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**Agenda item 4: Implementation of the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (MSSD)**

**Strengthening the Mediterranean Sustainability Dashboard**

**Note by the Secretariat**

The present working document presents activities undertaken, outputs, and perspectives for updating and strengthening the Mediterranean Sustainability Dashboard and the Regional Observatory on the Environment and Development, for consideration and discussion by the 19<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the MCSD.

## **Strengthening the Mediterranean Sustainability Dashboard**

### **Background**

1. At COP 21 (Naples, Italy, 2-5 December 2019), the Contracting Parties “*Welcome[d] the work done, taking note of the updated List of Indicators of the Mediterranean Sustainability Dashboard for monitoring the implementation of the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development 2016–2025, (...) and request[ed] the Secretariat to populate the indicators, using existing sources of information and data, giving priority to those addressing coast-related and sea-related issues; Recognize[d] the living nature of the List of Indicators of the Mediterranean Sustainability Dashboard and the need to keep it under review under the guidance of the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development Steering Committee, and with the technical support of the Plan Bleu Regional Activity Centre, as international work on Sustainable Development Goals indicators progresses; [and] Request[ed] the Secretariat to integrate the List of Sustainable Consumption and Production Indicators, welcomed and taken note of by the Contracting Parties through their Decision IG.23/4 adopted at their 20<sup>th</sup> Meeting (COP 20) (Tirana, Albania, 17-20 December 2017), in the Mediterranean Sustainability Dashboard*”.

2. Several activities of the UNEP/MAP Programme of Work and Budget for 2020-2021 (Decision IG.24/14) contributed to strengthening the Mediterranean Sustainability Dashboard during this biennium:

- Activity 1.4.1.2: Support the preparation of QSR 2023, by capitalizing on the results of SoED 2019, MSSD Dashboard and MedECC assessment report;
- Activity 1.4.2.1: Improve the work on the indicators of the Mediterranean sustainability dashboard in accordance with Decision IG.23/3;
- Activity 1.4.2.2: Exchange of best practices on data and indicators among National Observatories and observation networks (in synergy with the MSSD dashboard, IMAP indicators, SEIS) and update the Regional Observatory.

### **I. What the Mediterranean Sustainability Dashboard tells us about MSSD and SDGs implementation in the region?**

3. Monitoring the MSSD implementation and regularly updating the Mediterranean Sustainability Dashboard provides information on the state of the environment at regional level. Since 2015, the MSSD dashboard has been updated three times (2017, 2019, 2021). The 2021 draft compendium of 28 indicator factsheets is available in Document UNEP/MED WG.493/Inf.3.

4. The Mediterranean basin is one of the 36 “hot spots” of global biodiversity, with an exceptional rate of endemism: 37% of the 7,300 species of plants, vertebrates and invertebrates of the IUCN red list are only present in the Mediterranean. Today this biodiversity is experiencing different pressures, e.g. concentration of populations in coastal cities and on the coast, climate warming 20% higher than the global average, etc., and considerable environmental pressures (pollution, overconsumption of natural resources, land-use changes), compromising economic development, the health and well-being of the Mediterranean communities.

5. As a synthesis of Document UNEP/MED WG.493/Inf.3, the table below provides a key message for each MSSD indicator, using the following colour coding:

