



United Nations Environment Programme

EP



UNEP (DEPI)/MED WG.331/Inf. 7
11 May 2009

ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: ENGLISH



MEDITERRANEAN ACTION PLAN

Ninth Meeting of Focal Points for SPAs

Floriana, Malta, 3-6 June 2009

Report of the Joint Management Action of the European Community with the United Nations Environment Programme/Mediterranean Action Plan (UNEP/MAP) on the identification of possible SPAMIs in the Open Seas, including Deep Seas

*In the framework of a sustainable development approach,
this document will be available only in electronic format
during the meeting.*

Note : The designations employed and the presentation of the material in this document do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of UNEP concerning the legal status of any State, Territory, city or area, or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of their frontiers or boundaries.

© 2009 United Nations Environment Programme
Mediterranean Action Plan
Regional Activity Centre for Specially Protected Areas (RAC/SPA)
Boulevard du leader Yasser Arafat
B.P.337 –1080 Tunis CEDEX
E-mail : car-asp@rac-spa.org

Summary

BACKGROUND	3
CONTEXT	5
ANNEX I - CALENDAR OF THE FIRST PHASE OF THE PROJECT	8
ANNEX II	9
JOINT MANAGEMENT ACTION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY WITH THE UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENTAL PROGRAMME/MEDITERRANEAN ACTION PLAN (UNEP/MAP) ON THE IDENTIFICATION OF POSSIBLE SPAMIS IN THE OPEN SEAS, INCLUDING DEEP SEAS	9
FIRST PHASE PROJECT	9
ANNEX III	24
JOINT MANAGEMENT ACTION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY WITH THE UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENTAL PROGRAMME/MEDITERRANEAN ACTION PLAN (UNEP/MAP) ON THE IDENTIFICATION OF POSSIBLE SPAMIS IN THE OPEN SEAS, INCLUDING DEEP SEAS	24
SECOND PHASE PROJECT	24

Background

The action presented herein builds upon several legal frameworks, initiatives and statements along the last years, supporting the labour by RAC/SPA to promote the creation of protected areas in the open seas, including deep seas.

Already the seventh Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity noted the increased risks to biodiversity in marine areas beyond national jurisdiction and the need for international cooperation and action on behalf of these areas. It recommended its Executive Secretary to support the work of United Nations General Assembly in identifying appropriate mechanisms for the future establishment and effective management of marine protected areas in such locations.

Conservation and sustainable use of deep-sea genetic resources beyond national jurisdiction were also specifically addressed in the seventh Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity. Cooperation with United Nations Environment Programme for this purpose was specifically mentioned to further on the knowledge and preservation of these resources in areas beyond national jurisdiction (hereafter, ABNJ).

Within the Durban Action Plan it is remarked that, for achieving an interconnected global system of protected areas (outcome 3), one necessary step (key target 5) is to carry out intergovernmental action to protect ecosystems of regional seas and species groups in need of particular attention such as fish -including sharks. It is also underlined the need to develop a system of habitat protection and management on the high seas involving international collaboration.

RAC/SPA contributed along the last four activity biennia to push forward the protection of the open seas in the Mediterranean by being active in the preparation, either directly or through collaboration with its Partners and the Parties, of related documentation, events and communications, among others:

- The SAP BIO, which envisages specifically among its planned actions the identification and protection of deep marine habitats and important pelagic ecosystems;
- UNEP/MAP information note to the 59th Session of the United Nations General Assembly on High Seas and Biodiversity Conservation in the Mediterranean UNEP(DEC)/MED WG.268/Inf.18 (2005);
- The information document Les Aires Marines Spécialement Protégées en Droit International, UNEP(DEC)/MED WG.268/Inf.16(2005);
- Draft Guidelines for the Establishment and Management of Marine Protected Areas for Cetaceans, UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG.308/8 (2007);
- The ACCOBAMS programme of work on Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG.308/Inf.11(2007).

At the RAC/SPA meeting on SPAMIs promotion (Alicante, Spain, 11 May 2006), the appointed participants of the Contracting Parties suggested enhancing the SPAMI Network, by including further ABNJ. That input progressed to a 2007 recommendation to RAC/SPA to promote the creation of high seas SPAMIs, embracing appropriately sensitive habitats beyond 12 nautical miles, as well as of multiparty SPAMIs including high seas areas, in collaboration with pertinent institutions.

To transform the above in facts, RAC/SPA worked out the preparation of funding proposals aimed to achieve the support of appropriate donors. The European Union is committed to setting in motion the process for the actual protection of ecologically and biologically valuable ABNJ¹. Having regard to that, RAC/SPA prepared two Joint Management Action proposals to the European Commission, Directorate-General for Environment for funding (dated October 2007 and August 2008), both of which received a favourable answer by the side of the European Community and are described herein below.

¹ EU Presidency Statement. 2008 - United Nations General Assembly 62nd Session; Ad-Hoc Open-ended Informal Working Group to study issues relating to the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity beyond areas of national jurisdiction. United Nations 6th Committee: Agenda item 5(c) - The role of area-based management tools

Context

The Joint Management Action of the European Community with the United Nations Environment Programme/Mediterranean Action Plan aims to promote the establishment of a representative ecological network of protected areas in the Mediterranean, under the implementation of the action entitled: "Identification of possible SPAMI in the Mediterranean areas beyond national jurisdiction".

The action aims to facilitate the development of representative SPAMIs in the Mediterranean ABNJ, based on the best available scientific information for the conservation of the marine biodiversity in the Mediterranean ABNJ, and enabling the wise use of marine resources in these areas. It calls for the use of the best readily available science and the advice and assistance of scientists, resource managers, and stakeholders. It is directed primarily toward conservation, with a focus on ecosystem health and integrity.

Designing an ecologically representative network of Specially Protected Areas, including high seas to be tied together in the SPAMIs List represents a challenge from the scientific point of view. The need to ensure an adequate governance system for conservation and recovery of marine biodiversity, including on the high seas, is one of the actions proposed to further the protection of marine biodiversity.

The action envisages a process developed in two phases. The first phase of the initiative includes a feasibility assessment to identify ABNJ in the Mediterranean Sea that qualify as Specially Protected Areas of Mediterranean Importance (SPAMIs), on the basis of sound science. In this phase, the effort would help the Contracting Parties of the Barcelona Convention to establish a network of SPAMIs in the Mediterranean High Seas through the following key elements:

- (a) A general overview and analysis of the existing information on the presence of important elements of marine biodiversity in the Mediterranean High Seas –open seas areas, including deep seas-;
- (b) The definition of operational criteria for the site selection process, harmonised with SPAMI selection criteria, and the scientific criteria for identifying significant areas to be declared as MPAs beyond national jurisdiction, approved by the ninth Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity;
- (c) The preparation of a short list of potential sites in the high seas which could be protected as SPAMIs; and
- (d) The drafting of a roadmap for the elaboration of further proposals to be presented to the Contracting Parties for adoption.

The action planned for the first phase is attached as Annex I to this report. Note that the initial project duration of 15 months since January 2008 was officially extended to 24 months to cope with administrative constraints delaying the actual project start.

This first phase will lead to a second one, in which the list of SPAMIs in ABNJ that qualify as prospective SPAMIs will enter the process to be proposed as such, based on ecological, economic, social and political criteria, so as to better integrate an ecosystem approach in the process.

Implementing the action is the responsibility of RAC/SPA, and represents a major shift toward ecosystem approach. Hence, in the second phase, the effort would support to the

Barcelona Convention for the implementation of the ecosystem approach, in conjunction with the establishment of MPAs in open seas areas, including deep seas.

The main outputs of the project in the second phase will be the presentation of the reports for the candidate SPAMIs in ABNJ prepared in accordance with the format required for submitting SPAMIs proposals.

In addition to the main outputs, the following products will be generated: Review of the legal status of the selected areas; reports of the meetings of the Steering Committee; minutes of the consultation meetings; reports of the data collection and field survey campaigns; and information material -brochures, posters and leaflets.

The activities to achieve the objectives of the project in the second phase may be grouped in the following categories: Legal analysis about the status of each selected area; assessment and data collection, including field surveys for the areas selected; consultation and negotiation; and information campaign.

Annex II and Annex III attached to the report include the main body of the official texts of the action for both phases, proposed by the United Nations Environment Programme/Mediterranean Action Plan, and approved by the European Community. It is noted that the second phase project document includes also a component dealing with the integration of the ecosystem approach in the MAP system -Action 1 of second phase project-, which is being managed from MEDU in collaboration for its implementation with RAC/SPA, MEDPOL and BLUE PLAN. Indeed, the Applicant economic contribution to this second phase has been engaged by MEDU through participation provided within its ecosystem approach component.

The process to create SPAMIs in ABNJ, structured to be science-based and stakeholder driven, involves a Steering Committee, a Science Advisory Team, and a Regional Stakeholder Group. The Steering Committee provides general guidance on the development of the project and will validate its products. Regarding the Science Advisory Team, this panel offers a range of perspectives from individuals who served on each of these groups and who individually and collectively applied science to develop SPAMIs in ABNJ designs.

The delivery of spatial data, planning tools, science-guidelines, and socioeconomic and ecological evaluations in a decision support framework are essential in designing SPAMIs in ABNJ, and for informing decision-makers. Performance tools or evaluation methods, which could be applied or adapted for use by RAC/SPA may be identified. In addition, lesson learned from other Regional Seas may guide SPAMIs in ABNJ planning efforts regarding the approaches and tools currently being tested in the field.

