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Videoconference, 1-3 December 2020

**Agenda item 8: Any Other Business**

**Elements for IMAP Data Policy**

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## Introduction

The Contracting Parties, with Decision IG.24/2 (COP 21, Naples, Italy, 2-5 December 2019), “*Endorse[d] the Main Elements and Roadmap for the Preparation of a UNEP/MAP Data Management Policy, as set out in Annex II to the present Decision, and request[ed] the Secretariat (INFO/RAC) to develop such Policy, in close cooperation with the other MAP components and with the full involvement of the Contracting Parties, and to submit it to the Contracting Parties at their 22nd Meeting (COP 22);*”.

In this context a specific data policy for IMAP is going to be developed and implemented. The **first elements of the IMAP data policy were discussed during the following meetings:**

- Ecosystem Approach Correspondence Group on Monitoring (CORMON), Biodiversity and Fisheries (Marseille, France, 12-13 February 2019);
- Ecosystem Approach Correspondence Group on Monitoring (CORMON), Pollution (Podgorica, Montenegro, 2-3 April 2019);
- Ecosystem Approach Correspondence Group on Monitoring (CORMON), Marine Litter (Podgorica, Montenegro, 4-5 April 2019);
- Ecosystem Approach Correspondence Group on Monitoring (CORMON), Biodiversity and Fisheries (Rome, Italy, 21 May 2019);
- Ecosystem Approach Correspondence Group on Monitoring (CORMON), Coast and Hydrography (Rome, Italy, 21-22 May 2019);
- Fourteenth Meeting of MED POL Focal Points (Istanbul, Turkey, 27-29 May 2019);
- Thirteenth Meeting of REMPEC Focal Points (Valletta, Malta 11- 3 June 2019);
- Fourteenth Meeting of SPA/BD Thematic Focal Points (Portorož, Slovenia, 18-21 June 2019).

The document, presented during the **INFO/RAC National Focal Points Meeting** (16/17 April 2019), has been finally endorsed during COP21.

The roadmap proposed by INFO/RAC for the development of a MAP Data Management Policy, under the coordination of the Secretariat through an in-depth discussion and in close consultation with all relevant MAP Components and the Contracting Parties is ongoing.

It is essential that the Contracting Parties give the maximum availability and priority to the participation in the data policy definition process in order to establish a common and efficient data management to achieve and share the essential knowledge base for the Mediterranean Sea needed for next QSR.

### 1.Elements of IMAP Data Policy

Due to the delay caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the **planned bilateral meetings** have been postponed to the period November 2020 - February 2021.

INFO/RAC has developed a **questionnaire** to collect basic information on possible existing policies adopted and implemented by Contracting Parties. The questionnaire distributed during September 2020 will pave the way for bilateral discussions with the Contracting Parties in order to draw up a priority list on the agenda of bilateral meetings. A special focus will be devoted to Contracting Parties which are not EU Member States, since at EU level there is already a well-defined data policy based on the adopted EU regulation (INSPIRE and MSFD EU Directive). For this group of non-EU Countries, a common approach will be followed to fill the first version of the data policy matrix table for each of the official data streams.

Defining a common level of aggregation, together with preliminary results of the questionnaire and the outputs of the bilateral meetings with the first group of Contracting Parties, will constitute the basis for

the release of a draft Data Management Policy by the end of 2020. Such draft will be further enriched with the results of the remaining Countries within the first semester of 2021 and will be presented to the INFO/RAC Focal Points Meeting (8-9 June 2021).

### 1.1 Further developments about IMAP Users

**CP User profiles** have been further updated and refined according to Contracting Parties advise.

The role of Contracting Parties user has been detailed as per the table below:

Official **IMAP Users** are responsible to upload, validate and officially release monitoring data related to IMAP Common Indicators, in line with the following three data management levels:

**Level I - Upload:** users uploading the monitoring data file and performing the **compliance quality check** - the system will generate an error file if the monitoring data file is NOT compliant with Data Standards and Data Dictionaries.

**Level II - Validation:** users performing the process of quality control of monitoring data –the system doesn't generate any automatic output. **Validation** confirms that all controls related to the content have been successfully passed.

**Level III - Official release:** users officially releasing monitoring data at country level as a final step. Users have the duty to confirm the **official release**.

The 3-level users subdivision allows the CPs to differentiate the responsibility level according to the internal national organization on data management.

An example of a possible structure could be:

**Level I:** *scientific institutions responsible for data production and elaboration (i.e. monitoring and research institutes)*

**Level II:** *national institutions responsible for data collection and validation (for ex. Environmental National Agency)*

**Level III:** *national entities responsible for the official release of the data (i.e. National Focal Point)*

Nevertheless, Contracting Parties can decide to appoint the same user even for all the 3 levels.

