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Agenda item 7: Integrating Sustainability Considerations into the UNEP/MAP – Barcelona Convention System: draft Medium-Term Strategy 2022-2027, draft Programme of Work 2022-2023, Inputs for COP 22 Ministerial Declaration

Integrating Sustainability Considerations into the UNEP/MAP – Barcelona Convention System

Note by the Secretariat

The present document aims at supporting the MCSD in producing opinions on the overall UNEP/MAP Programme of Work (PoW), with the aim of integrating sustainability considerations into the UNEP/MAP – Barcelona Convention system as a whole. It includes the following sections:

- I. A brief analysis of the sustainability dimension of the draft UNEP/MAP Medium-Term Strategy (MTS) 2022-2027;
- II. An analysis of the sustainability dimension of the draft PoW for 2022-2023; and,
- III. A proposal for undertaking a consultation for the preparation of the draft Ministerial Declaration of the 22nd Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention (COP 22) (Antalya, Turkey, December 2021). Based on the provisional agenda of the 19th Meeting of the MCSD Meeting and its outcome, the MCSD is expected to bring issues of relevance to the attention of COP 22 and its Ministerial Session and Declaration (e.g. resilient and inclusive recovery from the COVID-19 health and socio-economic crisis through greater enforcement and acceleration of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as a blueprint for sustainability in the Mediterranean region), including the way forward in terms of possible commitments and outreach.

Integrating Sustainability Considerations into the UNEP/MAP – Barcelona Convention System

I. Sustainability dimension of the draft UNEP/MAP Medium-Term Strategy (MTS) 2022-2027

Mandate

1. At their 21st Meeting (Naples, Italy, 2-5 December 2019), through Decision IG.24/2 on “Governance”, the Contracting Parties “*Approve[d]* the Roadmap for the Evaluation of the 2016-2021 Medium-Term Strategy and the preparation of the 2022-2027 Medium-Term Strategy, as set out in Annex V to the present Decision;” and “*Request[ed]* the Secretariat to prepare the UNEP/MAP 2022-2027 Medium-Term Strategy in close cooperation with MAP components and with the full involvement of the Contracting Parties, under the guidance of the Bureau and through a dedicated steering committee that will be composed by the Bureau complemented by a limited group of interested Contracting Parties (3 additional persons, one nominated by each sub-group, to ensure a balanced geographical representation), and to submit a first draft to an open ended working group, for final submission to the Contracting Parties at their 22nd Meeting (COP 22)”.

Strong alignment with the 2030 Agenda and SDGs in the scope of UNEP/MAP – Barcelona Convention’s mandate