Cutting edge tools for understanding physical and biological dynamics and new approaches to conservation planning, monitoring and management are needed to design SPAMIs in the open seas, including deep seas, and to ensure their sustainability in the long term. A mix of theoretical and empirical insights has important implications for SPAMIs in ABNJ design, implementation, and evaluation.

Expertise from various disciplines, international co-operation, and understanding of the existing legal frameworks is required to realize the identification of possible SPAMIs in the open seas, including deep seas.

Analysis of key aspects of physical and ecological dynamics in the open ocean as well as issues around implementation and governance, all directed toward the effective definition and application of operational criteria for the site selection process, are addressed in the following five main activities planned, which are already ongoing. These activities are as

follows:

- Analysis of the existing information on ecosystems of Mediterranean Open Seas and selection criteria to designate potential SPAMIs in ABNJ.
- Fisheries management/conservation and step-relief areas in the Mediterranean Open Seas, including Deep Seas.
- Legal issues on territoriality of the Mediterranean Sea.
- Georeferenced compilation on bird important areas in the Mediterranean Open Seas.
- A Geographical Information System developed for Mediterranean Open Seas with corresponding description, results and applications to the implementation of the action.

The methodology followed in implementing the activities is based on the procedure set by the SPA/BD Protocol for the submission of proposals for the establishment the SPAMIs. A preliminary set of potential SPAMIs in ABNJ is being developed jointly by a group of experts in consultation with the Steering Committee.

Key elements in the project methodology include overviews and specific case studies to communicate the proposed aims and project methods to interested and concerned Contracting Parties and, in so doing, stimulate debate and encourage participation in the development of a short-list of possible SPAMIs in ABNJ through a consultative process. Operational criteria needed an adequate elaboration in order to support a preliminary short-list of potential sites.

Thus, in order to prepare an adequate short-list of potential sites that could be later endorsed by the Contracting Parties, it is expected that candidate sites will broaden the representativeness of SPAMIs with absent or underrepresented habitats and ecological processes. SPAMIs in ABNJ will be designed with stakeholder involvement and socio-political feasibility in mind.

Further to these considerations, the theory and practicalities of identification of potential areas -both static and mobile-, and options for management and governance, including enforcement and priorities for future research will be addressed.

The process of the candidate sites designation is ongoing, with data still being obtained, and the results should be considered only tentative. A draft list of sites to be considered for designation as SPAMIs in ABNJ will be presented for discussion to the Second Meeting of the Steering Committee, following the calendar shown in Annex I.

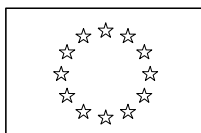
Annex I - Calendar of the first phase of the project

Activity	Project year 1												Project year 2												Implementing body
	1st Semester 2008						2nd Semester 2008						1st Semester 2009						2nd Semester 2009						
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	
Make initial arrangements, and consultants, adoption of workplan, recruitment procedures				■	■	■	■	■	■															RAC/SPA	
Collect, collate and analyse information								■	■	■	■													RAC/SPA & Consultants	
Establish Steering Committee									■	■	■													RAC/SPA	
Review and elaborate criteria											■	■	■											RAC/SPA & Consultants	
Submit scientific findings, criteria and stakeholders' list submitted to Steering Committee													■	■										RAC/SPA	
Prepare the First Meeting of the Steering Committee													■	■										RAC/SPA	
First Meeting of the Steering Committee														■										RAC/SPA	
Draft list of suitable sites														■										RAC/SPA & Consultants	
Undertake threats and socio-economic assessments														■	■	■	■							RAC/SPA & Consultants	
Engage stakeholders in reviewing candidate sites and developing roadmap															■	■	■	■						RAC/SPA, Steering Committee, Consultants	
Draft roadmap for Phase 2															■	■	■	■						RAC/SPA & Consultants	
Submit threats and socio-economic assessments and draft list of suitable sites to Steering Committee																		■						RAC/SPA	
Submit draft roadmap for Phase 2 to Steering Committee																		■						RAC/SPA	
Prepare the Second Meeting of the Steering Committee																			■	■				RAC/SPA	
Second Meeting of the Steering Committee, including the involvement of selected stakeholders																				■				RAC/SPA	
Final outputs review. Communication to the Convention (Contracting Parties Meeting). Wrapping up of results. Final diffusion in appropriate gatherings																				■	■	■	■	RAC/SPA	

Annex II

Joint Management Action of the European Community with the United Nations Environmental Programme/Mediterranean Action Plan (UNEP/MAP) on the identification of possible SPAMIs in the Open Seas, including Deep Seas

FIRST PHASE PROJECT



Contracting Authority:
European Commission
Directorate-General for Environment

Thematic Programme for Environment and sustainable management of
Natural Resources, including energy (ENRTP)
Grant Application Form

Budget line 210401

Priority 4 Targeted projects 2007

Name of applicant:	Coordination Unit of the Mediterranean Action Plan, MEDU	
Title of the action:	Identification of possible SPAMIs in the Mediterranean areas beyond national jurisdiction	
Location(s) of the action:	The UNEP-MAP Regional Activity Centre for Specially Protected Areas (RAC/SPA), in Tunis, which will hold the technical direction of the action; Countries parties to the Barcelona Convention	
Total eligible cost of the action (A) €220.000	Amount requested from the Contracting Authority (B) €200.000	% of total eligible cost of action (B/Ax100) 90,9
[EUR/National currency]	[EUR/National currency]	% (N/A for Joint Management)
Total duration of the action:	15 MONTHS	

Dossier No	
------------	--

(for official use only)

Contact details for the purpose of this action:	
Postal address:	United Nations Environment Programme Mediterranean Action Plan Regional Activity Centre for Specially Protected Areas (RAC/SPA) B.P. 337 - 1080 Tunis Cedex. TUNISIA
Telephone number: Country code + city code + number	+ 216 71 206 649 / + 216 71 206 485
Fax number: Country code + city code + number	+ 216 71 206 490
Contact person for this action :	Dr. Daniel Cebrian Menchero. SAP BIO Programme Officer Dr. Christine. Pergent-Martini. Scientific Director
Contact person's email address :	daniel.cebrian@rac-spa.org (copy always to car-asp@rac-spa.org)

Any change in the addresses, phone numbers, fax numbers and in particular e-mail, must be notified in writing to the Contracting Authority. The Contracting Authority will not be held responsible in case it cannot contact an applicant.

NOTICE

All personal data (such as names, addresses, CVs, etc.) mentioned in your application form will be processed in accordance with Regulation (EC) No 45/2001 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2000 on the protection of individuals with regard to the processing of personal data by the Community institutions and bodies and on the free movement of such data. Your replies to the questions in this form are necessary in order to assess your grant application and they will be processed solely for that purpose by the department responsible for the Community grant programme concerned. On request, you may be sent personal data and correct or complete them. For any question relating to these data, please contact the Commission department to which the form must be returned. Beneficiaries may lodge a complaint against the processing of their personal data with the European Data Protection Supervisor at any time (Official Journal L 8, 12.1.2001)].

APPLICATION FORM

I. THE ACTION

1. DESCRIPTION

1.1 Title

IDENTIFICATION OF POSSIBLE SPAMIS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN AREAS BEYOND NATIONAL JURISDICTION

Location(s)

The UNEP-MAP Regional Activity Centre for Specially Protected Areas (RAC/SPA), in Tunis, will hold the technical direction of the MAP action

Cost of the action and amount requested from the European Commission
(Contracting Authority)

Total eligible cost of the action (A)	Amount requested from the Contracting Authority (B)	% of total eligible cost of action (B/Ax100)
€220.000	€200.000	90,9

Please note that the cost of the action and the contribution requested from the Contracting Authority have to be expressed in EURO.

Summary (max 1 page)

Total duration of the action	15 months ²
Objectives of the action	<p>Long-term objective: Promote the establishment of a representative ecological network of protected areas in the Mediterranean, through the SPAMI system, including High Seas sites.</p> <p>Specific objective: Prepare a short list of potential Mediterranean High Seas sites qualifying to be declared SPAMIs; to be presented for consideration by the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention.</p>
Associated collaborating institutions and/or	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governmental agencies (e.g., competent offices of the Environment and Fisheries Ministries of the concerned nations; governmental marine research institutions) • Environmental Intergovernmental Organisations (e.g., relevant UNEP MAP structures, ACCOBAMS,) • International NGOs: IUCN Med, CIESM, WWF • Public and private institutions related to the use of Mediterranean Sea goods and services;
Target group(s)	Parties to the Barcelona Convention

² This project is intended to be the first step, that should be followed by a second one.