	In good progress towards sustainable development	
	Needs to pay specific attention	
	Stable	
MSSD indicators	Key messages – progress towards sustainable development	State
1. Ecological footprint	In 2017 (last updated data), all Mediterranean countries had ecological deficit, meaning that the environment capacity of the region is used up faster than it is renewed.	
2. Human Development Index (HDI)	The HDI has constantly progressed in most Mediterranean countries since 1990. With an average HDI of 0.794 in 2018, the Mediterranean region was above the world value of 0.731.	
3. Annual growth rate of real GDP per capita (SDG Indicator 8.1.1)	In 2018 (last updated data), the EU Mediterranean countries count for 75% of the Mediterranean GDP. In 2018, the average annual income per capita in the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean countries (11,000 USD) is more than 3 times lower than the average income in the EU Mediterranean countries (38,000 USD).	
4. Youth literacy rate	The Mediterranean average of literacy rate of young adults is 98% and above the world average (92%). Since 1990, the literacy rate of young adults has increased significantly in all the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean countries and is satisfactory in most of the Northern Mediterranean countries.	
5. Girl/Boy primary, secondary and tertiary school registration ratio	Girl's education has improved: the parity index for the gross combined enrolment rate is over 0.98 in 14 Mediterranean countries.	
6. Number of ratifications and level of compliance as reported by Barcelona Convention Contracting Parties	Disparities exist between countries regarding the ratification of Protocols. Morocco and the Syrian Arab Republic are the two Contracting Parties which have at least ratified the Barcelona Convention and all its Protocols.	
7. Coverage of protected areas in relation to marine territorial waters (SDG Indicator 14.5.1)	In 2018, there were a strong boost towards achieving the Aichi Target 11 and the SDG 14 through the declaration of the Spanish cetacean corridor. At the regional level 1.126 Marine Protected Areas are declared, among them 257 have a national designation status (MAPAMED 2021).	
8. Proportion of fish stocks within biologically sustainable levels (SDG Indicator 14.4.1)	The percentage of stocks in overexploitation was around 65% in 2008. It culminated to around 88% from 2012 to 2014 and was close to 75% in 2018. Moreover, an increase in biomass levels is observed in 6 out of 18 stocks, and 46% of assessed stocks now have high relative biomass. A corner is finally being turned on overexploitation of fish stocks in the region's fisheries.	
9. Number of protected areas participating in the Green List initiative	The development of the UICN Green List aims to provide an accurate framework for protected area's management. In 2019, 7 protected areas from North Africa (Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia) were proposed for the Green List of Protected Areas.	

10. Official development assistance (ODA) and public expenditure on conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and ecosystems (SDG Indicator 15.a.1)	Mediterranean countries lack sustainable and regular funding for biodiversity and ecosystem protection. In 2018, total ODA for biodiversity received in the Mediterranean region (9 countries) was about 350 million constant 2018 USD, equivalent to 1.1 USD per capita.	
11. Global Food Security Index	Lack of adaptation and mitigation measures for natural disasters and strong external food dependency are still significant challenges for the region. Physical access to food products depends on their availability as well as their affordability. However, physical access is not sufficient to guarantee food security, which also depends on the quality of people's diet.	
12. Level of water stress: freshwater withdrawal as a proportion of available freshwater resources (SDG Indicator 6.4.2)	Water stress is constantly increasing in most of the Mediterranean countries and the range of the water stress is wide: from less than 10% in the Balkans to 100% and more in the Southern Mediterranean countries. In Libya, the water stress is over 800% (8 times the available resources).	
13. Water demand, total and by sector, compared to GDP	Overall, the evolution of water demand is alarming in the Mediterranean due to the scarcity of the resource. Better water demand management, especially for agriculture, is one of the priority actions recommended by the MSSD. This means stabilizing water demand: decrease in the North and a controlled increase in the South and East. Mediterranean water withdrawals will be increasingly affected by climate change in multiple ways. Sustainable management of water resources, already under severe pressure in the region, will be more challenging.	
14. Proportion of population using safely managed drinking water service (SDG Indicator 6.1.1)	In 2017, the proportion of population using safely managed drinking water services was over 90% in 16 Mediterranean countries. However, estimates are available only for these 16 countries and there is no data for most of the Southern Mediterranean countries. In countries where data is available, the population without access to safely managed drinking water services decreased from 37 million in 2000 to 21.9 million in 2017.	
15. Proportion of population using safely managed sanitation services (SDG Indicator 6.2.1)	Wide disparities still exist in 2017. 6 countries have at least 90% of their population using safely managed sanitation services whereas 6 others have less than 50%. Estimates are available for 20 countries in the Mediterranean region, the population without safely managed sanitation services increased from 139 million in 2000 to 156 million in 2017 (the proportion decreased from 33% to 31%).	
16. Proportion of agriculture quality products and Share of the agricultural land area used by organic farming	Organic farming area is unprecedentedly booming (more than x 4 time since 2000, in a majority of countries) but still only covers 3% of the agricultural land in 2018. Italy, Slovenia and Spain are in the first positions in the Mediterranean region for their share of organic farming, and ranked respectively 8 <sup>th</sup> , 17 <sup>th</sup> and 20 <sup>th</sup> worldwide in terms of proportion of agricultural land used for organic farming. France, Spain and Turkey are among the world's top ten countries with the highest increase of organic land in 2018.	

