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ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME
MEDITERRANEAN ACTION PLAN**

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Meeting of the Integrated Monitoring Correspondence Group

Athens, Greece, 30 March - 1 April 2015

Report of the 4th EcAp Coordination Group

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**UNITED NATIONS
ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME
MEDITERRANEAN ACTION PLAN**

17 November 2014
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4th Meeting of the EcAp Coordination Group

Athens, Greece, 9-10 October 2014

Final Report

4th Meeting of the EcAp Coordination Group

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Introduction

The 4th Meeting of the Ecosystem Approach (EcAp) Coordination Group was held in Athens, Greece on the 9-10 October 2014, pursuant to the actions taken since the last Conference of the Parties (**COP 18**) and based on the **EcAp Roadmap**, the last meetings of the Integrated Correspondence Group (**Integrated Corgest**) and the Monitoring Correspondence Group Meetings (**CORMONS**). The objectives of the 4th Meeting of the EcAp Coordination Group were the following: a) to give recommendations on the further development of the Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Guidance; b) to give early inputs and recommendations towards the development of an EcAp Measures Gap Analysis, based on the Secretariat's initial analysis; c) to give comments and recommendations on the draft Socio-Economic Analysis; d) to give comments and recommendations on the draft Offshore Action Plan; e) to give first reactions on the GFCM proposed common indicators regarding OE3; and f) to give first reactions on the ACCOBAMS proposed recommendations on common indicators regarding EO11.

Participation

The meeting was attended by 44 participants from the following Contracting Parties: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Cyprus, Egypt, European Union, France, Greece, Israel, Italy, Lebanon, Libya, Malta, Montenegro, Morocco, and Spain.

Palestine also attended the meeting as an observer.

The Secretariat of the Mediterranean Action Plan (UNEP/MAP), including its components, MED POL Programme (MEDPOL), the Priority Actions Programme Regional Activity Centre (PAP/RAC), the Specially Protected Areas Regional Activity Centre (SPA/RAC), the Plan Bleu Regional Activity Center (PB/RAC), the Regional Activity Centre for Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP/RAC) and the Regional Marine Pollution Emergency Response Centre for the Mediterranean Sea (REMPEC) were present at the meeting.

United Nations specialized agencies and other intergovernmental organizations were represented, including the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM), the Agreement on the Conservation of the cetaceans in the Black Sea (ACCOBAMS), the European Environment Agency (EEA) and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

The following non-governmental organizations were represented by observers: the Enalia Physis, the Hellenic Marine Environment Protection Association (HELMPEPA), the Mediterranean Association to Save the Sea Turtles (MEDASSET), the World Wildlife Fund for Nature (WWF) and the IRIS-SES Project.

The list of participants is attached as Annex III to this report.

Agenda Item 1: Opening of the Meeting

The meeting was opened at 9.00 a.m. on 9 October 2014 by Mr. Gaetano Leone, Coordinator, Barcelona Convention Secretariat-UNEP/MAP. He reviewed the decisions and the progress related to EcAp, achieved since the last COP meetings. Mr. Leone thanked the participants and stressed the importance of taking action to protect the Mediterranean by strengthening sustainability in the region.

Agenda Item 2: Organizational matters

1. Following a short introduction of Mr. Leone, the meeting elected its officers as follows:

Chairperson: Mr. Ilias Mavroidis, Greece
Vice-Chairpersons: Mr. Almokhtar Saied, Libya and Ms. Jelena Knezevic, Montenegro

Rapporteur: Mme Nassira Rheyati, Morocco

2. Interpretation in English and French was available to the participants.
3. The meeting adopted the agenda set out in UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG.401./1 and UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG.401./2.