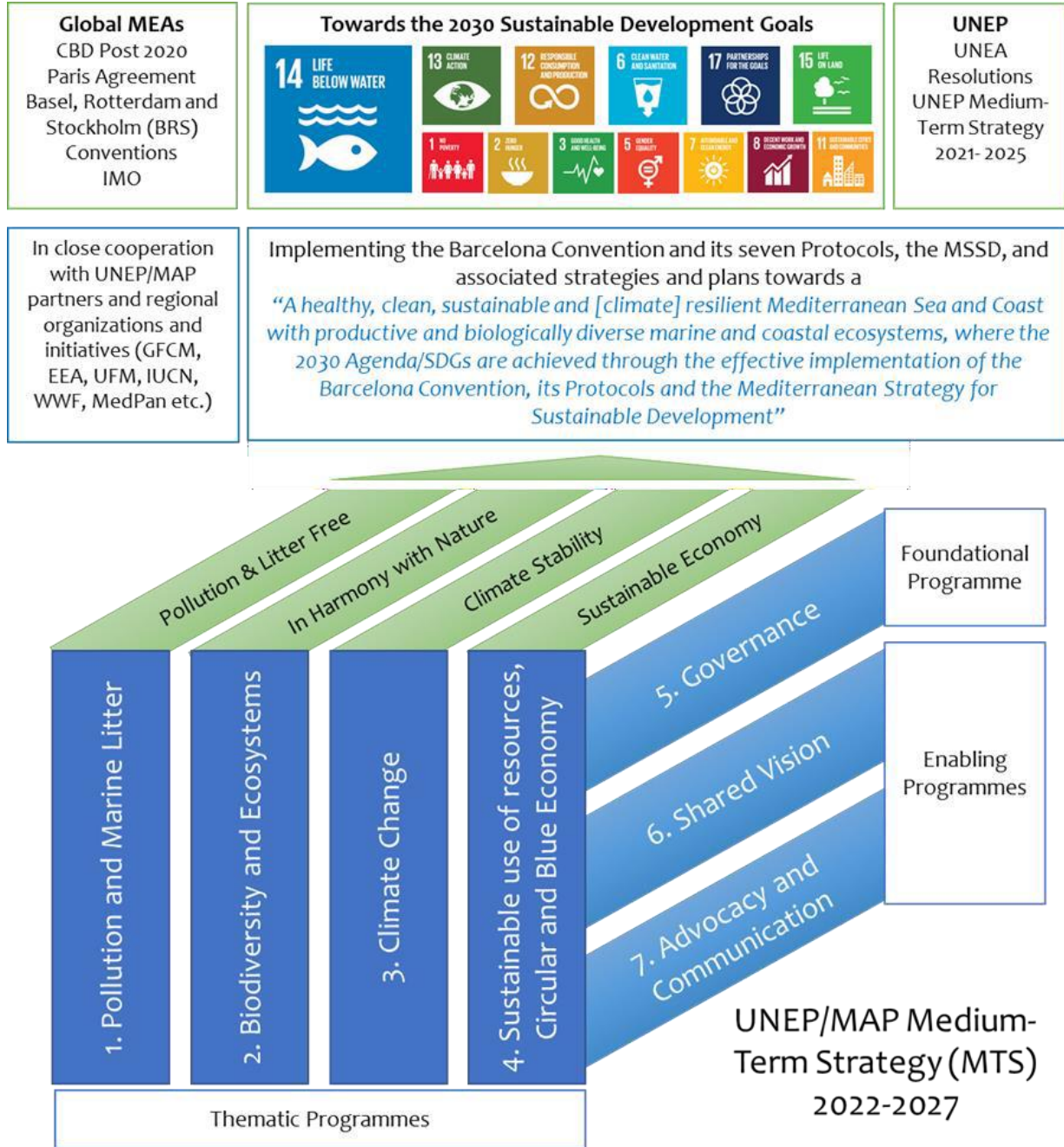
2. The MTS 2022-2027 reflects the broad political impetus expressed by the Naples Ministerial Declaration adopted at COP 21, which showcased strong political commitment for specific action in achieving Good Environmental Status (GES) and shoring up sustainable development in the Mediterranean region. The implementation of the MTS aims at substantively progressing in the implementation of the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols by the Contracting Parties, strengthening enforcement and compliance with their provisions and implementation of the ecosystem approach for achieving and maintaining GES and progressing in achieving SDGs in the Mediterranean. Draft MTS 2022-2027 also highlights the need for adequate resources and outreach, involving the Contracting Parties in collaboration with national, regional and global stakeholders.

3. The MTS 2022-2027 aims at contributing to the Decade of Action for the SDGs, which calls for accelerating sustainable solutions from the global to the regional, national and local levels. The MTS 2022-2027 will contribute to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the achievements of SDGs which are relevant to the protection of the marine and coastal environment and the sustainable development of the Mediterranean region.

4. The MTS 2022-2027 will also contribute to global processes, i.e. Post-2020 Biodiversity Framework, Paris Agreement on Climate Change, UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development, UN Environmental Assembly (UNEA) resolutions, and Multilateral Environmental Agreements of relevance to the Mediterranean region.

5. The design of the MTS 2022-2027 integrates key recommendations from the evaluation of the MTS 2016-2021, the mid-term evaluations of the Mediterranean Strategy on Sustainable Development (MSSD) 2016-2025 and of the Regional Action Plan on Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP), as well as key findings from the 2017 Mediterranean Quality Status Report (QSR), the 2020 report on the State of the Environment and Development (SoED), and the First Mediterranean Assessment Report (MAR1) prepared by the network of Mediterranean Experts on Climate and environmental Change (MedECC).

6. The MTS has a strong sustainability dimension at all levels: Vision, Goals, Objectives, Programmes, and Indicators. The scheme below provides an overview of the MTS, which is still a draft and will be revised to be aligned with the final text of the MTS.



7. **Vision:** The MTS vision, as included in the scheme above and which is still under discussion, will take into account the visions of the following UNEP/MAP instruments and policies: MTS 2016-2021, MSSD, SCP Regional Action Plan, and Ecosystem Approach Roadmap. It will also reflect the vision of UNEP 2050, of the CBD Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework vision (i.e. Living in harmony with nature), and of the EU Green Deal.