17. Red List Index (SDG Indicator 15.5.1)	The Mediterranean region is the second largest of 34 biodiversity hotspots in the world. The value of the Red List Index in the Mediterranean countries is above the world value 0.732, except for Israel (0.722). The Red List Index is above 0.9 in 10 Mediterranean countries. From 2010 to 2020, the Red List Index is decreasing mainly in 4 countries: Albania, Egypt, France, and Montenegro.	
18. Proportion of urban population living in slums, informal settlements, or inadequate housing (SDG Indicator 11.1.1)	In most countries with available data, the proportion of urban population living in slums is decreasing. National social housing programs allowed reducing the part of the population without access to an adequate dwelling and living in districts without essential services: for instance, this part fell from 28.1% to 5.2% in Egypt between 2000 and 2018 (14.2 million persons concerned). In Turkey, the population living in slums in 2018 is approximately 6.9 million (8.6%), compared to 12 million in 2000 (17.9%). On the opposite, situation in Lebanon, the State of Palestine and the Syrian Arab Republic is getting worse with increasing rate of population living in inadequate housing.	
19. Status of UNESCO world heritage sites	In the world, 53 sites are in danger and 28% (15) of these sites are in Mediterranean countries. All sites located in Libya, the State of Palestine and the Syrian Arab Republic are registered on the List of World Heritage in Danger.	
20. Waste generated and treated by type of waste and treatment type	In 2016, the overall situation is mixed: high waste generation is the North, high food part in the South and a low recycling rate at regional level. The total amount of Municipal Solid Wastes is slightly greater than 183 million tons, i.e. an average of 370 kg per capita per year (about 1 kg/cap/day).	
21. Green House Gas emissions (related to GDP)	CO <sub>2</sub> emissions from fossil fuel continue to rise in most Mediterranean countries. The rise in CO <sub>2</sub> emissions from 2000 to 2016 was higher than the national objectives in most countries. From 2000 to 2016, CO <sub>2</sub> emissions from energy have decreased in Spain, Italy, France, Slovenia, Croatia, Greece, Lebanon, Israel, Libya, Malta, the Syrian Arab Republic, and increased in Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, State of Palestine, Turkey, Albania, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina.	
22. Energy intensity measured in terms of primary energy and GDP (SDG Indicator 7.3.1); Renewable energy share in the total final energy consumption (SDG Indicator 7.2.1)	In the Mediterranean countries, the energy intensity and the share of renewable energy are improving at different speed. In 2017, the average energy intensity of the Mediterranean countries (3.8 MJ per GDP constant 2011 PPP USD) was below the European average (4.39 MJ) and the world average (5.01 MJ). Energy intensity in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Slovenia is over 4 MJ while it is lower than 1.7 MJ in Malta. In Mediterranean countries, the share of renewable energy in total final consumption varies widely: from 0.14 % in Algeria to 38% in Montenegro. In Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro, and Slovenia, the share is between 18% and 38% while it is low in the Southern Mediterranean countries, especially in the oil and gas producing countries.	

