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36<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Executive Coordination Panel

Split, Croatia, 27-28 September 2018

**Report of the Meeting**

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UNEP/MAP  
Athens, 2018

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## **I. Agenda item 1: Opening of the Meeting**

1. The 36<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Executive Coordination Panel (ECP) was held on 27-28 September 2018, in the premises of PAP/RAC, in Split, Croatia. The meeting was chaired by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)/Mediterranean Action Plan (MAP) Coordinator and attended by the Deputy Coordinator, the Heads of MAP Components and the Programme Officer responsible for governance issues.
2. Mr. Gaetano Leone, UNEP/MAP Coordinator opened the meeting at 14:00 on 27 September 2018.

## **II. Agenda item 2: Adoption of the Agenda and Organization of Work**

3. The meeting reviewed and adopted the Provisional Agenda prepared by the Secretariat, as in document UNEP/MED ECP.36/1. Further to the issues already included in the Provisional Agenda, it was decided that the meeting would also address (a) the preparations of the State of the Environment and Development Report (2019 SoED), and (b) the issue of data policy.

## **III. Agenda item 3: Follow up to the 35<sup>th</sup> ECP meeting**

### **a) Overview of progress in the implementation of the Programme of Work**

4. The Coordinator presented the main activities and accomplishments of the current period, including the collaboration with partners, such as the Secretariat of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfMS) and the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM), and the submission of new project proposals, such as the second phase of the SwitchMed Project, the third phase of the MPA action supported under the GreenMedIII Strategy, and the MedProgramme Child Projects. Furthermore, he informed the meeting on current and planned meetings and events and he provided an update on human resource issues of the Coordinating Unit. He also noted that 92% of assessed contributions have already been received by the Secretariat, which is a very positive development enabling the execution of the activities of the Programme of Work and Budget (PoW) in a timely manner. Finally, he informed the meeting on the creation by Spain of a new 46,385 km<sup>2</sup> Marine Protected Area (the Cetaceans Migration Corridor), a news item which had a very high visibility in social media and in the press.

5. The members of the ECP discussed the progress in the implementation of the PoW activities for the current period, referring also to planned events and to human resource issues. The Director of INFO/RAC, Ms. Giuseppina Monacelli, highlighted the positive impact of the visit of the Coordinator and of other representatives of the Secretariat and MAP Components to the premises of ISPRA and INFO/RAC and especially of the meeting between the MAP Coordinator and the ISPRA Director. The Director of SCP/RAC, Mr. Enrique de Villamore Martin, referred to the finalization of the first phase of the SwitchMed project and to two studies carried out on the legal status of the Centre, that may be also useful in relation to the discussions on the Host Country Agreements (HCAs) of RACs.

### **b) Progress on shared position for strengthening RAC structures**

6. On the issue of finding appropriate ways to address the need for strengthening the structures of the RACs, the Coordinator thanked the MAP Components which had sent their submissions, while he noted that inputs should be sent by all MAP Components to enable the Coordinating Unit to prepare a consolidated, well documented, text, for discussion at the next ECP meeting, before submission to the Contracting Parties through the Bureau. The meeting agreed with the proposed way forward.

### **c) Other follow-up**

7. The Deputy Coordinator, Ms. Tatjana Hema, referred to the financial issues and the follow-up to the relevant discussions held during the 35<sup>th</sup> ECP meeting (Paris, France, 6 June 2018). She noted that following the arrival of the new FMO at the Coordinating Unit, internal discussions were held including a teleconference with UNEP Headquarters. It is therefore expected that all issues raised at

the 35<sup>th</sup> ECP meeting will be clarified, including the issue of measures to reduce the negative impact of exchange rates, and the possibility to develop one project document for the whole MAP system.