Goals and Objectives

8. The MTS 2022-2027 aims at contributing to the long-term goals and objectives of the Barcelona Convention including Article 4, General Obligations: “(1)... *to prevent, abate, combat and to the fullest possible extent eliminate pollution of the Mediterranean Sea Area and to protect and enhance the marine environment in that Area so as to contribute towards its sustainable development*” and “(2)... *to pursue the protection of the marine environment and the natural resources of the Mediterranean Sea Area as an integral part of the development process, meeting the needs of present and future generations in an equitable manner*”.
9. The MTS 2022-2027 Overall Objectives are:
 - To drive transformational change in enhancing the impact of the “delivery as one” of the UNEP/MAP – Barcelona Convention system, and its contribution to the region;
 - To ensure that the GES of the Mediterranean Sea and coast, the relevant SDGs and their targets, and the post-2020 global biodiversity goals and targets are achieved, through concrete actions to effectively manage and reduce threats and enhance marine and coastal resources;
 - To contribute to strengthening Mediterranean solidarity and peoples’ prosperity; and,
 - To contribute to the Building Back Better approach of the “UN framework for the immediate socio-economic response to COVID-19” and towards a “green renaissance” in the Mediterranean by supporting new and sustainable business models, enabling a just and green transition to a nature-based solutions and circular economy.
10. Compared to the current MTS 2016-2021 the following innovative elements can be highlighted:
 - A more up-to-date business model for the UNEP/MAP – Barcelona Convention system aligned with the global agenda processes, and based on Mediterranean specificities, aiming to contribute to a transformational change;
 - Provide for MSSD update, as a strong sustainability element towards a vision beyond 2030 for the UNEP/MAP – Barcelona Convention system and the region;
 - An innovative programme to promote Blue and Green Economy, using circular economy approaches;
 - An action-oriented programme to promote advocacy, education and awareness, as well as a stronger Science-Policy Interface (SPI)
 - Expansion of collaboration with stakeholders, including the youth and the private sector;
 - Indicators interlinked with relevant SDG targets and indicators; and,
 - Build Back Better approach fully streamlined throughout the entire MTS strategic vision and programmes.

II. Information and discussion on the draft UNEP/MAP Programme of Work for 2022-2023

11. The Programme of Work (PoW) for 2022-2023 is the first biennial PoW of the forthcoming MTS implementation. Following a forward-looking approach for the effective initiation of the MTS 2022-2027, due consideration is given to the anticipated priorities of the latter and its links with SDGs and global environmental processes, as well as to emerging issues of relevance to the UNEP/MAP mandate. Potential impacts and the timing required to deliver the MTS 2022-2027 outcomes are considered in the identification of main activities and deliverables of the draft PoW 2022-2023.

12. The draft PoW 2022-2023 is built on result-based management (RBM) approaches, with the view to strengthening the shift of focus away from inputs and minor activities, and placing it on clearly defined outcomes to be achieved through the joint efforts of all concerned actors, including the Contracting Parties and UNEP/MAP Partners. This is in line with previous efforts towards a simplified and more strategic and result based PoW by further clustering activities.

13. An innovative element taken into account while developing the main elements of the draft PoW 2022-2023 is related to integration through the identification of flagship activities across all programmes and executing UNEP/MAP Components, to be delivered in a coordinated and integrated manner for enhancing the impact of the Secretariat's work.

14. The draft PoW 2022-2023 is built around 27 Outcomes to be delivered through the implementation of 116 main activities, distributed over the seven MTS Programmes.

Thematic Programme 1: Towards a Pollution and Litter Free Mediterranean Sea and Coast Embracing Circular Economy

15. In line with the MSSD Objective 1 (Sea and Coast) and SDG 14 "Life below water", the main objective of the draft PoW 2022-2023 for this Programme is to support integrated responses for prevention and reduction of pollution and marine litter in the framework of the Regional and National Plans under the Land-Based Sources (LBS) Protocol, the Mediterranean Strategy for the Prevention, Preparedness, and Response to Marine Pollution from Ships (2022-2031), the Mediterranean Offshore Plan, and the Regional Action Plan on Sustainable Consumption and Production.

16. A first set of activities is aligned with the MSSD Strategic Direction 1.1 on implementation of and compliance with the Protocols of the Barcelona Convention. The protection of the Mediterranean Sea against pollution from LBS is addressed through outcomes and activities aiming at: Boosting the implementation of the Regional Plan on Marine Litter, with a particular focus on plastics; Supporting the implementation of Regional Plans addressing priority pollutants and sectors; Developing new regional plans for the management of pollutants' releases from agriculture, aquaculture and storm water; Updating guidelines and strengthening national capacities for the implementation of the Dumping Protocol; Undertaking pilot actions to prevent, eliminate and dispose in an environmentally sound manner obsolete chemicals; Strengthening the capacity of individual coastal states to respond efficiently to marine pollution incidents; Improving pollution event follow-up and enhancing the level of enforcement and the prosecution of discharge offenders.

