributed to relevant authorities as a key tool for future sustainable management of the proposed site. The management plan provides guidelines and description of the regulations, management board, MPA boundaries and different conservation zones, as well as specific actions and related financial considerations required to ensure a level of conservation for the proposed marine site.

70. Within the MedMPA Network project, financed by the European Union, a presentation workshop of the ecological surveys undertaken in three sites suitable to be declared as MPAs in Lebanon (Batroun, Medfoun and Byblos) was organized in Beirut, in January 2018 which led to the endorsement of these results by national authorities and stakeholders. In Morocco, the report of the diagnosis-assessment phase for the elaboration of the Jbel Moussa management plan has been endorsed by the representatives of national and local stakeholders. The national consultants are currently progressing on the elaboration of the draft management plan. In Tunisia, the management plan for the North-Eastern part of the Kerkennah Islands (Tunisia) has been presented and endorsed during a consultation workshop held in Kerkennah, on 4 January 2019. Finally, In Egypt, the process aiming at the elaboration of the management plan for the Salloum MPA has been launched in April 2019.

Strategic Outcome 3.4: Monitoring, inventory and assessment of biodiversity with focus on endangered and threatened species, non-indigenous species and key habitats

71. SPA/RAC undertook, in fluent collaboration with the Parties, an evaluation of the Strategic Action Programme for the Conservation of Biological Diversity in the Mediterranean Region (SAP BIO), after fulfilling 15 years since its adoption, aimed to assess the actions achieved, existing gaps and pending issues at regional and national levels, calibrating the added value played by the role of SAP BIO for all Mediterranean countries, and providing options for a new post-2020 SAP BIO structure, elaboration steps and timeline. The evaluation was discussed with delegates at the Fifth meeting of National Correspondents of SAP BIO, to be again verified by the Sixth meeting of National Correspondents of SAPBIO (Portoroz, Slovenia, June 2019). The Conclusions and recommendations of such evaluation are presented to the 14th SPA/BD thematic Focal Point meeting.

72. Following the GEF Adriatic Project Inception Meeting and Steering committee meeting (May 2018) SPA/RAC and PAP/RAC supported Albania and Montenegro to set up their National team of experts (biodiversity, NIS, fisheries; coast and hydrography; eutrophication and contaminants; marine

litter). SPA/RAC supported both Albanian and Montenegrin experts to elaborate the national knowledge GAP assessment related to EO1 (Marine Habitat, Sea turtle, Seabirds, Marine mammals) and EO2 (NIS). Additionally, in March 2019, Albanian and Montenegrin fisheries experts started the elaboration of a knowledge gap assessment related to EO3 “fishery” with SPA/RAC support in close collaboration with FAO/GFCM. Both Albanian and Montenegrin project team of experts are drafting a monitoring programme related to EO1 and EO2 assisted by SPA/RAC.

73. Within the implementation of the EU funded project Marine Litter MED, SPA/RAC in close consultation with MEDPOL has prepared the report “*Defining the most representative species for IMAP Candidate Indicator 24*” which will be reviewed during this Meeting.

74. Within the framework of assessment of available data to propose GES Targets concerning the amounts of litter ingested by or entangling the sea turtles, a specific questionnaire has been prepared and disseminated through the SPA/RAC focal points and the Mediterranean Marine turtles’ specialists Network. Based on the responses received from the questionnaire, the report “*Assessment of the available data to propose GES targets for IMAP Candidate Indicator 24*” has been prepared.

75. In the framework of the Bilateral Cooperation Agreement between UNEP/MAP and The Italian Ministry of Environment, Land and Sea (IMELS), an MSP pilot project was prepared. The project aims to complement SUPREME and GEF Adriatic projects and to strengthen the EUSAIR Strategy, to be developed into the Adriatic relevant marine areas, subject to major pressures. Common consultancies between IMELS, UNEP/MAP, SPA/RAC and PAP/RAC led to the definition, by January 2019, of the project work plan. Thus, the project activity has been split in two components, one national aiming at supporting Albania in its initial steps towards MSP implementation (led by SPA/RAC with focus on field surveys) and one sub-regional aiming at strengthening common approaches for coherent implementation of MSP in the Adriatic area (led by PAP/RAC).