	Action Item	Responsibility	Deadline
1.	New/updated inputs on needs for strengthening RAC structures	All RACs (especially Plan Bleu/RAC and INFO/RAC)	19 October 2018
2.	Consolidated text on strengthening RAC structures, for discussion at ECP37	CU	Early December 2018
3.	Clarifications on financial issues raised at ECP35	CU (in coordination with UNEP Headquarters)	December 2018

#### IV. Agenda item 4: Preparations for the 87<sup>th</sup> Bureau meeting

##### a) Updates from MAP Components on activities and projects

8. Under this agenda item, the Director of Plan Bleu/RAC, Ms. Elen Lemaitre-Curri, referred to the preparations of the 2019 SoED report. She noted that the first meeting of the Steering Committee will take place through teleconference on 17 October 2018, and will discuss, *inter alia*, the preparation of the summary for decision-makers. The first inputs by authors are expected by 15 November, and then refinement and consolidation will follow. The scientific review is expected to take place in March, followed by the preparation of the summary for policy-makers and the submission to the Plan Bleu/RAC Focal Points.

9. On the issue the Planning and Priorities Tables, the Deputy Coordinator thanked the ECP members for their contributions and informed them that the next round of inputs for the preparation of the revised tables will take place at the end of December-beginning of January. This version is expected to have the finalized table of 2018 and the planning for 2019. Furthermore, the need for MAP Components to share relevant parts of Planning and Priorities Tables with the respective Thematic Focal Points was re-iterated.

10. The Coordinator also referred to the progress in the implementation of the Cooperation Agreement with Italy, and the inputs required by RACs for the preparation of the progress report. Furthermore, he noted the low level of commitment/expenditure by the RACs involved in the implementation of the EC-funded Marine Litter MED Project, stressing the importance of increasing expenditure as per the project's workplan and budget, since the project is finishing in June 2019.

11. The Director of INFO/RAC referred to the INFO/RAC Focal Points Meeting and the 1<sup>st</sup> ENI SEIS II South Support Mechanism Regional Workshop on Infrastructure and Data Management, organized back-to-back in Rome, Italy (3-5 October 2018) and on the issues to be addressed, including the spatial data infrastructure, the new reporting system on National Baseline Budget, the data dictionaries and the data sharing policy.

12. The Director of SCP/RAC referred to the completion of the SwitchMed Project, to the recent increases in delivering the Marine Litter MED project, to a new project that will be funded by the EBRD, to the second phase of SwitchMed project expected to start in Spring 2019, to the SwitchMed connect event to take place in Barcelona, Spain on 13-15 November 2018, and to the request of extension for the ACT4LITTER project.

13. The Director of SPA/RAC, Mr. Khalil Attia, noted that the date of the kick-off meeting on twinning agreements among SPAMIs, which is pending confirmation by Italy, needs to be set before COP 14 of the CBD. He also noted that the SPA/BD Thematic Focal Points meeting is already under organization, and he informed the ECP of upcoming meetings and events organized by SPA/RAC.

14. The Director of PAP/RAC, Ms. Zeljka Skaricic, informed the ECP that the CAMP Bosnia and Herzegovina is ready for signature, and that there are discussions to start on a trial basis the development of a multilateral CAMP, with the view also to create a network of CAMPs. She also referred to the recent meeting on the preparation of the Common Regional Framework on ICZM and on the need to develop a matrix of overlappings with inputs provided by MAP Components on the Ecological Objectives for which they are responsible. Finally, she referred to the need to develop guidelines on Strategic Environmental Assessment as per the PoW.

15. The Director of REMPEC, Mr. Gabino Gonzalez, informed the ECP that REMPEC is collaborating with INFO/RAC to update the REMPEC website, and that REMPEC is collaborating with Bosnia and Herzegovina for the ratification of the Prevention and Emergency Protocol by this Contracting Party. He also informed the meeting of the progress in relation to the sub-regional contingency plan between Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia, and on requests submitted to REMPEC in relation to new sub-regional contingency plans. He also pointed out that although there is still a low level of commitment in the implementation of the EC-funded Marine Litter MED Project, progress is currently being made. Finally, he referred to the examination of the possibility of designating the Mediterranean Sea or parts thereof as SOx emission control area under MARPOL Annex VI.

16. Finally, in relation to the preparation of the PoW for 2020-2021, it was noted that the same methodology and process as the one used for the previous biennium will be followed.

**b) Preparations for COP 21**

*(i) Organizational matters*

17. The Coordinator referred to his meeting with the Chief of Cabinet of the Italian Minister of Environment, Land and Sea (IMELS), and noted that the date and venue of COP 21 are now set as 2-5 December 2019 in Naples, Italy.