23. Domestic material consumption, domestic material consumption per capita, and domestic material consumption per GDP (SDG Indicator 12.2.2)	Despite the diversity of their Domestic Material Consumption, the Mediterranean countries start a relative decoupling of their economic growth. In the period 2000-2017, the Mediterranean economy achieved a “relative decoupling” of economic growth from resource use (fossil fuels, metal ores, industrial and construction minerals, biomass): income or GDP of most Mediterranean countries increased faster than the amount of materials used in the Mediterranean countries.	
24. Number of National Strategies for Sustainable Development adopted or updated [and number of updates since first edition]	Most Mediterranean countries have national green economy of sustainable development strategies. All countries have contributed with their Voluntary National Review of SDGs at the HLPF.	
25. Proportion of bank credit allocated to the private sector – Existence of alternative financing systems using bank credit	The domestic credit allocated to the private sector in % of GDP is varying across time and countries without any obvious trend. In the Mediterranean region, the share of domestic credit allocated to the private sector in 2019 and trends over time varied across countries, from 24% in Egypt to 107% in France and reaches about 114% in Cyprus.	
26. Research and development expenditure as a proportion of GDP (SDG Indicator 9.5.1)	Since the beginning of the 21 <sup>st</sup> century, the amount of national public expenditures on R&D expressed as a % of GDP is increasing in most Mediterranean countries. In average, Mediterranean countries spent 1.3% of their GDP on R&D in 2018 and these expenditures are increasing. The expenditure in EU-27 countries is stabilized around 2.1% of GDP.	
27. Number of countries that have clear mechanisms in place for ensuring public participation and guarantying public access to environmental information	The adoption and implementation for public access to information is heterogeneous in the Mediterranean. Only few data are available for the southern Mediterranean countries. 8 Northern Mediterranean countries have ratified the Aarhus Convention from 2001 to 2007.	
28. Number of countries that have National Strategies/Action Plans on Education for Sustainable Development in place	The Mediterranean Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development (MSESD) and its Action Plan was endorsed in 2014. The overall aim is to encourage the countries to develop and incorporate ESD into formal, non-formal and informal education. In June 2019, 15 Mediterranean countries (68%) have a legal framework on ESD.	

## II. What the Sustainable Development Goals Report tells us about marine and coastal issues in the Mediterranean region

6. The UN Sustainable Development Goals Report 2019<sup>1</sup> provides insights into the progress made so far in the implementation of the 17 Goals that the UN Member States, including the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention, resolved to achieve by 2030. The report noted that “countries are taking concrete actions to protect our planet: marine protected areas have doubled since 2010; countries are working concertedly to address illegal fishing; 186 parties have ratified the Paris Agreement on

<sup>1</sup> <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs>

climate change, and almost all have communicated their first nationally determined contributions.” Notwithstanding that progress, the report contains sobering facts about the challenges that lie ahead: “sea levels are rising; ocean acidification is accelerating; the past four years have been the warmest on record; one million plant and animal species are at risk of extinction; and land degradation continues unabated. The world is moving too slowly in our efforts to end human suffering and create opportunity for all. (...) It is abundantly clear that a much deeper, faster and more ambitious response is needed to unleash the transformation needed to achieve the SDGs by 2030.”

7. The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2019 contains a set of key messages on SDG 14 “Life Below water” that are relevant to the work of the UNEP/MAP – Barcelona Convention system and which converge with several priorities identified by the MCSD, as illustrated in the table below.

Key messages (SDG Report, 2019)	Context in the Mediterranean region (based on SoED, 2020, and 2017 MED QSR)
<p><b>Land-based pollutants and marine debris threaten coastal habitats, but improvements in water quality are achievable.</b></p>	<p><b>Nutrients, heavy metals, persistent organic pollutants (POPs), pesticides, hydrocarbons, and marine litter are the main pollutants of the Mediterranean Sea.</b></p> <p>Plastics account for up to 95 to 100% of total floating marine litter and more than 50% of seabed marine litter. The Regional Plan on Marine Litter Management in the Mediterranean (2013) provides for a set of policy, legal, institutional, regulatory, economic, and technical measures, addressing different aspects of marine litter prevention and management from land- and sea-based sources. A Regional Cooperation Platform on Marine Litter established in 2016 supports the exchange of good practices and information-sharing.</p>
<p><b>The extent of marine protected areas has doubled since 2010, but more must be done to safeguard key biodiversity areas.</b></p>	<p><b>The building of a coherent, representative, and well managed network of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) is a priority in the Mediterranean region, but MPAs critically lack permanent funding for operating costs.</b></p> <p>To date, about 1,200 MPAs and other effective area-based conservation measures cover over 8.9% of the Mediterranean Sea. However, only 10% of marine areas covered by conservation measures duly implement management plans due to the lack of financial resources and technical capacity, as well as legal and policy gaps.</p>
<p><b>The decline in fish stocks appears to have stabilized; now they need to be rebuilt, especially in severely depleted regions.</b></p>	<p><b>78% of Mediterranean and Black Sea fish stocks are fished at biologically unsustainable levels (FAO, 2018).</b></p>