17. This is complemented by outcomes and activities which aim at promoting a transformational change, embracing SCP and circular economy approaches, which are at the core of the MSSD Objective 5 on Transition towards a green and blue economy: Supporting public and private actors in preventing marine litter and toxic chemicals; Supporting the creation and development of circular economy businesses in key sectors of activity which are main sources of pollution.

18. Another set of activities aims at furthering the implementation of the Road Map related to the possible designation of the Mediterranean Sea, as a whole, as an Emission Control Area for Sulphur Oxides pursuant to MARPOL Annex VI (Med SO_x ECA) and at examining the possibility of developing a similar process for Nitrogen Oxides.

19. To further support the UNEP/MAP Strategic Response to COVID-19 in the Mediterranean, innovative activities have been designed to develop the One Health Approach in relation to pollution links with human health.

Thematic Programme 2: Towards Healthy Mediterranean Ecosystems and Enhanced Biodiversity

20. This Programme is in line with SDG 14 on Ocean and SDG 15 on Biodiversity. It also echoes the MSSD Objective 2 and its Strategic Directions on resource management and protection of biological diversity, in particular Strategic Directions 2.1 on conservation of natural resources and ecosystems and 2.3 on marine and coastal protected areas. However, the proposed activities under this Programme meet only indirectly the other Strategic Directions of the MSSD Objective 2 on food production, food security, and sustainable forms of rural development.

21. The main objective of the draft PoW 2022-2023 for this Programme is to support the Contracting Parties in their efforts towards improving ecosystem resilience through restoration of those with best regeneration potential, to assist them in establishing, expanding and efficiently managing a comprehensive, coherent and effective Mediterranean network of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) and Other Effective area-based Conservation Measures (OECMs), improving the status of conservation of Mediterranean endangered and threatened species and key habitats, and minimizing non-indigenous species introductions and controlling their introduction pathways, in accordance with the post 2020 SAP BIO and Key Species and Habitats Action Plans.

22. Innovative aspects of proposed activities are related to the identification, capitalization and replication of successful practices, as a contribution to the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration in the Mediterranean.

23. Another set of outcomes and activities is related to the policy and regulation framework: Updating and implementing regional action plans on species and habitats and supporting elaboration of sub-regional and national ones; Improving measures to mitigate the impact and interaction with coastal and marine human activities and enhancing their adoption by the Contracting Parties; Guiding enforcement activities through technical tools, standards, criteria, and guidelines.

24. Due consideration is also given to non-indigenous species: Implementing targeted priority measures related to the updated Mediterranean Strategy on Ships' Ballast Water Management and Action Plan to minimize the transfer of invasive aquatic species.

Thematic Programme 3: Towards a Climate Resilient Mediterranean

25. This Programme is linked with the SDG 13 on Climate Action and MSSD Objective 4 for Addressing climate change as a priority issue for the Mediterranean. The main objective of the draft PoW 2022-2023 for this Programme is to support Contracting Parties in identifying and implementing nature-based, technical solutions to prevent or reduce the impact of climate change on coastal and marine ecosystems and increase resilience to climatic change and variability, as well as in implementing climate change mitigation efforts, including by reducing GHG emissions and taking advantage of the positive

nexus between SCP and action-led societal transformation.

26. Proposed outcomes and activities on Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) are also relevant to the MSSD Objective 3 on Planning and managing sustainable Mediterranean cities in view of reaching the following outcomes: Supporting the elaboration of national ICZM plans and strategies aiming at increasing resilience to climatic variability and change, and enhancing water security of coastal populations; Mainstreaming climate change adaptation into local ICZM plans; Integrating sustainable management policies and practices in priority coastal aquifers.

27. Due consideration is given to the development of nature-based solutions – which are the interface between MSSD Objectives 4 on Climate change and 2 on Biodiversity and resource management: Building a region-wide common understanding of and promoting nature-based solutions for climate change adaptation in the Mediterranean; Undertaking a state of play on existing practices and measures for biodiversity restoration linked with climate action, including scientific evaluation, sharing of best practices and pilot/demonstration actions implementation.

28. Proposed activities support the identification and implementation of innovative solutions to reduce GHG emissions from ships in selected ports, including energy efficiency and decarbonization.