*(ii) Themes of COP 21*

18. The Coordinator thanked the RACs for their inputs and noted that Italy would like the Ministerial declaration to be prepared through a longer and inclusive process, to start much earlier than the COP. He noted that the Ministers should provide political guidance on the new Mid-Term Strategy and that the main theme of the COP could be related to biodiversity, considering also the CBD COP 14 which would launch the process of the post -2020 biodiversity strategy. Furthermore, this theme could be linked to marine litter and plastics, as suggested by SCP/RAC, noting also the evaluation of the relevant Regional Plan. Following this discussion, the possible COP 21 theme suggested to the Bureau in view of its 87<sup>th</sup> meeting (Athens, Greece, 6-7 November 2018) is the “Regional dimension of global biodiversity targets, and especially the Post-2020 Biodiversity Strategy”, while it was noted that this theme could focus on the links with toxic substances and marine litter, as well as with Marine Spatial Planning. The suggested theme will be further discussed in the 87<sup>th</sup> Bureau meeting, especially with Italy, as Host Country of COP 21. The participation of speakers from IMO to further pursue the integration of themes was suggested by REMPEC.

*(iii) Side Events*

19. The issue of possible side events during COP 21 was raised, noting that the involvement of partners in possible side events would be very welcomed. INFO/RAC noted its interest to organize a side event on Copernicus, while SPA/RAC referred to the possibility on organizing a side event on Marine Protected Areas. It was also stressed that due to the relatively small number of COP participants, it is advisable not to have parallel sessions/side events.

*(iv) COP 21 Decisions*

20. The members of the ECP highlighted the fact that all COP decisions are prepared by the Coordinating Unit and MAP Components, noting that it would be very welcomed if Contracting

Parties could “sponsor” decisions and become further involved in the drafting of their text. In relation to the possible subjects of COP 21 decisions, the issues of (a) data policy and (b) transboundary Strategic Environmental Assessment, were raised in addition to other proposals submitted by MAP Components and presented by the Coordinating Unit. The option to group subjects and to present consolidated, omnibus, decisions was also discussed as feasible.

21. In closing the discussion on the preparations for COP 21, the Coordinator informed the meeting of the offer by Italy to second a member of their staff to the Coordinating Unit in Athens, to act as a link between MAP and IMELS and to support substantially the process of the preparation of the COP, at no cost to MAP. He also asked the ECP members to send, if possible innovative, ideas to the Coordinating Unit on the preparation of the COP, preferably before the 87<sup>th</sup> Bureau meeting.

**c) Development of MoUs**

22. The Coordinator noted that this agenda item addressed the request of the Bureau that the Coordinating Unit should (a) provide legal advice on the process of development and subscription of MoUs relevant for the implementation of POWs, for discussion at the 87<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Bureau, and (b) instruct the MAP Components to involve the relevant Thematic Focal Points in the process of development of MoUs to allow proper contribution and with the view to strengthen cooperation and coordination.

23. The Plan Bleu/RAC Director noted that there should be a distinction between MoUs which have a broader scope and MoUs that address the implementation of specific activities of the PoW. The Coordinator stressed that to implement PoW activities, other types of agreements can be used, such as Letter of Intent, etc., while MoUs are more general and long-term agreements. They also highlighted the importance of providing information to focal points on agreements signed by MAP Components and on the status of collaboration. The importance of keeping the Coordinating Unit informed on agreements with partners for the implementation of the PoW was also highlighted.

**d) Host Country Agreements of RACs**

24. The meeting discussed the draft document to be submitted to the 87<sup>th</sup> Bureau meeting, while MAP Components highlighted challenges faced. The Director of SPA/RAC noted the challenges of obtaining visas for travelling, and asked whether this issue can be addressed within the draft text of the minimum common provisions; he also asked if the issue of tax exemption of Host Country contributions could be addressed.

25. The Coordinator asked the MAP Components if they have any comments and suggestions to send them to the Coordinating Unit by 3 October, before the deadline for distribution of 87<sup>th</sup> Bureau meeting documents.

**e) SPA/BD Thematic Focal Points meeting**

26. The Director of SPA/RAC, noted the efforts to identify agenda items of the upcoming SPA/BD Thematic Focal Points meeting that are relevant to/would require the presence of other focal points/experts, while he also referred to the organizational and budgetary challenges. The ECP decided to present to the 87<sup>th</sup> Bureau meeting only these items/issues that are new and integrative and would possibly require the presence of other focal points/experts, as well as of relevant partners.