Agenda Item 3: Introduction of the Draft Monitoring and Assessment Guidance

4. The Secretariat presented the Draft Monitoring and Assessment Methodological Guidance (UNEP (DEPI)/MED WG.401/3) and provided information on the EcAp monitoring process ahead.
5. GFCM and ACCOBAMS Secretariats presented their proposals on common indicators related to Ecological Objectives EO3 (UNEP (DEPI)/MED WG.401/Inf.7) and EO11 (UNEP (DEPI)/MED WG.401/Inf.8) respectively.
6. This was followed by a comment from a Contracting Party on ACCOBAMS's presentation in regard to shipping noise. She also expressed the necessity to extend the frequency of monitoring.
7. Another Contracting Party encouraged the establishment of a framework for collaboration, noting that underwater noise is a common issue in the Mediterranean region and there is a need to address it on a regional level by possibly establishing a joint monitoring programme for underwater noise.
8. With regard to the Monitoring and Assessment Guidance on Biodiversity and Non-Indigenous Species (NIS), SPA/RAC stated that planning of country implementation and national engagement for recurrent funding of future monitoring are key challenges for biodiversity work, since this is a new area of monitoring on regional level.
9. IUCN promised to share their ongoing work on the classification of benthic habitats and their NIS (MedMIS - Mediterranean Marine Invasive Species) cell phone application and highlighted the need to work closer with CIESM and to strengthen taxonomist networks.
10. Some Contracting Parties noted that the list of species, especially cetaceans was too long and affirmed that there is a need to focus on those widely present in the region. For this purpose, in their view, every state should choose priority list of species to start monitoring on.
11. A Contracting Party proposed to organize a joint workshop on NIS together with OSPAR and promised to present a proposal on food webs at the next CORMON meeting, stressing the need to establish follow-up activities and plans. The Secretariat recalled that a joint workshop was also recently proposed by OSPAR experts to SPA/RAC with regard to collaboration on biodiversity indicators.
12. Another Contracting Party highlighted the importance to further look into the links between pressures and impacts (See Annex I on Recommendations).
13. For the Monitoring and Assessment Guidance on Pollution and Litter, a Contracting Party stressed the importance to choose the right species when it comes to biological monitoring. It asked for E. Coli to be part of the monitoring when it comes to microbiological effects and requested that the Secretariat prepares a summary table of common indicators adopted at COP 18.

14. A Contracting Party expressed the need to assess the added value of monitoring eutrophication offshore. They argued that priority should be given to contaminants monitoring. They welcomed the proposal of focusing on sea turtles as a basis to monitor entangled/ingested litter in the Mediterranean.
15. This was supported by other Parties.
16. Regarding the use of the TRIX index in relation to eutrophication in the Mediterranean, Contracting Parties' views were divided and they asked the online informal group on eutrophication to further look into alternatives to the TRIX index, as well as into its modified use in the Mediterranean.
17. The importance of citizens' initiatives was highlighted by IUCN and HELMEPA.
18. On Coast and Hydrography, PAP/RAC highlighted the uniqueness of coast related monitoring in the Mediterranean, while a Contracting Party volunteered to share their CAMP indicators experience and proposed them to be potentially integrated in EcAp monitoring.
19. REMPEC described the availability of oceanographic and meteorological data in the Mediterranean Operational Network for the Global Ocean Observing System (MONGOOS) and noted that this data will be available in the future on an online platform developed under the Project Mediterranean Decision Support System for Marine Safety – MEDESS-4MS. This system will also contain shoreline morphology, socio-economic and environmental layers for the entire region..
20. A Contracting Party welcomed the changes made in the list of manmade structures and stated that work is now ongoing in their country on how best use GIS information and how to measure length of coastline. They welcome the establishment of a coast and hydrography information expert group.

Agenda items 4 and 5: Draft Offshore Action Plan and Inter-linkages of the Offshore Action Plan and the Ecosystem Approach with specific emphasis on monitoring

21. After the REMPEC Secretariat's presentation, the EcAp Coordination Group Meeting provided recommendations on the draft Offshore Action Plan and on the monitoring work planned within its context.
22. A Contracting Party stressed the importance of using the ecosystem approach as guiding principle for future expert discussions on offshore monitoring, with the aim of linking pressures (offshore monitoring) and impacts (EcAp monitoring).