76. In conformity with COP 20 Decision IG.23/9, SPA/RAC collaborated with the relevant authorities in France, Italy, Lebanon, Monaco, Spain and Tunisian order to carry out, through mixed independent/national technical advisory commissions (TACs), the ordinary periodic review for the following 19 SPAMIs (by alphabetical order):

- Blue Coast Marine Park (France);
- Embiez Archipelago - Six Fours (France);
- Port-Cros (France);
- Pelagos Sanctuary for the Conservation of Marine Mammals (France, Italy and Monaco);
- Capo Carbonara Marine Protected Area (Italy);
- Marine Protected Area of Penisola del Sinis - Isola di Mal di Ventre (Italy);
- Porto Cesareo Marine Protected Area (Italy);
- Palm Islands Nature Reserve (Lebanon);
- Tyre Coast Nature Reserve (Lebanon);
- Alboran Island (Spain);
- Columbretes Islands (Spain);
- Medes Islands (Spain);
- Mar Menor and the Oriental Mediterranean zone of the region of Murcia coast (Spain);
- Natural Park of Cabo de Gata-Níjar (Spain);
- Natural Park of Cap de Creus (Spain);
- Sea Bottom of the Levante of Almeria (Spain);
- Kneiss Islands (Tunisia);
- La Galite Archipelago (Tunisia); and
- Zembra and Zembretta National Park (Tunisia).

77. The site visits and meetings of the various TACs took place during March 2019. The outcomes of this review will be brought to the attention of the 14th SPA/BD thematic Focal Points meeting (June 2019) and subsequently to COP 21 (December 2019).

78. The ordinary review of the Pelagos Sanctuary allowed for testing the SPAMI online evaluation system for transboundary high-sea SPAMIs. The results of this test will be brought to the attention of the 14th SPA/BD thematic Focal Points meeting (June 2019).

79. SPA/RAC is undertaking an evaluation of the “Roadmap for a Comprehensive Coherent Network of Well-Managed MPAs to Achieve Aichi Target 11 in the Mediterranean” to assess the progress made (including success and possible failure) by the Mediterranean countries towards achieving the Aichi Target 11. The results of such an evaluation, along with post-2020 recommendations for the Mediterranean region, will be presented to the 14th SPA/BD thematic Focal Points meeting (June 2019).

80. Within the MAVA Marine turtles project, SPA/RAC supported the implementation of the monitoring nesting programmes in Egypt Lebanon, Libya, Spain and Tunisia. The programme aimed to monitor and assess beach quality, threats and pressures on the known nesting areas and to explore new areas.

81. Also, within the MAVA Species Project, SPA/RAC (as the Project’s Coordinator) and the Partners (ACCOBAMS, BirdLife Int., ICUN-Med, MEDASSET) are working on enhancing the knowledge on marine megafauna species (Marine Mammals, Sea Birds, Sea turtles and Elasmobranches) in key areas of the Mediterranean. A gap analysis was carried out to identify the priorities, for which a call for small projects was launched in 18 February 2019. The Species Project is expected to continue until November 2021 and will provide a complementary data for the MAVA MED Bycatch Project.

82. Within the MAVA Kuriat project, monitoring programs of the Key species and threats were implemented by the management unit with the help of external experts. The monitoring, implemented in line with the management plan and IMAP guidelines, concerns marine turtles, fishing activities, human attendance, non-indigenous species and seabirds. The results of these monitoring programs will contribute to take the appropriate management measures for the site.

Strategic Outcome 3.5: Technical assistance and capacity building at regional, sub-regional and national levels to strengthen policy implementation and compliance with biodiversity -related national legislation

83. Capacity building, technical support and trainings developed by SPA/RAC aimed to fill knowledge gaps in specific areas identified both at national and sub-regional levels, depending on the topic and existing regional/sub-regional recommendations, conclusions, with a focus on the Southern Mediterranean. Further trainings aiming at strengthening national capacities towards the 2023 MED QSR development were developed in close collaboration with regional partners.