**f) Preparation of an operational Communication Strategy**

27. The Programme Officer responsible for governance issues, Mr. Ilias Mavroeidis, introduced this issue and noted that a concept note has been prepared by INFO/RAC and a draft template by the Coordinating Unit, in view of the preparation of the operational Communication Strategy. Since the preparation it is at an early stage, a brief update will be presented to the 87<sup>th</sup> Bureau meeting.

28. INFO/RAC highlighted the importance of a clear vision of the Strategy, while noting that one of the pending issues is to examine the need for a SWOT analysis. The meeting also highlighted the importance of the strategy for the whole MAP system and its role in relation to the right information to decision makers.

29. The Coordinator noted that the issue will be discussed also in the Task Force on Information and Communication and that all MAP Components will be involved as the strategy develops.

30. Under this agenda item, the issue of the data policy was also discussed. INFO/RAC referred to the InfoMAP data structure and to the need to clarify the role of each RAC vis-à-vis data management and planning. To this end, INFO/RAC will work with all MAP Components under the guidance of the Coordinating Unit and will prepare a general document with a roadmap to be presented to INFO/RAC focal points. It was stressed that the issue of data policy/access to data is very important and highly sensitive, and that a draft decision on this subject is certainly needed.

	Action Item	Responsibility	Deadline
4.	MAP Components to share relevant parts of Planning and Priorities Tables with respective Thematic Focal Points	MAP Components	On 6-month basis
5.	MAP Components to increase level of commitment/expenditure for Marine Litter MED Project	Relevant MAP Components	Continuous until June 2019
6.	Preparation of matrix of activities on each Ecological Objective for CRF on ICZM	Relevant MAP Components	End of November 2018
7.	Send to the CU ideas on the preparation and substance of COP 21	MAP Components	End of October 2018 (preferably)
8.	Comments on the text of minimum common provisions for HCAs of RACs	MAP Components	3 October 2018
9.	Preparation of a draft COP decision on data policy	INFO/RAC and all MAP Components	Continuous until COP 21

#### V. Agenda item 5: Partnerships and preparation for bilateral meetings, including with GFCM

31. The Coordinator noted that a bilateral meeting with GFCM is planned to take place on 1 October 2018 in Athens, Greece. He thanked MAP Components for the inputs provided to the Implementation Table of the MoU with GFCM and asked participants if there are any other issues to be raised in the bilateral meeting.

32. Plan Bleu/RAC noted that GFCM would be a significant contributor to the 2019 SoED report and to this end a contact point is needed within GFCM to facilitate communication and provision of inputs.

	Action Item	Responsibility	Deadline
10.	GFCM to be asked to provide a contact point for the 2019 SoED preparation	CU	1 October 2018

#### Agenda item 6: Date and Venue of the 37<sup>th</sup> ECP meeting

The next ECP meeting is planned to be held in Geneva, Switzerland, on 9-10 January 2019.

#### Agenda item 7: Any Other Matters

33. No other matters were raised during the meeting.

34. The meeting was closed by the Coordinator at 13:30 on 28 September 2018.

**Annex I**  
**List of participants**

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**Annex II**  
**Agenda**

## **Agenda**

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- Agenda item 2**            Adoption of the Agenda and Organization of Work
- Agenda item 3**            Follow-up to the 35<sup>th</sup> ECP meeting:
- d) Overview of progress in the implementation of the Programme of Work
  - e) Progress on shared position for strengthening RAC structures
  - f) Other follow-up
- Agenda item 4**            Preparations for the 87<sup>th</sup> Bureau meeting:
- a) Updates from MAP Components on activities and projects
  - b) Preparations for COP 21
  - c) Development of MoUs
  - d) Host Country Agreements of RACs
  - e) SPA/BD Thematic Focal Points meeting
  - f) Preparation of an operational Communication Strategy
- Agenda item 5**            Partnerships and preparation for bilateral meetings, including with GFCM
- Agenda item 6**            Date and Venue of the 37<sup>th</sup> ECP meeting
- Agenda item 7**            Any Other Matters