Agenda Item 6: Draft EcAp Measures Gap Analysis

23. The Secretariat presented the draft initial EcAp Measures Gap Analysis (UNEP (DEPI)/MED WG.401/5).
24. The Contracting Parties welcomed this document. They agreed that EcAp does not replace existing measures, but helps to structure them and asked for the further development of the analysis, in line with the recommendations annexed to this Report.

Agenda item 7: Draft Socio-Economic Analysis Report

25. The Plan Bleu Secretariat presented its Draft Socio-Economic Reports.

26. The Parties welcomed the Reports and asked the Secretariat to present the two drafts to the upcoming MAP Focal Points Meeting in March 2015 for further discussion and approval.

Agenda item 8: Conclusions and recommendations

27. Participants adopted a list of Recommendations, as contained in Annex I.

Agenda item 9: Any Other Business

28. Under this agenda item ACCOBAMS shared an information note on its program to assess cetacean populations and their distribution in the Mediterranean (the "ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative").

Agenda item 10: Closure of the meeting

29. The Chairperson closed the meeting at 16.30 hours on 10 October 2014.

Annex I
Final Recommendations

Final recommendations of the 4th meeting of the EcAp Coordination Group

The 4th Meeting of the Ecosystem Approach Coordination Group (**EcAp Coordination Group**) welcomed the ongoing work on monitoring and assessment, the initial measures gap analysis and to the socio-economic and offshore related activities.

It expressed support to the draft Socio-Economic Reports with comments received during the meeting and afterwards (by 31 October) and asked the Secretariat to present the two drafts to the upcoming MAP Focal Points Meeting in March 2015 for their further discussion and approval.

It welcomed the progress made on the development of common indicators in relation to Ecological Objectives EO3 and 11 and the partnership in this regard established with the Secretariats of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (**GFCM**) and of the Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and Contiguous Atlantic Area (**ACCOBAMS**).

It mandated the upcoming Monitoring Correspondence Groups (**CORMONs**) and the CORMONs online informal working groups to:

- further discuss at the expert level the assessment criteria options described in the draft Monitoring and Assessment Methodological Guidance;
- specifically address in the biodiversity discussions the link of impacts and pressures;
- while updating the indicative list of species and habitats, take note of the need to focus on those species and habitats where data is most available in the region, noting possible sub-basin and local differences, especially in the upcoming initial phase of monitoring;
- further discuss those areas where it is likely that in the initial phase, due to inadequate level of data, the collection of new original data will be necessary to establish trends;
- further address the potential use of the TRIX index and its applicability to Mediterranean specifics (different nutrient levels) and assess alternative methods;
- further discuss the 2-tier approach in relation to biological effects, also looking into alternative methods and present suggestions at the upcoming MEDPOL Focal Points Meeting;
- further address how to best utilize citizen scientist initiatives in relation to the specific expert monitoring areas;
- look into the possibility of monitoring E. coli in microbiological pollution (9.5.1.);
- look into the possibility of developing a simplified master list of marine litter categories, especially for finding commonalities with the practice of other Regional Sea Conventions;
- in relation to coast and hydrography, address the scale of measuring the length of the coastline.

In addition, the meeting requested the Secretariat to:

- continue working closely together with the GFCM and ACCOBAMS Secretariats, to further elaborate the proposals on common indicators in relation to fisheries and marine noise respectively, looking specifically into synergies and complementarities with the ongoing work under the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (**MSFD**) of the European Union;
- ensure the efficient start of the online informal working groups on biodiversity, contaminants, eutrophication and marine litter and the establishment of the group on coast and hydrography;
- present the outcome of the online informal working groups to the upcoming Integrated CORMON and to the upcoming MAP Components Focal Points Meetings, to ensure further

expert level discussion, before the presentation of the draft Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme to the next EcAp Coordination Group in September 2015;