84. Within the GEF Adriatic Project, SPA/RAC and PAP/RAC provided international expertise related to IMAP to assist the National teams of experts in Albania and Montenegro to prepare the National Knowledge GAP assessment and draft a national monitoring programme aligned with IMAP. In coordination with the National GEF Adriatic Project coordinators, three (03) EcAp trainings workshops were organized for national teams of experts: EO5 Eutrophication and EO9 Contamination

(02-03 October 2018, organized by PAP/RAC), EO10 Marine litter (22 November 2018, organized by PAP/RAC), EO1 Biodiversity, EO2 NIS and EO7 Hydrography (26-27 November 2018, organized by SPA/RAC and PAP/RAC).

85. Within the MAVA Med Bycatch project, a training on bycatch for Tunisian bycatch observers and representatives of national institutions and NGOs was jointly organized from 03 to 06 October 2018 in Tunis (Tunisia) by SPA/RAC, BirdLife International, ACCOBAMS, IUCN Med and MEDASSET and the Tunisian National partners, AAO/BirdLife Tunisie, INSTM and DGPA.

86. Within the MAVA Kuriat Project, a capacity building training on management, conservation, monitoring and communication tools on marine and coastal biodiversity have been organized for the key actors concerned by the management of the Kuriat islands and in particular the joint management unit (between APAL and Notre Grand Blue NGB).

87. Within the MedKeyHabitats II project; and in collaboration with EcAp Med II project; a training session on monitoring techniques of marine biodiversity in line with the IMAP Ecological Objectives (EOs) and Indicators, were organized in order to initiate a monitoring system of marine Key Habitats.

88. In Morocco, this training session was held from the 26th to 29th of June 2018 in the National Parc of Al Hoceima. 15 participants benefited from this training including managers and researchers related to the management of the pilot sites. This session training focused on the monitoring technique related to habitats, non-indigenous species and seabirds. In Algeria, 11 managers and researchers were also trained on monitoring technique of marine habitats, non-indigenous species and seabirds. It was held from the 9th to 13th September 2018 in Rachgoun Island, Ain-Temouchent (Algeria).

89. Furth more, to ensure the functioning of these monitoring system, a scuba diving training session was formed in Kuriat island (Tunisia), plane islands (Algeria) and Habibas islands (Algeria) for the managers of the pilot sites.

90. SPA/RAC co-organized and implemented with the CBD Marine Team the Sustainable Ocean Initiative (SOI) Capacity Building Workshop for Northern Africa and the Mediterranean (Tangier, Morocco, 15-19 October 2018). The event showcased efficient cooperation among a Regional Seas Convention and a Regional Fisheries Management Organization with a Global Environment Convention, commonly aimed to provide support towards achieving Aichi Target 6 and 11 at national level in the countries of the region. It was a very relevant exercise where national experts and practitioners from marine biodiversity conservation and Fisheries and marine resources management public administrations worked together with regional active organizations, with the support of CBD Secretariat, UNEP/MAP and GFCM on: a) Undertaking self-assessment of progress towards Aichi Biodiversity Target 6 and 11; b) Exchanging experiences on how to use sector-based and cross-sectoral tools and approaches for conservation and sustainable use of marine and coastal biodiversity and ; c) Getting introduced on developing strategies and action plans to enhance cross-sectoral approaches to conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity.

91. The first ODYSSEA training workshop dedicated to Observatories Managers and Technical Staff held in Lisbon, (PT), 23-25 October 2018, simultaneously with ODYSSEA 1st General Assembly. SPA/RAC has prepared the outlines of the Training Program, based on a survey conducted within the project stakeholders, and has coordinated the contribution of the speakers.

92. ODYSSEA Deliverable D10.1 “Training material for workshops” was prepared by SPA/RAC and delivered by the end of November 2018. In January 23-24, 2019, SPA/RAC has been involved in

the official launch of ODYSSEA project in Morocco and it was an opportunity to identify the capacity building needs of the Moroccan stakeholders in the field of Operational Oceanography.

93. SPA/RAC took part in the ODYSSEA project review meeting held in the premises of the Research Executive Agency in Brussels (13 February 2019). During this event, SPA/RAC has presented the activities carried out in the frame of WP10 "Capacity Building in North African Countries".

94. On February 18, 2019, SPA/RAC participated to the stakeholders' workshop organized by the ANDDCVS (the Tunisian partner involved in ODYSSEA) in Tunis. SPA/RAC has presented the project progress, the capacity building program and the version V2 of ODYSSEA data platform in order to collect the stakeholder's feedback.