Final beneficiaries	Parties to the Barcelona Convention, especially the developing countries
Estimated results	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In-depth assessment of the ecological knowledge of the Mediterranean High Seas (deep sea included), producing an inventory of its known biodiversity values and an analysis of knowledge gaps; 2. Provide the enabling conditions to the setting of true ecological networks of protected areas within the Mediterranean, including High Seas sites, thus complementing existing national MPAs; 3. Tangible increase in the knowledge of marine biodiversity features of the Mediterranean, including the High Seas.
Sector	41 General Environmental Protection
Main activities	Scientific literature search and analysis, production of summaries and cartography; meetings,
Total duration of the action	15 months

Where applicable, clearly indicate the sector, theme, or geographical area specified in the call for proposals to which the proposed action would apply:

Objectives (max 1 page)

Long-term objective: Promote the establishment of a representative ecological network of protected areas in the Mediterranean, through the SPAMI system, including High Seas sites.³

SPAMIs are implemented within the framework of the Barcelona Convention Protocol on Specially Protected Areas and Biological Diversity in the Mediterranean, and may be established in the High Seas. By identifying and proposing areas of conservation interest in a large portion of the Mediterranean basin, where important yet currently unprotected elements of marine biodiversity are known to exist, the proposed action will spur the development of SPAMIs on the High Seas. This will, in turn, contribute to the long-term sustainability of human activities in the region, improving the future prospects of riparian states, including those still considered developing countries.

Specific Objectives: Prepare a short list of potential Mediterranean High Seas sites qualifying to be declared SPAMIs; to be presented for consideration by the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention.

The objective involves assessing the feasibility of identifying, on the basis of currently available information, sites beyond national jurisdiction in the Mediterranean Sea that qualify as Specially Protected Areas of Mediterranean Importance (SPAMIs). The project will help the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention to implement a network of SPAMIs in the Mediterranean High Seas through:

- (a) a general overview and analysis of the existing information on the presence of important elements of marine biodiversity in the Mediterranean High Seas, including in the pelagic domain, on seamounts, submarine canyons and in the deep sea;;
- (b) the definition of operational criteria for the site selection process, harmonised with SPAMI selection criteria,
- (c) the preparation of a short list of potential sites in the High Seas which could be protected as SPAMIs; and
- (d) the drafting of a roadmap for the elaboration of further proposals to be presented to the Contracting Parties for adoption.

In order to fully contribute to the achievement of the long term objective above, the results of this initiative should be completed in a second stage that would therefore consolidate the list of Mediterranean marine areas beyond national jurisdiction qualifying to be proposed as SPAMIs as a result of the interaction among ecological, economic, social and political drivers. It would nevertheless fall within the responsibility of the Parties to the Barcelona Convention to accord such declaration.

Needed activities will likely involve the identification of stakeholders and expert scholars and institutions, the creation of technical working groups, the setting up of stakeholders' involvement mechanisms, the preparation of studies by expert scholars and institutions on candidate areas, addressing knowledge gaps, and finally the selection of areas to be proposed for adoption as SPAMIs.

Relevance of the action (max 3 pages)

Political and legal frameworks exist within the Barcelona Convention to address conservation concerns at the Mediterranean level, including the establishment of specially protected areas of Mediterranean importance (SPAMIs). In light of the commitment of the world's nations to reach by 2012 the target set in 2002 in Johannesburg, at the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), concerning marine protected area networks ("develop and facilitate the use of diverse approaches and tools, including ... *the establishment of marine protected areas consistent with international law and based on scientific*

3

We use different wordings to refer to the areas concerned: High Seas, areas beyond national jurisdiction, etc. All mean the same: areas of the sea (water column and sea bed) where no national jurisdiction is claimed or sovereign right exerted.

information, including representative networks by 2012 ...⁴), the need arises to support the transformation of the existing SPAMIs into a system of MPAs that is truly representative of the full complement of Mediterranean habitats. Subsequent international fora have pointed to the need to move beyond creating systems of MPAs by amalgamating existing ones, to creating true ecological networks of protected areas in which the whole is greater than the sum of its parts⁵.

Therefore, if the 2012 target is to be met in the Mediterranean, the need arises to assist the transformation of the existing SPAMIs into a system of MPAs that is truly representative of the full complement of Mediterranean habitats, inclusive of the Mediterranean high seas. In addition, UNEP's Mediterranean Action Plan (MAP) work assisting Mediterranean states in implementing a region-wide system of ecologically representative networks, as well as creating capacity to support such networks, must be supported.

Creating a network comprising high seas SPAMIs in the Mediterranean is a difficult process that will require: (a) the identification of the stakeholders to be involved, (b) the solution of problems having a scientific and technical nature, and (c) the intertwining of ecological considerations with economic, social, and political concerns.

Designing an ecologically representative network of Specially Protected Areas, including high seas areas to be tied together in the SPAMI List represents a challenge from the scientific point of view. Whereas a small proportion of the Mediterranean marine environment – mainly limited to shallow coastal habitats in the northwest – is reasonably well-known, most of the remaining portion of the region, including the deeper benthos and the water column, remains uncharted as far as the distribution of habitats, species, and biodiversity in general is concerned. In addition, scientific understanding of many of the critical population and community processes (e.g., dispersal, recruitment, trophic links, direct and indirect effects of competition and predation, movement patterns), which bear directly on the potential success of MPAs, suffers from a lack of strong empirical studies and of a comprehensive theoretical framework. A region-wide effort clearly needs to be undertaken to identify what is there in the Mediterranean in terms of biodiversity that would need or benefit from the type of spatial protection that MPAs can provide.

The Mediterranean High Seas do not receive adequate conservation attention, nor are their habitats represented within existing MPAs (with the exception of the Pelagos Sanctuary). High Seas marine protected areas (and eventually SPAMIs) will permit new types of habitats to be protected and will allow the creation of new partnerships through a cooperative approach to resources conservation and management in areas outside of national jurisdictions. Inclusion of High Seas MPA and SPAMI sites will also strengthen the regional seas programme by enhancing the representativeness of Mediterranean MPAs.

The European Commission shares the point of view above. On the one hand it is acknowledged that the economic growth has to be done without further deterioration the environment; in the case of the marine environment, "Our main challenge, however, lies in being able to promote economic development based on the sea without at the same time aggravating the state of the marine environment."⁶ On the other hand, the need to ensure an adequate governance system for conservation and recovery of marine biodiversity, including on the High Seas, is one of the actions proposed to further the protection of marine biodiversity.⁷ Progress towards establishing Marine Protected Areas in the High Seas and

⁴ World Summit on Sustainable Development, Plan of implementation. 31(c).

⁵ The IUCN 5th World Park Congress (Durban, September 2003) adopted WPC Recommendation 22 ("Building a global system of marine and coastal protected area networks") calling on the international community as a whole to "establish by 2012 a global system of effectively managed, representative networks of marine and coastal protected areas, consistent with international law and based on scientific information". The WSSD target was later adopted as well by the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) at the 7th Conference of its Contracting Parties (Kuala Lumpur, February 2004), which agreed to develop a strategy to meet this goal, including indicators of progress.

⁶ José Manuel Durão Barroso, "Key note speech - European Maritime Policy," Lisbon, 2007.

⁷ Communication of the European Commission "Halting the loss of biodiversity by 2010 and beyond Sustaining ecosystem services for human well being (COM (2006)216)."

supporting the adoption of an Implementing Agreement to the UN Convention of the Law of the Sea, are actions also proposed by the EC.

This approach is fully in line with the *Strategic Action Programme for the Conservation of Biological Diversity in the Mediterranean Region* (SAP BIO), adopted by the Convention in 2003, which indicates that "the setting up of protected areas offshore (including the High Seas) to protect pelagic ecosystem and sensitive species and important and partially unknown benthic areas ... should be a priority."

Finally, the recommendations for actions to the RAC/SPA Centre for 2006 and 2007 include mandates that have been taken in account to formulate the present proposal:

"to promote the creation of SPAMI in the Eastern Mediterranean; elaborate a programme of work for the development of protected areas; collaborate with ACCOBAMS for the creation of MPAs for cetaceans conservation"

SPA focal points proposal for recommendation on June 2007: *"promote the creation of High Seas SPAMI, appropriately embracing sensitive habitats beyond national jurisdiction, as well as of multiparty SPAMIs including High Seas areas, in collaboration with pertinent institutions."*

Description of the action and its effectiveness

Overall Objective and the Purpose of the Action

The overall objective is to identify potential MPA sites for inclusion in the SPAMI list, focusing on the currently under-represented Mediterranean High Seas.

Outputs and expected results

The main output will include a list of ecologically critical sites for possible inclusion in a representative Mediterranean MPA network, including their geographical and ecological characterization, as well as a first assessment of the pressures and threats on them. In particular, it is expected that this output is based upon and contributes to the promotion of:

- In-depth assessment of the ecological knowledge of the Mediterranean High Seas, producing an inventory of its known biodiversity values and an analysis of knowledge gaps, in line with the Johannesburg WSSD Plan of action, thus complementing existing national MPAs networks;
- Enabling conditions to the setting of true ecological networks of protected areas within the Mediterranean, including High Seas sites, thus complementing existing national MPAs;
- Tangible increase in the in-situ protection of marine biodiversity features the Mediterranean, including the High Seas.

The outcome of the project will help to stimulate a coordinated and focused effort by the Mediterranean community of users of the marine environment (both stakeholders and scientists) to promote the increase in the knowledge of the Mediterranean high seas areas, as well as further systematize and elaborate the theoretical framework to link the different subsystems (e.g., pelagic, seamount, deep sea, hydrothermal, etc.) with the coastal system within the greater Mediterranean system, and the impact of different human activities. Based on the existing knowledge and on the criteria and methods developed in the process, this action will constitute a first step of the process to build a coherent system of natural sites configured and managed to conserve high seas species, to maintain ecological functions and evolutionary processes as a means to conserve biodiversity, to ensure that the goods and services it provides are sustainably used and to indicate what further knowledge needs to be gained in order to complete the whole system.