- revise the draft Monitoring and Assessment Guidance based on the comments received by the Contracting Parties, noting flexibility needs in implementation, representing sub-regional and local specifics;
- in relation to the draft Offshore Action Plan, clarify further the entity in charge of gathering the Mediterranean Offshore Environment Impact Assessment (**EIA**) and the related data;
- in relation to upcoming offshore monitoring work, note the importance not only to build the upcoming offshore monitoring on the EcAp principles, but also to ensure that this work will enable to assess the links between impacts and pressures;
- ensure further science-policy interface and strengthened cooperation with key scientific partners, including the Mediterranean Science Commission (**CIESM**) and build on their available knowledge and data for the upcoming State of the Environment Assessment;
- prepare a summary table of COP 18 proposed indicators, common indicators and candidate indicators with an explanatory note;
- further develop and present to the upcoming MAP Focal Points Meeting in March 2015 the Initial Gap Analysis on existing measures under the Barcelona Convention relevant to achieving or maintaining good environmental status in the Mediterranean Sea;
- analyze further the implementation status of existing measures and present such analysis to the upcoming MAP Components Focal Points Meetings for further expert level comments;
- ensure that well informed discussions takes place in upcoming Focal Point Meetings on key elements, outstanding issues of the draft Gap Analysis, such as the identified gaps, both in relation to the implementation of existing measures and in relation to the needs of developing new regional measures;
- ensure the strong link and the introduction of EcAp targets in the ongoing revision of the National Action Plans (**NAPs**);
- ensure strong link between EcAp and the process leading up to a reviewed Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (**MSSD**), a Sustainable Consumption and Production Action Plan (**SCP Action Plan**), and the Sustainable Development Goals (**SDGs**), taking special note of the new proposed SDG on Oceans and Seas and the similarity of its vision to the objectives of EcAp;
- distinguish in the draft Gap Analysis between measures which are undertaken under the auspices of UNEP/MAP-Barcelona Convention and those undertaken by partner organizations and relevant projects;
- update the EcAp 2015 time-table.

The meeting encouraged the Contracting Parties to:

- send their written comments on the monitoring, socio-economic and offshore related work to the Secretariat by 31 October;
- send nominations to the Secretariat as soon as possible and volunteer to lead the online informal working groups;
- share their proposals on the inclusions of additional indicators into the Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme, in line with the relevant COP 18 Decision (Decision IG. 23/1);
- send written comments and suggestions to the Secretariat as soon as possible, building on the recommendations of the respective CORMON Groups, on further elaboration of the key topics to be addressed by the online informal working groups;

- send written comments on the draft Gap Analysis to the Secretariat as soon as possible and no later than 5 December 2014;
- send their 2012-2013 national reports in the existing electronic form to the Secretariat by 31 October 2014;
- participate in the upcoming GFCM MedSuit meeting in 6-7 November 2014 in Rome, Italy, where the fisheries-related common indicators will be discussed among fisheries and environmental experts; and
- participate in the upcoming MAP Components Focal Points Meetings.

Annex II
Agenda

Thursday 9 October 2014

- Agenda item 1: Opening of the meeting
- Agenda item 2: Organizational matters
- a) Election of officers
 - b) Adoption of the Provisional Agenda
 - c) Organization of work
- Agenda item 3: Introduction of the draft Monitoring and Assessment Guidance
- Agenda item 4: Draft Offshore Action Plan
- Agenda item 5: Inter-linkages of the Offshore Action Plan and the Ecosystem Approach, with specific emphasis on monitoring

Friday 10 October 2014

- Agenda item 6: Draft EcAp Measures Gap Analysis
- Agenda item 7: Draft Socio-Economic Analysis Report
- Agenda item 8: Conclusions and recommendations
- Agenda item 9: Any Other Business
- Agenda item 10: Closure of the Meeting

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