Key messages (SDG Report, 2019)	Context in the Mediterranean region (based on SoED, 2020, and 2017 MED QSR)
States have taken important steps to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing	<b>Illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing remains one of the greatest threats to marine ecosystems.</b> Small-scale fisheries in developing countries are particularly vulnerable. The first international binding agreement developed expressly to combat IUU fishing, the Agreement on Port State Measures, entered into force in June 2016. As of March 2019, 59 States – five of which are Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention –, and the European Union were Parties to it.
Most countries have frameworks to address the needs of small-scale fisheries; the next critical stage is their implementation.	<b>Fisheries play an important socio-economic role across the Mediterranean region, in terms of food production</b> (landings representing 850,000 tons in 2016), <b>revenue</b> (approx. 2.44 billion USD annually) <b>and employment</b> (>227,000 direct jobs onboard fishing vessels, plus indirect job opportunities for fish processing). The Regional Plan of Action for Small-Scale Fisheries in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea was adopted in 2018 under the auspices of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (FAO-GFCM).
Increasing acidification is threatening marine life and hampering the ocean's role in moderating climate change	<b>The Mediterranean Sea is subject to ocean acidification at rates in line with global averages.</b> The sea is absorbing CO <sub>2</sub> , which causes ocean acidification at an unprecedented rate of - 0.018 to - 0.028 pH units per decade, with significant expected consequences on calcifying organisms, impacting marine biodiversity and aquaculture.

### III. Main achievements in 2020–2021

#### *Improving the Mediterranean Sustainability Dashboard*

8. As per Decision IG.24/3, in view of Plan Bleu Focal Points Meeting and the 19<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the MCSD, Plan Bleu delivered an updated version of the Mediterranean Sustainability Dashboard<sup>2</sup> (see Document UNEP/MED WG.493/Inf.3), including calculated indicators and new factsheets.

9. The dashboard also includes SCP Indicators following the update undertaken by SCP/RAC and based on the SCP Indicators welcomed and taken note of by COP 20. The integration of SCP Indicators strengthens the dashboard on green, blue and circular economy issues (MSSD Objective 5).

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.obs.planbleu.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/SMDD\\_Dashboard\\_Version\\_Mars\\_2021.pdf](https://www.obs.planbleu.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/SMDD_Dashboard_Version_Mars_2021.pdf)



10. Following recommendations from the MCSDD Steering Committee held in December 2020, Plan Bleu assessed options about the methodology to follow, and related expertise to mobilize, identify or define legal indicators on environmental regulations to better cover MSSD Objective 6 “Governance”, SDG 14 “Life Below water” and SDG 17 “Partnerships for the goals”. The objective is to initiate methodological work in pilot sites during this biennium, so that possible adjustments of the Mediterranean Sustainability Dashboard might be proposed for the future to consider these new indicators. Plan Bleu postponed the development of indicators to monitor the impacts of the COVID-19 crisis in the Mediterranean, especially on the relationship between the state of the environment and human and ecosystems health, as meaningful and certified data might not be yet available.

#### ***Preparation of inputs for the MED QSR 2023***

11. With the support of a GIS specialist, Plan Bleu/RAC designed a series of nine thematic maps to illustrate the relationships between the state of the environment and human activities<sup>3</sup>. The maps cover the following topics:

- Impacts of leisure boating on coastal habitats (in particular *Posidonia oceanica*)
- Location of discharge points / outlets at sea (wastewater treatment plants, industries, etc.) and fishing areas
- Impact of prospecting and offshore drilling of fossil products on areas of biological interest at sea
- Impact of offshore renewable energies (wind power) on migration corridors (birds).
- Quality of surface water and coastal ecosystems and large coastal towns.

#### ***New design for the Regional Observatory website***

12. A new design for the Mediterranean Observatory on Environment and Sustainable Development website<sup>4</sup> has been launched in January 2021, in English and French. The revamped website allows to access specific webpages dedicated to the monitoring of the implementation of the MSSD and the SCP Regional Action Plan, as well as specific publications, thematic maps, and the new indicators factsheets.