How the project will improve the situation of target groups/beneficiaries

Currently, wide areas of the Mediterranean do not receive any protection, and both marine productivity and biodiversity is threatened as a result. Creating coherent ecological networks of MPAs will allow the wise and rational use of marine goods and services, therefore benefiting all the countries of the Mediterranean, especially those developing countries that are most dependent on preserved marine ecosystems.

Possibilities for replication and extension of the action outcomes (multiplier effects)

This process will act as a demonstration model for site selection, which could be adopted for use at the national and/or local level, even in cases where scientific information is scant.

In addition, there is a governance dimension. The full utilisation of legal possibilities offered by the SPAMIs Protocol will confirm the usefulness of the Barcelona Convention legal system and stimulate new actions.

Potential resulting activities and their effectiveness

The process of assessment of information is mainly of scientific nature. However, it is proposed that the final list is made up taking into account social and political circumstances, as those already listed by the SPAMI protocol and its developments.

If the decision eventually taken by the Parties to the Barcelona Convention has to be positive, there has to be from the beginning of the process a close involvement of individual parties and stakeholders. In addition, there will be a parallel political process designed to ensure that when information is finally presented to the Convention, it spurs additional forward movement.

The shortlist will identify sites of particular importance, but the management to be undertaken at those sites will vary according to the particular threats to biodiversity at each sites.

For instance, under the General Fisheries Council of the Mediterranean, some sites have already been designated as protected from certain fishing activities. This project's results will highlight all the possibilities of protection afforded by environmental policies. Besides SPA and SPAMI creation, the Contracting Parties can also pursue the implementation of Action Plans for the conservation of species and habitats, according to their agreed implementation calendars. For maximum efficiency, other newly endangered or threatened species and habitats should also be taken into consideration. This could be achieved by running an assessment of the status of the species listed in Annexes II and III to the SPA/BD Protocol.

Thus the identification of sites and the highlighting of gaps in knowledge will stimulate political action to develop and implement protected area plans in a cooperative and coordinated fashion, bringing together the Parties of the Barcelona Convention to work towards an important common goal. As Lee Kimball from IUCN and others have written, the regional scale may be the most effective scale on which to promote effective marine conservation and strategic marine science, and this project will be an important step in that direction

In addition to the usual reports in a project cycle, a number of particular deliverables may already be identified (pending of validation by the steering committee),

- Summary of the reviewed knowledge on marine biodiversity features in the Mediterranean High Sea areas, in relation to their possible protection through "in-situ" measures.
- Set of operational criteria, based in the SPAMI protocol and its developments, allowing to identify the sites in the High Seas that most qualify to be designated SPAMIS
- Short list of candidate sites.

Methodology

The technical direction of the activity will be ensured by the Regional Activity Centre for Specially Protected Areas (RAC/SPA).

It is widely recognised that designating MPAs is a complex process that normally involves a number of activities⁸

- (a) compilation of all the pertinent bibliographic information (published as well as “grey” literature and user knowledge derived from interviews, etc.);
- (b) collection of updated scientific information through dedicated research targeting the features of concern, human activities in the area, and the existence, types and distribution of threats;
- (c) analysis of data to identify the existence of critical habitats types or species within the considered area;
- (d) definition of goals of the prospective MPA, based on the existing knowledge of the presence of features to be protected in the area and of the existence of threats to their survival;
- (e) elaboration of the rationale for the proposal, where the case is made for the establishment of an MPA as an effective tool to counteract the known threats;
- (f) drafting of a science-based MPA proposal, inclusive of maps to support decisions on conservation priorities based on links among areas important to the conservation of the concerned feature, ecological processes and human activities, to be presented for consideration by the competent authorities and by all the stakeholders; and
- (g) beginning of a consultation phase involving the building of consensus through awareness campaigns, stakeholder participation, socio-economic analysis and, wherever necessary, conflict resolution.

The project presented by this proposal focuses on the three first activities.

This scientific sequence has to be read in conjunction with the legal requirements laid down by the Protocol in its Article 9. In order to facilitate the possible designation of sites according to these requirements, the participation of concerned riparian countries becomes essential and will be taken into consideration when defining the different types of tasks

Locating sites

From a technical point of view, the development of the process above will be in line with the state of the art, as have been laid down, for instance, for the implementation of the European Ecological Network Nature 2000.⁹

Face to the lack of detailed biological data, the identification of sites in marine areas away from the coast has to be based on more general geological, hydrological, geomorphological and biological information. For many of the habitats types and species in danger of disappearing in their natural area of distribution in the Mediterranean or which have a reduced natural area of distribution, methodology exists for identifying the location and undertaking physical and ecological assessment of the areas required, although existing data may be sparse or even absent.

The type of information required to underpin any proposal for an MPA should depend on the type of

⁸ What follows is adapted from UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG.320/Inf.12, Guidelines for the Establishment and Management of Marine Protected Areas for Cetaceans

⁹ Guidelines for the establishment of the Natura 2000 network in the marine environment. Application of the Habitats and Birds Directives

objectives likely to be defined for the site. The main goals that MPAs may have include the conservation of biodiversity (minimizing extinction risk), the protection of vulnerable species, ecosystem protection, the reestablishment of ecosystem integrity, the prohibition of some activities to avoid users conflicts, and even the enhancement of the size and productivity of harvested fish or invertebrate populations to help support fisheries. Each MPA may have just one of the above goals, or may also have a combination of them, as they are not mutually exclusive.

Broad scale geophysical or oceanographic information is often available for large sea areas, and can be used as the first step in the selection of sites by helping to identify the location of potential habitats types. Once this information is gathered and collated, new and more detailed analysis may take place, directed to those specific areas where existing information indicates that a particularly interesting habitats exists or a species occurs, or are likely to do so.

Using available physical information mapped at a regional scale, such as modelled geological seabed data, bathymetric data, physical oceanographic data, navigation or naval charts (where they show seabed type), allow therefore to predict the location of potential sites aimed to conserve and protect habitat types. Refining this information and adding afterwards any existing more localised datasets, such as side scan sonar, acoustic ground discrimination system (AGDS) surveys, multibeam bathymetric survey, aerial photography or satellite images (only for some habitats in very shallow water, such as seagrass beds or maerl) will allow to identify particular sites important for the protection of habitats. In any event, such conclusion should be validated in the field ("ground ascertained") by direct sampling.

The importance of accessing to the information and data from archives, existing maps and other sources from stakeholders' activities could never be overestimated. They are likely to exist in a wide variety of formats and at different levels of detail. Whilst the purpose for collecting information and even mapping vary considerably (e.g. industry environmental assessments, conservation, fisheries, planning), the underlying techniques and type of data collected have nevertheless a great deal in common. Historical maps and charts (e.g. of fishing grounds) may also be used to help provide information for certain habitats.

All biological data relevant to marine habitats should eventually be collated and can be plotted in a geographic information system (GIS) and overlaid upon the maps of seabed type or other broad scale physical or hydrographical data. Existing results of benthic mapping programmes using the widely spread habitats classifications should be used, to the highest possible level, to help in characterising habitats biologically.

For species ranging over large areas, such as cetaceans or fishes, it can be difficult to identify manageable areas essential to their life and reproduction, and then susceptible of being protected. In many cases, these areas are too large to constitute an easily manageable MPA. This problem is partly because such species are mobile within the water column and difficult to observe, and partly because data concerning their distribution patterns while at sea are sparse, since such research is expensive and needs to be conducted over long time periods. Data are available for some species in some areas, and further research including relatively new methods such as use of PODs (porpoise detectors) and satellite tracking of individual animals (seals, cetaceans and turtles) can provide data on aggregation patterns which may be used to identify areas for consideration. Data elaborated with geostatistical techniques may also be used to identify densities and distribution centres in space and time for mobile species such as cetaceans and seas.

Spite the obvious difficulties it could be possible to identify sites for species ranging over large areas (i.e. seabirds, fishes or cetaceans). According to the experience of the EU Countries on the designation of sites for the small cetacean Harbour porpoise, it is possible to identify areas covering crucial steps in the life cycle of this species. These areas would be identifiable on the basis of the continuous or regular presence of the species (although subject to seasonal variations), a good population density (in relation to neighbouring areas), a high ratio of young to adults during certain periods of the year.

Geo-referenced statistical data from national fish surveys, including, where available, data on by-catches, as well as incidental sightings and strandings data may offer a first indication of the importance of some sites for these species. In any event, this should be validated in situ.

It should not be forgotten that the project aims to identify and provide the necessary information to start building up the High Seas component of the SPAMIs network. It will be successful if a number of sites, whose importance is out of question, are acknowledged such status. This does not mean that all sites needed to constitute a real network will be identified. Network criteria will be defined and applied, on the basis of current specifications of the Protocol and its further elaboration. But at the end of the project, other “real politic” and feasibility criteria will be used. We refer in particular to take into account:

That any site eventually proposed is in an area (including the water column and the sea floor) whose sovereignty is disputed between Parties to the Convention.

That any site eventually proposed includes an area (including the water column and the sea floor) where specialised competency (conservation of live marine resources, fisheries management and regulations implementation, etc) has been allowed by the Law of the Sea to any Parties to the Convention.

That the management measures needed to ensure the conservation of the sites are easily identifiable and implemented.

How to proceed

In terms of the different action involved, the following sequence of tasks has been already identified.