95. In the framework of the Bilateral Cooperation Agreement between UNEP/MAP and the Italian Ministry of Environment, Land and Sea (IMELS), SPA/RAC is preparing a joint action with REMPEC to compile information on pressures and impacts in a sub-region (an EBSA zone) where SPAMIs and PSSAs can be declared. A training workshop on management measures and PSSAs declaration processes in the Adriatic will be organized in November 2019, with the aim to provide coordinated support to Contracting Parties to enhance skills in identifying areas where PSSAs declarations could be promoted.

96. Also, and through an MoU with ACCOBAMS, SPA/RAC has taken charge of executing the Capacity Building Component of the ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative (ASI) and coordination of the survey for the South Mediterranean countries. In 2018, concentration was on preparing teams for the ASI fieldwork that was to start in summer 2018. In this regard, two ASI regional workshops were conducted. The first was the Aerial Survey Method workshop that took place in Cuers (France) in May 2018. The second was about survey methods from boats and marine vessels, it took place in Samos (Greece) in June 2018. The second stage of the Capacity Building Component was to fill any remaining gaps capacity building requirements by the ACCOBAMS countries. In collaboration with the EcAp Med II programme, three regional workshops and one national workshop were planned to take place in 2019. The first regional workshop took place in Bizerte (Tunisia) to provide training on processing/analysis of cetacean's data using dedicated software. The workshop took place during February 2019. The other regional workshops will take place in Lebanon with a similar theme (June 2019) and in Montenegro to introduce cetaceans research methods in MPAs (August 2019). A national workshop is dedicated to Libyan experts and will take place in Monastir (Tunisia) in April 2019.

97. Two special training sessions on Sea Turtle litter ingestion were organized during the 2017-2018 biennium, in cooperation and in synergy with the EU-funded INDICIT project. The first, English-speaking, training session for sharing technical skills on marine litter ingested by or entangled by Sea Turtles was successfully organized in Portici, Naples on 6 July 2017, with the participation of experts in sea turtle from Tunisia, Lebanon, Egypt, and Israel. A second, sub-regional, French-speaking, training session was organized in the rescue center of Monastir, Tunisia, in 1-2 November 2018, with the participation of 10 experts in sea turtle, veterinarians and scientists from Algeria, Libya, Lebanon, Morocco and Tunisia. Both training sessions addressed a number of issues such as the observation of necropsy and dissection of a digestive tract for the collection of debris ingested by a loggerhead turtle, as well as different steps of collecting the marine litter from the esophagus, stomach and intestines. The trainings also included practical sessions to perform some operations on intestines and samples, and to classify and identify all the types of marine litter in accordance with the most recent monitoring

protocol(s). Both training sessions aimed at providing tools for technicians who will carry out the monitoring of marine litter ingested by sea turtles in the Mediterranean.

98. With the aim to reinforce national capacities for the monitoring and conservation of threatened and endangered species SPA/RAC has organized:

- A Sub regional training on biology and monitoring of marine turtles in the Mediterranean Dalyan, Turkey, 20-27 June 2018. (Marine Turtles Project);
- National training on the identification and conservation of cartilaginous fishes (Sfax, Tunisia, 23-25 April 2018 in collaboration with INSTM);
- Sub regional training on Marine Biodiversity monitoring (Kuriat islands, Tunisia, 8-12 August 2018);

99. SPA/RAC organized in January 2019 the Mediterranean Symposia on Marine Key Habitats and Non-Indigenous Species (NIS) from 14 to 18 January 2019 as follows:

- 6th Mediterranean Symposium on Marine Vegetation (14-15 January 2019);
- 3rd Mediterranean Symposium on the Conservation of Coralligenous and other Calcareous Bio-Concretions (15-16 January 2019);
- 2nd Mediterranean Symposium on the Conservation of the Dark Habitats (16 January 2019); and
- 1st Mediterranean Symposium on the Non-Indigenous Species (17-18 January 2019).

100. The Symposia are held on a 4-yearly period. This year edition was organized in Antalya (Turkey) in partnership with the Turkish Ministry of Environment and Urbanization and to the Association TUDAV (Turkish Marine Research Foundation). The proceedings are available at SPA/RAC website.