13. Advanced functionalities to share environmental information are currently provided by UNEP GRID-Geneva in the context of the World Environment Situation Room<sup>5</sup> (WESR). Plan Bleu is developing a pilot project to ensure the migration of the Mediterranean Sustainability Dashboard and associated data managed by Plan Bleu, as well as dataset from previous projects (e.g. MedICIP) to the

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.obs.planbleu.org/en/maps/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.obs.planbleu.org/en>

<sup>5</sup> The development of the WESR is coordinated by UNEP GRID-Geneva, as the future UNEP data and knowledge online platform. It will enable users to visualize, query, access, link and download data, information and knowledge products regarding the world environment situation in near real-time. MapX (\*) is the WESR’s map component. It is an open geospatial platform that aims at managing, analyzing and visualizing data on natural resources and the environment, having the capacity to use the most up-to-date web tools in terms of cartographic viewer, display of environmental information, download of data, and interactive drafting and editing of reports. It has been developed in partnership with UNEP since 2015 using open-source technologies compatible with international geospatial standards (e.g. OGC, ISO) and focuses on specific needs of stakeholders through various projects and locations. (\*) MapX is the platform hosting data for the various WESR themes: climate, risks, biodiversity, etc. To date, interactive services are developing using free and open-source software and technics. MapX, is an open source and neutral online platform hosted by the UNEP Science Division, developed by UNEP/GRID-Geneva, under the umbrella of the WESR. See: <https://wesi.unep.org/>

MapX environment of WESR and to establish connections with external databases. Further developments are under consideration until December 2021 in the context of this pilot project.

14. The pilot project developed by Plan Bleu/RAC to improve the regional observatory aims at improving data sharing, based on a common UNEP-hosted platform for easier aggregation and analysis in support of regional studies to illustrate the trends of the interactions between environment and development, and increased access to data and environmental information by all stakeholders in line with the MSSD implementation and monitoring.

#### *Strengthening regional observation networks*

15. Plan Bleu prepared a ‘state of play’ about national capacities regarding observatories and environmental monitoring programs. Challenges related to the collection and processing of data, as well as their sharing within the existing observation systems at Mediterranean and national levels have been highlighted. The technical report<sup>6</sup> provides with 22 factsheets (one per Contracting Party) and has been submitted for review by Plan Bleu Focal Points, with feedback received from eight countries. A synthesis<sup>7</sup> is also available.

16. Plan Bleu established preliminary contacts with the National Centres of Scientific Research (CNRS) of France and Lebanon and the French Institute of Research for Development (IRD) regarding the bilateral initiative O’LiFE, a Lebanese-French Observatory on the Environment focusing on the risk and vulnerability of Mediterranean societies and ecosystems. O’LiFE and Plan Bleu are currently drafting a concept note to highlight possible activities and room for collaboration.

17. Plan Bleu established relationships between the MED 2050 foresight study and the Mediterranean Sustainability Dashboard, making links between the 28 indicator factsheets and the 38 MED 2050 sheets on variables. The European Environmental Agency (EEA) proposed to share its experience and capacity, based on its on-going work on the EU SDG monitoring report – 2021 indicator set.

#### **IV. Perspectives for the Mediterranean Sustainability Dashboard – Activities for 2022-2023: Proposals**

18. Within the UNEP/MAP – Barcelona Convention system, Plan Bleu has played a key role in supporting Mediterranean countries in setting up national observatories on the environment and development. In view of initiating a Mediterranean network of regional and national observatories and monitoring centres, as well as of collecting and integrating national data, information and indicators, Plan Bleu plans to strengthen the Mediterranean Sustainability Dashboard towards a reliable and updated Regional Observatory on the Environment and Development. This will also contribute to calculating a set of indicators and to supporting regional assessment studies such as state of the environment and development reports, Mediterranean Quality Status Reports (QSR), and foresight studies, as well as socio-economic analysis and regional reports on climate change.

19. Such a regional observatory and a network of partners need coordination to maintain and update the database content, communicate around and trigger interest, as well as to compare and integrate various data which are elaborated through different methodologies. The regional observatory will

<sup>6</sup> <https://planbleu.org/en/publications/technical-report-mapping-of-mediterranean-observatories-and-monitoring-programmes-for-the-environment-and-for-marine-and-coastal-activities/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://planbleu.org/en/publications/summary-lithocean-technical-report/>

therefore allow to share and source the data (with mention for official national data), qualifying their validity and describing the associated meta-data, so that data users know what they get without ambiguity. This would also strengthen countries' capacities in terms of environmental reporting.