1. Initial inception exercise to
 - Identify the information required by the criteria laid down by the SPAMIs Protocol for the designation of MPAs.
 - Initial evaluation of the availability of information in order to assess the conditions enabling the identification of sites qualifying to be designated.
 - Preparation of the plan to compile all available information and to develop operational criteria
 - Validation of the results
2. Scoping exercise
 - Detailed compilation, review and analysis of available information.
 - Production of a summary of available information.
 - Development of a set of operational criteria to apply to for the identification of sites susceptible of being designated SPAMIs.
 - Validation of both the summary of information and the operational criteria.
3. Production of the first “broad list” of sites
 - Application of operational criteria to sites where available information allows, to obtain the first “broad list”
 - Validation
4. Wrapping up
 - Preparation of the short list
 - Preparation of a roadmap for the continuation of the process in the future.
 - Revision
 - Validation
 - Notification to the Parties

Different actors and activities

Three different group of actors have been already identified:

- The RAC/SPA, which will hold the technical direction of the project. It will be in charge of the general management, organisation of activities, arranging for the meetings, informing the Parties, etc. It will also provide secretariat services for the project. It will also inform in particular the applicant, and provide all necessary information to be reported to the as far as this project is concerned,
- The Steering Committee, chaired by the RAC/SPA. Parties, other MAP or UN bodies, NGOs and stakeholders will be represented. It will provide general guidance on the development of the project and will validate its products. It is expected it will meet at least three times during the project.
- The consultants. To be hired by RAC/SPA, applying the usual rules within UN-UNEP MAP. They will receive guidance from the Steering Committee, and prepare the requested deliverables. In principle, they will cover mainly scientific domains. It may however happen that, if the stakeholders in the Steering Committee are unable to provide social and economic information, particular expertise in these fields is also required.

Duration and indicative action plan for implementing the action

The duration of the action will be 15 months.

The indicative action plan may not prejudice a specific start up implementation date. To this end, it may not make reference to specific dates or months, and therefore simply show "month 1", "month 2", etc.

Applicants are recommended to base the estimated duration for each activity and total period on the **most probable duration** and not on the shortest possible duration by taking into consideration all relevant factors that may affect the implementation timetable.

The activities stated in the action plan should correspond to the activities described in detail in this section. The implementing body shall be either the applicant or any of the partners, associates or subcontractors. Any months or interim periods without activities must be included in the action plan and count toward the calculation of the total estimated duration of the action.

The action plan for the first 12 months of implementation should be sufficiently detailed to give an overview of the preparation and implementation of each activity. The action plan for each of the subsequent years may be more general and should only list the main activities foreseen for those years. To this end, it shall be divided into six-month interim periods (NB: A more detailed action plan for each subsequent year will have to be submitted before receipt of new pre-financing payments, pursuant to Article 2.1 of the General Conditions of the grant contract).

The action plan shall be coherent with, and based on the identification of all links and relation between the different activities described in section 1.7.

The action plan is attached as Annex I of the report.

Sustainability

This project aims to contribute to the achievement of the so-called long-term objective: Promote the establishment of a representative ecological network of protected areas in the Mediterranean, through the SPAMI system, including High Seas sites. Its achievement is possible only in the long term.

The project tries to make the best possible use of the legal and political possibilities offered by the Barcelona Convention system to trigger a process that will, in the long-term, achieves the objectives in the Protocol. The problems is twofold: political will and means.

As regards the first aspect, this project will only be achieved if concerned countries participate in and support this endeavour. The first signs are encouraging, but we will make every effort to implicate these countries in the activities of the project with the intention of promoting their ownership. MEDU and the European Commission will also try that a parallel political process takes place to ensure such buy-in.

If the project becomes involved in problems and disputes over the limits to different national jurisdictions as regards waters or continental shelf areas, its success will be seriously compromised. The project will specifically avoid these situations. The project is further enabled by the existence of an importance High Seas precedent: the Pelagos Sanctuary for Mediterranean Marine Mammals.

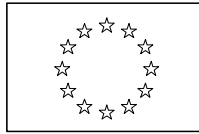
An additional support to the political will side of the project is the fact that the proposals for actual High Seas SPAMI sites will have to come from Parties to the Barcelona Convention, to ensure a positive decision from the Convention when the information is finally presented. Given the surge in public interest in the open ocean and deep seas, there is every reason to believe that Parties to the Barcelona Convention will utilize the regional seas framework and the powerful nature of the MPA tool, to protect the biodiversity of Mediterranean High Seas.

Concerning the problems related to resources, this project has the vocation to be the first part of the first step. The "short list" of identified sites will have to be further elaborated to produce the necessary information to be presented to the CoP. A concept note has been already presented to the European Commission in order to secure funding for the second part of this initial step. However, the development of management measures will require additional funding. This will have to come from the Convention or from other international donors. This is why a feasibility criteria has been introduced: the easy identification and implementation of any relevant management measure.

Annex III

Joint Management Action of the European Community with the United Nations
Environmental Programme/Mediterranean Action Plan (UNEP/MAP) on the
identification of possible SPAMIs in the Open Seas, including Deep Seas

SECOND PHASE PROJECT



**Contracting Authority:
European Commission
Directorate-General for Environment**

**Thematic Programme for Environment and sustainable management of
Natural Resources, including energy (ENRTP)**

Grant Application Form

Budget line 21.0401

Reference: Priority 4 Targeted projects 2008

Deadline for submission of applications: **01 September 2008**

Name of applicant:	Coordinating Unit for the Mediterranean Action Plan (MEDU)	
Title of the action:	Support to the Barcelona Convention for the Implementation of the Ecosystem Approach, including the establishment of MPAs in open seas areas, including deep sea.	
Location(s) of the action:	All Parties to the Barcelona Convention, that is, all riparian countries to the Mediterranean Sea and the European Community	
Total eligible cost of the action (A)	Amount requested from the Contracting Authority (B)	% of total eligible cost of action (B/Ax100)
761,500 EUR	685,000 EUR	89.950%
Total duration of the action:	28 months	
Signed on behalf of the applicant:		
Name	Mr Paul Mifsud	
Signature		
Position	Coordinator of the UNEP/MAP	
Date	29 August 2008	

Contact details for the purpose of this action:	
Postal address:	48 Vas. Konstantinou, 11635 Athens, Greece
Telephone number: Country code + city code + number	+ 30 210 7273123
Fax number: Country code + city code + number	+30 210 7253196
Contact person for this action :	Paul Mifsud
Contact person's email address :	paul.mifsud@unepmap.gr

Any change in the addresses, phone numbers, fax numbers and in particular e-mail, must be notified in writing to the Contracting Authority. The Contracting Authority will not be held responsible in case it cannot contact an applicant.

NOTICE

All personal data (such as names, addresses, CVs, etc.) mentioned in your application form will be processed in accordance with Regulation (EC) No 45/2001 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2000 on the protection of individuals with regard to the processing of personal data by the Community institutions and bodies and on the free movement of such data. Your replies to the questions in this form are necessary in order to assess your grant application and they will be processed solely for that purpose by the department responsible for the Community grant programme concerned. On request, you may be sent personal data and correct or complete them. For any question relating to these data, please contact the Commission department to which the form must be returned. Beneficiaries may lodge a complaint against the processing of their personal data with the European Data Protection Supervisor at any time (Official Journal L 8, 12.1.2001)].

FULL APPLICATION FORM I. THE ACTION

To be submitted by all applicants

1. DESCRIPTION

- **Title**

Support to the Barcelona Convention for the Implementation of the Ecosystem Approach, including the establishment of MPAs in open seas areas, including deep sea.

- **Location(s)**

All Parties to the Barcelona Convention, that is, all riparian countries to the Mediterranean Sea and the European Community

- **Cost of the action and amount requested from the Contracting Authority**

Total eligible cost of the action (A)	Amount requested from the Contracting Authority (B)	% of total eligible cost of action (B/Ax100)
761,500 EUR	685,000 EUR	89.950%

Please note that the cost of the action and the contribution requested from the Contracting Authority have to be expressed in EURO.

• **Summary (max 1 page)**

Total duration of the action	<p>28 months</p> <p>Indicative start date: 01 January 2009</p> <p>Indicative ending date: 01 May 2011</p>
Objectives of the action	<p><Overall objectives>: The overall objective is to promote the application of the ecosystem approach (ECAP) to the management of human activities within the Barcelona Convention , to consolidate the conservation of marine habitats including in areas in open seas, including deep seas. The action is also to promote implementation of the EU Marine Strategy in shared seas.</p> <p><Specific objectives>: The specific objectives are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Promoting and enhancing the implementation of the roadmap for the application of the ecosystem approach to the management of human activities that has been adopted by the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention. - Facilitate the establishment, by the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention of Specially Protected Areas of Mediterranean Interest to protect habitats of conservation interest located in protected areas in open seas and deep sea habitats, <p>The specific objectives are to plan and expand implementation of the ecosystem approach in the context of the Barcelona Convention, which is a UNEP Regional Seas Convention covering the Mediterranean Sea.</p> <p>The Convention has traditionally worked on protected areas in coastal areas but conservation cannot be fully effective unless backed up by which can also be extremely vulnerable but are underrepresented for a number of reasons. The project will prepare for designation of marine protection areas (MPAs) in such areas.</p>
Partner(s)	
Target group(s) ¹⁰	All governmental and non-governmental entities involved in the planning of human activities using the Mediterranean marine environment.
Final beneficiaries ¹¹	The users of the Mediterranean marine environment such as fishing and tourism sectors and other sea users, including the local communities in the coastal zones.
Estimated results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Better integration of ecosystem considerations in the planning and management policies of the main human activities that use the Mediterranean Environment. - Concerted Ecological Vision for the Mediterranean integrating

¹⁰ Target groups” are the groups/entities who will be directly positively affected by the project at the Project Purpose level – See paragraph 2.3 in Section II for the list.