101. SPA/RAC has, also, organized the 6th Mediterranean Conference on Marine Turtles (Porec, Croatia, 16-19 October 2018), in close collaboration with Bern Convention, the Bleu World Institute (Croatia) and the University of Primorska (Slovenia).

102. As usual, SPA/RAC cooperated with the ACCOBAMS Secretariat for the organization of the “Fourth Biennial Conference for the conservation of cetaceans in the South Mediterranean countries” (Oran, Algeria, 11-13 November 2017) as well as the organization of dedicated workshops during the European Cetaceans Society (la Spezia, Italy, April 2018) :

- Toward understanding the overlap of selected threats and Important Marine Mammals Areas (IMMAs) in the Mediterranean Sea;
- Joint Workshop ACCOBAMS/ASCOBANS/ECS/SPA-RAC on marine debris and cetaceans stranding.

103. An awareness raising day on marine litter and its impact on biodiversity (Kuriat Island, Tunisia, 30 June 2018) has been organized in collaboration with (the Tunisian INDICIT partner) and the NGO Notre Grand Bleu, SPA/RAC contributed to the organization of the workshop “The Mediterranean integrated programme for monitoring pollution impact on marine and coastal ecosystems and biodiversity” in collaboration with MedPOL, (Izola, Slovenia, 29 November 2017) aimed on the contaminants impacts on coastal and marine ecosystems and ways of mitigation.

Strategic Outcome 3.6: Enhanced cooperation at regional, sub-regional and national levels to protect and conserve biodiversity and ecosystems

104. SPA/RAC has elaborated a revised draft for the Joint Cooperation Strategy on Spatial based Protection and Management Measures for Marine Biodiversity Among the Secretariats of ACCOBAMS, GFCM, IUCN-Med, and UNEP/MAP through SPA/RAC, with some alternative text fragments, based in feedback by Parties. The document was provided to the Coordinating Unit for further processing and the process undergone is herein presented to the 14th SPA/BD thematic Focal Points meeting.

105. SPA/RAC is participating in relevant meetings of the CBD on the Post 2020 Biodiversity Framework elaboration. It is also leading a UNEP/MAP Secretariat Task Force set with members of all RACs and the Coordinating Unit to compile contributions to be provided to the CBD Secretariat on this future Global Framework for biodiversity conservation.

106. Within the framework of the implementation of the MAVA Marine turtles project, SPA/RAC organized, as coordinator of the project the first and the second steering committee meetings held respectively in 5 May 2018 in Tunisia and 21-22 of March 2019 in Turkey. The following partners, in addition to the MAVA representative, took part to the mentioned meetings: Archelon, Dekamer, MEDPAN, WWF Greece, WWF Turkey, WWF North Africa, National Marine Parc of Zakynthos, MEDASSET and IUCN MED.

Strategic Outcome 3.7: Identifying and tackling with new and emerging issues, as appropriate

107. SPA/RAC coordinated on behalf of MAP with the ongoing process towards the adoption of an implementing agreement on BBNJ (namely concerning marine genetic resources, marine protected areas BNJ, and SIA), where UNEP Regional Seas Programme is contributing. It provided a presentation on the procedures to declare SPAMIs embracing BBNJ for a side event on Application of Area-based management tools under the Regional Seas Programme, within the last BBNJ IGC-2 meeting (NY, April 3rd, 2019).

Theme III- CLIMATE CHANGE:

Strategic Outcome 7.1: Strengthening the regional implementation of the obligations under the BC and its Protocols, and of programmes of measures in existing Regional Strategies and Action Plans

108. SPA/RAC is working with Plan Bleu in order to build synergy to favor the increase in the use of harmonized climate change vulnerability and impacts indicators for biodiversity in SPAMIs. Collaboration includes a workshop organized in collaboration with the University of Aix Marseilles and diverse partners on climate change and MPAs. Within the workshop programme SPA/RAC plan to manage a session aimed to motivate the managers of SPAMIs to use standardized climate change indicators and to get formally engaged two-three SPAMIs to test those indicators.

Strategic Outcome 7.4: Monitoring and assessment

109. Collaboration is ongoing with Plan Bleu in order to elaborate a cost analysis for the implementation of climate change vulnerability and impacts indicators measurement for biodiversity in a sample of SPAMIs.