20. The revamped observatory would benefit from up-to-date technologies, in terms of cartography and dynamic representations of the environmental information, as well as remote access to data, thus better meeting Contracting Parties' needs to monitor progress towards achieving the MSSD and SDGs.

21. During the biennium 2022-2023, Plan Bleu proposes to pursue its mission of informing the MSSD implementation through the Mediterranean Sustainability Dashboard, while making full use of the opportunities offered by the collaboration with UNEP/GRID-Geneva and of the functionalities WESR offers (cartographic viewer, display of environmental information, download of data and interactive drafting and editing of report) to further support Contracting Parties and enrich the Observatory.

22. The migration of the MSSD indicators to MapX would (1) allow an efficient management and follow-up of the MSSD indicators; (2) ensure a high standard for environmental information sharing; (3) provide a complementary substantive coverage with easy access to additional data from other providers to Plan Bleu's regional observatory.

23. Under the UNEP/MAP Medium Term Strategy (MTS) 2022-2027, Programme 6 "Together for a shared vision of the Mediterranean Sea and coast", Outcome 6.1 "Environment and Development Observation and IMAP monitoring provide updated and quality assured data in support of decision-making by Contracting Parties and assessment of GES"; Activity 1 "Strengthen the MSSD monitoring framework and a regional observatory on the environment and development", Plan Bleu proposes two complementary activities:

- Activity 1: Deliverable 1 *Framework agreement with UNEP Science Division and/or UNEP/GRID-Geneva signed*; Deliverable 2 *MAP Environment & Development observatory worked out, based on up-to date tools and technology on an open-access data-sharing platform*. Those two outputs aim at establishing a long-term collaboration between UNEP/MAP (with a clear role for Plan Bleu) and UNEP/GRID-Geneva for the hosting of the Mediterranean Sustainability Dashboard and the Regional Observatory's data on the WESR platform, their updating and their progressive enrichment under the guidance of the MCSDD. Deliverable 3 *4 agreements with national or regional partners to give access to their data through the shared platform*, aiming at building the first agreements to build the observatory in network, will best serve the needs of the Contracting Parties.
- Activity 2: *Support and strengthen existing national and subnational observation networks and capacities*. In continuity of the first training workshop scheduled in fall 2021, Plan Bleu proposes to organize sub-regional workshops to build national and local observation capacities and benefit from feedback and experience of local and national observatories for the further enrichment of the observatory in network. On a volunteer basis from Contracting Parties and their institutions, specific technical and methodological assistance could be brought at national or local level. The long-term objective would be to create a coordinated Observation and Information System at regional level – by strengthening networks between National Environment Agencies, National Statistic Institutes, National Observatories, etc.

## **V. Issues for consideration by the 19<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the MCSD**

24. The 19<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the MCSD is invited to review and comment the work undertaken by Plan Bleu and the perspectives (proposals) for strengthening the Mediterranean Sustainability Dashboard and the Regional Observatory on the Environment and Development, in view of conclusions and recommendations to be transmitted to the UNEP/MAP Focal Points and COP 22.

25. The comments and advice from the MCSD are expected in particular on the Plan Bleu's proposal to act as a backbone of activities in (1) animating a network of regional and national monitoring centres and observation systems (e.g. strengthening networks of National Environment Agencies/Observatories, National Statistic Institutes) and (2) providing Contracting Parties with sustainable technical and methodological assistance to strengthen national capacities on observation and information system on the environment and sustainable development. To do so a strong regional coordination mechanism associated with structural funding (not just "push and go" via projects), would be necessary. The commitment of national contact/focal points from relevant institutions will be another prerequisite.

26. There is a constant need to strengthen inter-institutional cooperation between UN agencies but also with Ministries and national agencies in view of harmonizing data, sharing knowledge and exchanging practices. More cooperation with and permanent support to countries through robust technical and methodological assistance is necessary to measure progress towards sustainable development and to provide the requested data and information in the framework of reporting for international conventions. This will also support the collective preparation of socio-economic and assessment studies, interconnecting the various work streams at regional and national levels on SDGs, the MSSD and National Strategies for Sustainable Development (NSSD).

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