¹¹ “Final beneficiaries” are those who will benefit from the project in the long term at the level of the society or sector at large

	<p>the Ecosystem requirements.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Methodologies and approaches available to the stakeholders and decision-makers at regional, national and local levels.
Main activities	<p>Two main actions are considered within this project:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <u>The further development of the Ecosystem Approach within the Barcelona Convention.</u> This action requires the carrying out of the following main activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identification of important ecosystem properties and assessment of ecological status and pressures. - Socio-economic analysis of ecosystem goods and services - Development of a set of ecological and operational objectives with indicators and target levels. - Regional meeting of government-designated experts to consider and review the results of the project. - 2. <u>Identification and preparation for nomination of Specially Protected Areas of Mediterranean Importance (SPAMIs) by the CoP of the Convention</u> This action requires the carrying out of the following main activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Legal analysis about the status of each of the selected areas and data collection including field surveys - Elaboration of the draft SPAMIs presentation reports - Consultation meetings to review and finalise de presentation reports

Where applicable, clearly indicate the sector¹², theme, or geographical area specified in the Programme to which the proposed action would apply

¹² See paragraph 2.2 in Section II for the list of Sectors

• Objectives (max 1 page)

The overall objectives of this project are (A) to promote the application of the ecosystem approach (ECAP) to the management of human activities within the Barcelona Convention and (B) to consolidate the conservation of marine habitats including in Mediterranean open sea areas, including deep seas.

To attain the overall objective (A), the first action to be carried out under this project (Action 1) will be the further development of the Ecosystem Approach within the Barcelona Convention. Indeed, the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention (all Mediterranean coastal states plus the EU) have decided at their last Ordinary Meeting in Almeria (Spain), in January 2008, to progressively apply the ECAP to the management of human activities that may affect the Mediterranean marine and coastal environment for the promotion of sustainable development, as recommended by the World Summit on Sustainable Development (Johannesburg, 2002) in its Plan of Implementation.

For this purpose, a process has been initiated, involving scientists and policy makers, and when appropriate, other competent bodies/organizations/authorities, aiming at the gradual application of the ecosystem approach which would include the following steps:

- 1) Definition of an ecological Vision for the Mediterranean.
- 2) Setting of common Mediterranean strategic goals.
- 3) Identification of important ecosystem properties and assessment of ecological status and pressures.
- 4) Development of a set of ecological objectives corresponding to the Vision and strategic goals.
- 5) Derivation of operational objectives with indicators and target levels.
- 6) Revision of existing monitoring programmes for ongoing assessment and regular updating of targets.
- 7) Development and review of relevant action plans and programmes.

The first two steps of the road map have already been agreed upon by the Contracting Parties. Thus, the implementation of the road map and specifically its steps 3 and 4, will be among the specific objectives of the project.

As regards objective (B), Under its overall objective of consolidating the conservation of marine habitats, the project aims specifically at promoting the establishment of a representative ecological network of marine protected areas in the Mediterranean, using, in this context, the SPAMI system to establish MPAs to protect habitats of conservation interest located in open sea zones.

- **Relevance of the action (max 3 pages)**

General presentation and analysis of the problems and their interrelation at all levels.

The **Ecosystem Approach** has been introduced aiming at improving the way human activities are managed for the protection of the marine environment. Following the World Summit on Sustainable Development, it has been adopted by many International Conventions and Regional Seas Organizations. The Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention have adopted it in January 2008 at their Almeria meeting. The proposals to that meeting were developed in the framework of a project (ECOMED) funded by the EC.

It is widely recognised that "the main challenge as regards the provision of marine goods and services, also in the Mediterranean area, lies in being able to promote economic development based on the sea without at the same time aggravating the state of the marine environment."¹³ At Mediterranean scale, we acknowledge that "the environment in the Mediterranean forms the basis for the development of the region, and it is crucial to put an end to the environmental degradation that is already giving rise to very high economic and social costs. The region also needs to redirect its development to meet the economic and social needs, which are considerable in the South and East, without increasing the process of environmental degradation."¹⁴ The EC, finally, adopted as the objective of its Strategy "to protect and restore Europe's oceans and seas and ensure that human activities are carried out in a sustainable manner so that current and future generations enjoy and benefit from biologically diverse and dynamic oceans and seas that are safe, clean, healthy and productive."

In this context, any environmental policy should be developed in a way that secures an effective protection of the marine environment and that makes possible the continued provision of marine goods and services for the wealth of the population. The application of the ECAP has the potential to help reach a balance between the requirements of human activities and the conservation of the marine environment. Its adoption and gradual implementation within the framework of the Mediterranean Action Plan (Barcelona Convention) will give new impetus to the preparation of more integrated and holistic policies by the Convention, including the impact of human activities on the marine environment.

To ensure the sustainability of the exploitation of marine goods and services in the Mediterranean Sea, it is important that the ECAP and its related conservation and management measures be applied not only to coastal areas, but they should cover also the **habitats and ecosystems located in open seas**, including deep sea. The SPAMI system set under the Barcelona Convention is a tool that can be used by the Contracting Parties to establish MPAs in such areas of the Mediterranean. The project includes activities aimed at facilitating the process of designation of SPAMIs in areas identified as hot spot of biodiversity and whose protection requires using tools within the Convention. The creation of SPAMIs on such areas that may extend to High Seas requires the elaboration of substantive presentation reports and a consultation process between concerned countries. Facilitating such processes for the creation of SPAMIs in these areas will significantly contribute to the development and implementation of a Mediterranean representative network of MPAs.

¹³ EC President Barroso, "Key note speech - European Maritime Policy" Portuguese Presidency Ministerial Conference Lisbon, 22 October 2007"

¹⁴ Taken from "MEDITERRANEAN STRATEGY FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT A Framework for Environmental Sustainability and Shared Prosperity"

Description of the target groups and final beneficiaries.

All the Governmental and Non-Governmental entities concerned with the sustainable use and the conservation of the marine environment in the Mediterranean will benefit from the results and outputs of the project. These include authorities, organisations and individuals in all the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention. The project results and outputs will also facilitate the work of many international organisations (IGOs and NGOs) active in the Mediterranean.

The ultimate beneficiaries will be the users of the Mediterranean Sea including many sectors of human activities such as Fisheries, Tourism etc.

The implementation of the Ecosystem Approach is not only a task for the Convention and its subsidiary bodies, but also and mainly for its Parties. Likewise, the completion of the designation of MPAs in the open seas will enhance the capacity of the Convention itself, whose visibility will be increased, but also of the whole community of users of the Mediterranean Sea.

Specific problems to be addressed by the action

Through its two actions, the project will help to solve the implementation deficit that chronically affects the environmental decisions taken at regional level.

As regards **the implementation of the Ecosystem approach**, there is a need to transform the political will already expressed by Parties to the Convention into real actions, in order to prove its advantages with respect to the current approaches in environmental policy-making. This presents obvious synergies with the implementation of the Marine Strategy Directive by EU Member States and will facilitate the elaboration and testing of guidelines indicating the ways to proceed at regional scale.

The creation of a network of **SPAMIs in the Mediterranean open seas** is a process that will tackle the common problems in the region as regards implementation (a) the identification of the stakeholders to be involved, (b) the joint consideration of issues having scientific and technical nature, and (c) the intertwining of ecological considerations with economic, social, and political concerns.

Relevance of the proposal to the needs and constraints to target groups and beneficiaries and how it will provide the desired solutions

The two actions of the project address high priority issues identified within the framework of the Mediterranean Action Plan. During their 15th Ordinary Meeting, the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention highlighted the importance of the ECAP and adopted a roadmap to progressively apply it to the management of human activities that may affect the Mediterranean marine and coastal environment

As it appears in the SAPBIO adopted by the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention, "the setting up of protected areas offshore (including the High Seas) to protect pelagic ecosystem and sensitive species and important and partially unknown benthic areas such as the "white coral community", seamounts and submarine canyons should be a priority. The SPAMI List can constitute an important tool to help the creation of MPAs offshore in international waters".

This project falls within priority IV of the document referred to, "strengthening environmental governance and EU leadership;" in particular on the support to be provided to international environmental organisations and processes, that share the EU's desire to find multilateral solutions to environmental problems. In addition, the implementation of the ecosystem approach and the setting of MPA networks are amongst the important commitments by the EU and the International Community (CBD and WSSD). The project will, in addition, contribute to the gradual implementation of the ecosystem approach to the management of fisheries activities.

- **Description of the action and its effectiveness (max 14 pages)**

Action 1: The further development of the Ecosystem Approach within the Barcelona Convention

The project's "Action 1" aims at promoting and enhancing the implementation of the road map for the application of the ecosystem approach to the management of human activities that has been adopted by the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention (see above).. At the same time, Directive 2008/56/EC establishes a framework for the marine strategy and defines the obligations of EU member states as well as their implementation modalities. The overall aim of this project is to contribute to the success of this new environmental policy, whose principles are shared by the EU and the Barcelona Convention, building upon the long history of cooperation between the European Commission (EC) and the Barcelona Convention Coordinating Unit (MEDU).