### 1.2 Further developments about data

An important starting point is to agree about data to be considered suitable for the IMAP reporting. The three following categories have been taken into account:

#### 1.2.1 Testing phase data

The contribute of Contracting Parties into the **testing phase** of the IMAP Pilot Info System has been of utmost importance and has enabled detecting and sorting out arising issues. It has been also an asset for the first elaboration by INFO/RAC of a **Technical Guide**, an additional useful tool complementing the **User Guide**, already developed for the testing phase, to support the Contracting Parties in the IMAP process. Both guidelines can be downloaded at <http://imappilot.info-rac.org>.

The first **IMAP call is open** and includes both new monitoring data generated in **2020**, as well as available monitoring data collected **prior to 2020**, if their content is compatible with format required by the respective Data Standards and Data Dictionaries adopted for IMAP Common Indicators.

The IMAP Pilot Info System is ready to receive past and new data. **The uploaded testing files need control and validation by Countries.** To avoid new efforts and repetitions INFO/RAC needs confirmation by CPs about the nature of the data uploaded in the testing phase. CPs need to clarify which of the following options is valid for their data sets:

1. They are only **test data that are NOT for inclusion** into the IMAP Pilot Info System;
2. They are **official data** sent before the opening of the IMAP call, already **validated and to be considered eligible for inclusion** as part of mandatory reporting.

To facilitate CPs work, INFO/RAC has renamed the files. It is required to CPs to access the IMAP Pilot Info System at <http://imappilot.info-rac.org>, go to the section **Upload** and search and check the file belonging to their country whose name start with “**TEST**”.

- ✓ If the right **option is 1**, CP can **delete** the file;
- ✓ if data are in the **option 2**, press the validation bottom if the file is in “**Compliant**” status
- ✓ if data are in the **option 2**, liaise with INFO/RAC if the file is in “**Not compliant**” status.

In any case, CPs need to send an official e-mail to INFO/RAC ([imap@info-rac.org](mailto:imap@info-rac.org)) explaining which test files have to be accepted and maintained and which ones have to be deleted. The saved files will be renamed and integrated in the system as new IMAP call data.

Furthermore, INFO/RAC and the respective MAP Components help desk accounts established during the testing phase, remain active to provide full support to the Contracting Parties:

- [imap@info-rac.org](mailto:imap@info-rac.org) for any problem relating to access, data standards download and upload, any difficulty that users can encounter during the process, including clarifications and advice of the type of content requested by the system;
- [pollmlitter\\_imap@info-rac.org](mailto:pollmlitter_imap@info-rac.org) to provide clarifications and advice related to scientific aspects of the information requested by the system for Pollution and Marine Litter;
- [bio\\_imap@info-rac.org](mailto:bio_imap@info-rac.org) to provide clarifications and advice related to scientific aspects of the information requested by the system for Biodiversity and Non-Indigenous Species;
- [coasthydro\\_imap@info-rac.org](mailto:coasthydro_imap@info-rac.org) to provide clarifications and advice related to scientific aspects of the information requested by the system for Coast and Hydrography.

### 1.2.2 MED POL data

Migration of the monitoring data reported using the MED POL Metadata Templates, as confirmed by the Meeting of the MED POL Focal Points, Rome, Italy, 29-31 May 2017, to the new IMAP (Pilot) Info System using Data Standards and Data Dictionaries adopted for IMAP Common Indicators 13 (Concentration of key nutrients in water column), 14 (Chlorophyll-a concentration in water column) and 17 (Concentration of key harmful contaminants measured in the relevant matrix (biota, sediment, seawater)), is going to be completed by the end of November 2020.

- ✓ Contaminants in Biota and Sediment reported to MEDPOL has been already migrated;
- ✓ Nutrients in seawater reported to MEDPOL will be migrated by the end of November 2020.

### 1.2.3 Projects datasets

The lack of monitoring data leads to explore other possible sources to fill the gaps. It is up to the CPs to assess which other sources are available and endorse them as official IMAP data sets.

Criteria for validation of other available datasets should be defined by Countries in a common and agreed way in order to avoid incoherent datasets in IMAP.

In this context, projects occupy a relevant position and although their use is allowed, the following rules should be applied:

- the project source should be always reported in remarks;
- monitoring data related to projects should be collected in separated files and not mixed with other monitoring data produced by IMAP national monitoring programmes.

### **1.3 Data availability at level of the Mediterranean Region and next steps**

In the general framework of the agreed roadmap on MAP data policy and taking into account the countries needs, capacities and challenges caused by the recent COVID-19 pandemic, it is essential to inform the Secretariat about the following aspects:

- the state of art of the availability of monitoring data for IMAP;
- the reasons for the delay in user appointment or data uploading from CPs that affect the planned timeline.

In particular, in the following short term scenario for IMAP each CP would:

- ✓ assure the **completion of IMAP data collection** for the 11 selected Common Indicators and clear understanding of quality controls outputs as follows from compliance check run on IMAP Pilot Info System;
- ✓ publish **a set of validated data accessible at the regional level** (each CP provides assessment products of data referred to its own country);
- ✓ agree with the other CPs under the INFO/RAC and CU coordination on **a common level of aggregation of data**, not allowed for publication, to assure wide visualization in the Mediterranean Region.