This new policy requires changes in the way that environmental decisions and policies are made, introducing holistic and integrated approaches that aim to manage the human activities in a sustainable way and in an environmental cooperation between Mediterranean countries.

The road map adopted by the Mediterranean states consists of seven steps. The first two steps of the road map have already been agreed upon by the Contracting Parties.

The ecological Vision agreed is the following:

“A healthy Mediterranean with marine and coastal ecosystems that are productive and biologically diverse for the benefit of present and future generations”;

The strategic goals agreed are:

- a) To protect, allow recovery and, where practicable, restore the structure and function of marine and coastal ecosystems thus also protecting biodiversity, in order to achieve and maintain good ecological status and allow for their sustainable use.*
- b) To reduce pollution in the marine and coastal environment so as to minimize impacts on and risks to human and/or ecosystem health and/or uses of the sea and the coasts.*
- c) To prevent, reduce and manage the vulnerability of the sea and the coasts to risks induced by human activities and natural events;*

Thus, the specific objective of the project is to facilitate the implementation of the road map and specifically its steps 3 and 4 (see road map above).

Step 3 of the road map requires that an assessment of the ecological status and of pressures and impacts is undertaken in each of the four regions of the Mediterranean using the agreed Table of Contents shown below. For the implementation of step 3, there is already an agreement to identify four areas in the Mediterranean based on bio-geographic and oceanographic considerations The four regions agreed upon are: Area1: Western Mediterranean Sea, Area 2: Adriatic Sea, Area 3: Ionian Sea and Central Mediterranean, Area 4: Aegean-Levantine sea. A socio-economic analysis of the goods and services provided by the ecosystem and the cost of degradation of the marine and coastal environment will also be undertaken. The compilation of assessment methodologies will be undertaken as a supporting activity.

1 Preparation of the assessment documents on ecological status and pressures and impacts based on the agreed Table of Contents

Groups of national experts will undertake to prepare the assessment documents and identify gaps. The work of the groups can be divided into three parts. They will first collect and compile information using the agreed table of contents, then they will identify the information gaps and lastly they will proceed with the assessment using the products of activity 3. At the kick-off meeting, work methodology will be explained and responsibilities shared.

Output: Four draft assessment documents containing information in the four respective areas and identifying gaps with proposals for further work..

2 Preparation of the socio-economic analysis

The socio-economic analysis of the goods and services provided by the ecosystem and the cost of degradation of the marine and coastal environment will be undertaken by the relevant MAP component with external assistance.

Output: Socio-economic analysis

3 Compilation of existing assessment methodologies and identification of possible quality descriptors of the marine and coastal ecosystem.

This task will be undertaken by the relevant MAP components assisted by experts.

Output: Compilation of assessment methodologies and possible quality descriptors of the marine and coastal ecosystem

4. Pilot project for the implementation of step 4 and subsequent steps of the road map.

Step 4 of the road map requires that a set of ecological objectives should be developed corresponding to the Vision and strategic goals.

As there is no experience in the Mediterranean and the Mediterranean Action Plan is a vast programme covering a diverse number of issues, it is proposed that, before implementation of this step, a pilot project is initiated to apply steps 4-7 of the road map using selected objectives common, to the extent possible, to all four areas and covering pollution and biodiversity. This activity will require the organization of two meetings attended by MAP and outside experts.

Output: Model examples of implementing the road map using a number of methodologies..

5. Organization of a regional meeting of government-designated experts to consider and review the results of Action 1 of the project .

The outputs produced by the above activities i.e. the assessment documents, the document on assessment methodologies and ecosystem quality descriptors, the socio-economic analysis, the results of the pilot project on the implementation of the road map and other relevant issues will be reviewed by the Third Meeting of Government-designated Experts on the Application of the Ecosystem Approach by MAP, scheduled to be convened in late Spring 2009.

Expected output: Agreed documentation and proposals to the Meeting of Contracting Parties.

Action 2: The identification and preparation for nomination of Specially Protected Areas of Mediterranean Importance (SPAMIs) by the CoP of the Convention

The activities needed to achieve the objectives of the project's "Action 2" may be grouped in 4 categories:

- Project Governance
- Assessment and data collection
- Consultation and negotiation
- Information

Here are the activities to be undertaken:

- Appointment of the steering committee
- Legal analysis about the status of each of the 3 selected areas
- Preliminary delimitation of the selected areas
- First Meeting of the steering committee
- First consultation meetings
- Data collection including field surveys
- Elaboration of the draft presentation reports
- Second Consultation meetings
- [Second Meeting of the steering committee]
- Information campaign

1. Appointment of the steering committee

The mandate of the Steering Committee is to provide guidance on the development of the project and to validate the main outputs. RAC/SPA will act as Secretariat for the Steering Committee and provide the necessary arrangement for its meetings.

2. Legal analysis about the status of each selected area

The legal status of the area is a key element that defines the procedure to follow for proposing the areas as SPAMI. It has also an impact on the arrangements for the enforcement of the regulation applicable to the area as well as for the implementation of the management measures.

3. Preliminary delimitation of the shortlisted areas

Under this activity, the suitable limits of each candidate area will be defined taking into accounts its natural features and its legal context. The preliminary limits will be used to design the programme of the field surveys of activity 5 hereinafter.

4. First Meeting of the steering committee

At least two meeting of the Steering Committee will be convened during the project period.. The first one will be held at the beginning of the project.

5. Data collection including field surveys Timetable for activities

The objective of this activity is to provide up-to-date data about the natural features of the selected areas. These data are needed to prepare the SPAMI presentation reports.

6. Elaboration of the draft presentation reports

Under this activity the presentation reports will be elaborated by a group of national and international experts.

7. Consultation meetings

The countries concerned will be invited to attend the consultation meetings with the view of reviewing and finalising the draft presentation reports.

8. Information campaign

The aim of this activity is to inform the relevant authorities and the general public about the process of creating the proposed SPAMI.

Outputs of Action 2: The main outputs of the Project's Action 2 will be the presentation reports for 3 candidate SPAMIs prepared in accordance with the format required for submitting SPAMI proposals. In addition to the main outputs the following outputs will be generated:

- Review of the legal status of the selected areas
- Reports of the Meetings of the steering committee
- Minutes of the consultation meetings
- Reports of the data collection/field survey campaigns
- Information material (brochures, posters and leaflets)

• **Methodology (max 4 pages)**

ACTION 1

1. Preparation of the assessment documents on ecological status and pressures and impacts based on the agreed Table of Contents presented below.

Methodology: Working groups will be established in each area that will undertake the compilation and collation of existing information. Each bordering state in the Area will nominate at least one participant to the group but all Contracting Parties are free to participate. It is expected that involvement of experts from all countries will enable the retrieving of maximum information within the countries including grey literature. The work of the groups will actually be divided into three parts: (a) compilation of existing information, (b) identification of possible gaps and (c) actual assessment work. After establishment, the groups will have their kick-off meetings to discuss organization of work and sharing of responsibilities. Overall coordination will be assumed by the Barcelona Convention Secretariat. After completion of the first two stages of the work, the groups will agree on assessment methodologies used and on proposals for filling of gaps identified.

Agreed Table of Contents for the assessment documents

I. Marine and coastal ecosystem status

Executive summary

1. Introduction
2. Physical and chemical characteristics
 - 2.1 Topography, bathymetry and nature of seabed
 - 2.2 Spatial and temporal (all available data but at least 5 years) distribution of salinity; annual and seasonal temperature regime; currents, air sea interaction, water masses, mixing, upwelling, turbidity, etc.
 - 2.3 Spatial and temporal (all available data but at least 5 years) distribution of nutrients (dissolved inorganic nitrogen and phosphorus, total nitrogen and phosphorus), dissolved oxygen and pH
 - 2.4 Sedimentology
 - 2.5 General description of the catchment area in relation to the analysis
3. Biological characteristics
 - 3.1 Description of water column biological communities (basically phyto- and zooplankton) including the species and seasonal and geographical variability
 - 3.2 Information on invertebrate bottom fauna, macro-algae and angiosperms including species composition, biomass and annual/seasonal variability
 - 3.3 Description of population dynamics (including evolution trends), natural and actual range and status of species of marine mammals, reptiles and seabirds
 - 3.4 Inventory of the temporal occurrence, abundance and spatial distribution of exotic, non-indigenous and invasive species
 - 3.5 Information on the structure of fish populations including abundance, spatial distribution and age/size structure
 - 3.6 To the extent not described above, description of coastal biological communities including species composition and abundance
4. Habitat types

Predominant habitat types should be described in terms of physical, chemical and biological features. Habitats of special scientific or economic or biodiversity interest or habitats subject to intense or specific pressures should be identified. Identification and mapping of special habitat types including MPAs, etc.

5. Conclusions and identification of gaps.

II. Pressures and impacts (Note (1) Should cover cumulative and synergistic effects (2) Ecosystem goods and services to be included in the socio-economic assessment)

1. Contamination (including biomagnification) by hazardous substances (includes heavy metals, halogenated and petroleum hydrocarbons, antifoulants, chemicals and pharmaceuticals, etc. from all sources as well as radionuclides)
2. Dumping activities (introduction of substances and impact)
3. Nutrient and organic matter enrichment. Inputs of fertilizers and other N-P rich substances (e.g. from point and diffuse sources including agriculture, aquaculture and atmospheric deposition). Inputs of organic matter (e.g. sewers, mariculture, riverine inputs)
4. Biological disturbance (non-indigenous and invasive species, microbial pathogens, impact of fisheries on target and non-target species)
5. Physical disturbance
 - 5.1 Effects from man-made structures and constructions on and off shore
 - 5.2 Impacts on the seabed and siltation changes (e.g. from fishing and boating activities, dredging material, outfalls, exploration and exploitation of living and non-living resources on the seabed and subsoil, marine erosion, etc.)
 - 5.3 Effects of underwater noise and marine litter
6. Other interferences; on temperature (e.g. power plants); on salinity (e.g. in lagoons from constructions); desalination plants
7. Tourism and recreational activities
8. Maritime activities
9. Emerging issues such as climatic change effects and deep sea ecosystem modifications

III Conclusions including policy considerations and priorities

This chapter could include the conclusions and all issues of serious concern (eg. health issues) and hot spot areas where urgent action is needed. Where policies are in place and measures have been taken relevant to the application of the ecosystem approach, these could be taken into account.

Note 1: In addition to the above, the Secretariat will undertake an economic and social analysis of the use of the waters and of the cost of degradation of the marine and coastal environment. The study will address the role of the marine and coastal ecosystem as provider of goods and services to mankind and may also include the socio-economic situation in the region.

Note 2: For the environmental evaluation, when appropriate, the measures already taken and their effectiveness may also be addressed

2. Preparation of the socio-economic analysis

It is envisaged that the preparation of a socio-economic analysis of the goods and services provided by the ecosystem and the cost of degradation of the marine and coastal environment will be undertaken by the relevant MAP component with external assistance. One of the MAP components (Blue Plan) has extensive experience in socio-economic work.

3. Compilation of existing assessment methodologies and identification of possible quality descriptors of the marine and coastal ecosystem.

This work will be undertaken by the relevant MAP components (MED POL and SPA/RAC) with the assistance of outside expertise. A lot of work has already taken place in other fora and thus the work will concentrate on searching and compiling available information judging its usefulness for the

Mediterranean area. This work will assist the Area groups which will undertake the preparation of the assessment documents (activity 1).

4. Pilot project for the implementation of step 4 and subsequent steps of the agreed road map for the application of the ecosystem approach

This project will consist of a brainstorming exercise and a desk study basing work on available information within MAP but also on the experience developed within other fora such as HELCOM. The organization of two meetings is envisaged attended by the relevant MAP secretariat staff and by outside experts. Participants will try by using various ideas to complete the road map for a selected number of ecological objectives pertinent to the activities of MED POL and RAC/SPA i.e. pollution and biodiversity.

During the first meeting of this group (two days) work will concentrate on the ecological objectives to be utilized; then, operational objectives will be derived for each ecological objective as well as indicators for monitoring and following progress. During the second meeting work will concentrate on the possible target levels, revision of existing monitoring activities and action plans including adaptation of ongoing MAP activities and policies. Organisation of a regional meeting of government-designated experts to consider and review the results of Action 1 of the project

All outputs and proposals derived from the above activities will be submitted for review and consideration by the Third Meeting of Government-designated Experts on the Application of the Ecosystem Approach which is expected to take place in late spring 2009. This meeting may make relevant proposals to the Meeting of the Contracting Parties that will take place at the end of 2009.

It is envisaged that the following will be submitted to the above meeting:

- Four draft assessment documents (compilation of information, identification of gaps, proposals for filling the gaps, proposals for assessment methodologies)
- Socio-economic analysis
- Compilation of assessment methodologies and possible quality descriptors of the ecosystem
- Model examples of how to proceed with the implementation of step 4 and subsequent steps of the agreed road map for the application of the ecosystem approach.

ACTION 2

The methodology to be followed in implementing the activities of Action 2 is based on the procedure set by the SPAMI Protocol of the Barcelona Convention as for the submission of proposals for the establishment of SPAMIs. Here is the methodology proposed for each activity:

1. Appointment of the steering committee

From the beginning of the project a Steering Committee will be formed. Its mandate is to provide guidance on the development of the project and to validate the main outputs. All the riparian countries to the short listed areas [the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention] will be invited to designate their representatives in the Steering Committee. The relevant International Organisations and NGOs will be also invited to attend the Meeting of the Steering Committee as Observers.

A first meeting of the Steering Committee will be convened during the first three Months of the Project. A second Meeting will be held Three months before the project end.

2. Legal analysis about the status of each selected area

The legal status of the area is a key element that defines the procedure to follow for proposing the areas as SPAMI. It has also an impact on the arrangements for the enforcement of the regulation applicable to the area as well as for the implementation of the management measures. It is therefore important to carry out an in-depth analysis of the legal status of the area to check carefully if the relevant limits of

national sovereignty or jurisdiction are clearly defined and if there is any dispute about the concerned areas. In this case, zones hosting possible sites but over which there remain unsolved disputes between parties to the Convention, will be excluded.

3. Preliminary delimitation of the shortlisted areas

Based on the outputs of the project "Identification of possible SPAMIs in the Mediterranean areas beyond national jurisdiction", the limits and surface area of the selected zones will be defined on preliminary basis. The final boundaries will be defined during the consultation meeting taking into account the results of the field surveys.

4. First Meeting of the steering committee

The first meeting of the Steering Committee will be held before the end of the project's month 3. It will review the workplan of the project, the legal analysis and the preliminary limits prepared under activity 2 and activity 3 respectively.

5. Data collection including field surveys Timetable for activities

A field survey will be carried out in each of the three selected areas using a research vessel. The duration of each survey will be 7 to 10 days using as appropriate side scan sonar, acoustic ground discrimination system (AGDS) and relevant techniques for water column studies.

The objective of the field surveys is to supplement the existing data and provide further details and evidence as for the physical and ecological features of the candidate areas.

6. Elaboration of the draft presentation reports

Under this activity the presentation reports will be elaborated by a group of national and international experts. They will conform to the format for the SPAMI presentation reports adopted by the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention.

In addition to the information about the natural features of the area, the presentation reports should include the goals of the SPAMI, detailed information about the management measures applicable to the area and the related institutional arrangements.

7. Consultation meetings

The SPAMI Protocol stipulates that proposals for inclusion in the SPAMI List may be submitted (i) by two or more neighbouring Parties concerned if the area is situated, totally or partially in the high sea and (ii) by the neighbouring Parties concerned in areas where the limits of national sovereignty or jurisdiction have not yet been defined.

Under this activity, for each candidate area, a consultation process will be carried out between the concerned countries with the view of defining the objectives of the area, the management measures and the required arrangements. When there are important differences as regards delimitation issues between concerned parties to the Convention, the area will not be taken into consideration.

Where possible and appropriate, bilateral or multilateral agreement may be elaborated and signed by the concerned countries.

8. Information campaign

In order to facilitate and support the process to be conducted at national level for the elaboration of the proposals for inclusion in the SPAMI, the project will elaborate information material and organise an information event (information day) in each participating country.

Workplan for Action 2 (OCTOBER 2009-JANUARY 2011)

Year 2

	Semester 1						Semester 2						Implementing body
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
Appointment of the steering committee	■	■											RAC/SPA
Legal analysis about the status of each selected area		■	■										RAC/SPA
Preliminary delimitation of the selected areas			■										RAC/SPA
Meeting of the steering committee			■										RAC/SPA
First consultation meetings				■	■	■							RAC/SPA
Data collection/Field survey							■	■	■				RAC/SPA
Elaboration of the draft SPAMI presentation reports					■	■	■	■	■	■	■		RAC/SPA
Second Consultation meetings											■	■	RAC/SPA
Information campaign				■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	RAC/SPA National authorities

Year 3

	Semester 1						Semester 2						Implementing body
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
Information campaign	■	■	■										RAC/SPA National authorities
Finalisation of the SPAMI presentation reports	■	■	■										RAC/SPA National authorities
Submission of the Proposals for inclusion in the SPAMI List				■									National authorities

• **Sustainability (max 3 pages)**

As regards the implementation of the Ecosystem Approach, the willingness of Parties to participate is a precondition for success. Some Parties and also numerous stakeholders have already approached MEDU to offer their participation. The process followed to prepare the decision on the Ecosystem Approach that has been adopted by the Contracting Parties has proven to be successful and will be applied. The adoption of the Marine Strategy Directive will undoubtedly guarantee the participation of the EU Member States.

The designation of MPAs represents of course a challenge from the scientific point of view. Whereas a certain proportion of the Mediterranean marine environment – mainly limited to shallow coastal habitats in the northwest – is reasonably well known, the remaining portion of the region, including the deeper benthos and the water column, remains uncharted.

This action relies on the cooperation within the Mediterranean marine science community to support this first step of the process to build a coherent system of natural sites configured and managed to conserve

key species, mostly in open sea areas, to maintain ecological functions and evolutionary processes as a means to conserve biodiversity, and to indicate what further knowledge needs to be gained in order to complete such system.

Both actions will be supported by specific legal decisions. The implementation of the Ecosystem Approach is a legal obligation for EU Members that, in addition, will be requested to ensure cooperation with non-EU countries. The formal designation of MPAs will be made through a decision of the CPs, that should be followed by proper management decisions to be taken only after the designation is made.