29. Echoing the MSSD Flagship Initiative on the Mediterranean science-policy interface on climate and environmental change (MedECC), knowledge-oriented outcomes and activities aim at developing science-based policy recommendations to address thematic impacts of climate change.

Thematic Programme 4: Towards the Sustainable Use of Coastal and Marine Resources Including Circular and Blue Economy

30. This Programme is linked with the SDG 12 “Responsible consumption and production” and MSSD Objective 5 on Transition towards a green and blue economy. The main objective of the draft PoW 2022-2023 for this Programme is to assist Contracting Parties in achieving the sustainability of coastal and marine resources through the synergetic implementation of planning and management approaches and integrating circular economy measures and solutions in key blue economy sectors.

31. The draft PoW 2022-2023 under this programme will contribute to create green and decent jobs for all (MSSD Strategic Direction 5.1), to promote SCP patterns (Strategic Direction 5.3), to encourage environmental friendly and social innovation (Strategic Direction 5.4), to ensure a green and more inclusive market (Strategic Direction 5.6), while promoting the integration of sustainability principles into decision-making on public and private investment (Strategic Direction 5.5) and contributing to the review of definitions of development, progress, and well-being (Strategic Direction 5.2) through the following outcomes: Promoting integration of circular economy into key blue economy sectors, including through state of play analyses, recommendations, pilot actions and sustainable entrepreneurship support; Supporting development of national policies and pilot actions on SCP and circular businesses; Supporting effective and systemic use of economic instruments for nature conservation and sustainable development; Offering greening schemes for local businesses in coastal wetland areas; and Promoting sustainable marine renewable energies in the Mediterranean, in conformity with the UNEP/MAP Barcelona Convention framework.

32. Another set of outcomes and activities are relevant to the MSSD Objective 1 (Sea and Coast) and Objective 3 (Sustainable Cities): Implementing the ICZM Protocol and its Common Regional Framework, focusing on the preparation or updating National ICZM Strategies and coastal plans for selected areas; Implementing the Mediterranean Offshore Action Plan and maintaining its governance,

cooperation and partnership framework sustainable and operational; Supporting on-the-ground activities in selected coastal areas through Coastal Area Management Projects (CAMP) including transboundary CAMP.

33. A draft MTS's outcome is relevant to the MSSD Objective 2 on resource management, food security, and sustainable rural development: Applying the water-energy-food-ecosystems nexus approach to natural resources management.

Foundational Programme 5: Governance

34. This Programme is mainly linked with MSSD Objectives 1 (Sea and Coast) and 6 (Governance). The main objective of the draft PoW 2022-2023 for this Programme is to support the ratification process and achieve that all Protocols enter into force and to ensure the effective implementation by the Contracting Parties of the Barcelona Convention, its Protocols, UNEP/MAP Strategies and regional policies and measures and relevant COP Decisions (as reflected in MSSD Strategic Direction 1.1), while supporting policy coherence and complementarity among relevant work at global, regional and national levels (Strategic Direction 6.3).

35. This Programme also aims at enhancing partnerships¹ and multi-stakeholder engagement, including with the private sector, and science-policy interface (Strategic Direction 6.2), and at promoting gender mainstreaming into UNEP/MAP operations and activities, which corresponds to a cross-cutting sustainable development goals related to social issues (SDG 5: Gender equality).

36. Two specific draft MTS's outcomes are of interest for the work of the MCSD and its Steering Committee: Developing legal indicators – which would complement the Mediterranean Sustainability Dashboard, as recommended by the MCSD Steering Committee –; and, Implementing the MSSD 2016-2025, focusing on the work to further strengthen and sustain the Simplified Peer Review Mechanism (SIMPEER).

37. Finally, the following draft MTS's outcome echoes the MSSD Strategic Direction 7.3 on strengthening capacity for financing the MSSD: Strengthening capacities for mobilizing external resources to implement PoW and MTS and executing efficiently externally funded projects.

Enabling Programme 6: Together towards a Shared Knowledge and Foresight of the Mediterranean Sea and Coast

38. Expected outcomes under this Programme are of interest for the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the MSSD, echoing Decision IG.24/3 adopted at COP 21 and MSSD Strategic Direction 7.2 on regional processes for the MSSD implementation and monitoring, as well as for undertaking assessment studies, which are linked with the work of the MCSD and included in Decision IG.24/4, namely: Updating the Mediterranean Sustainability Dashboard and SCP indicators database; Strengthening work of regional, national and sub-national observatories on environment and development; Preparing the MED 2050 foresight exercise (in parallel of a transboundary diagnostic analysis for the Mediterranean and the 2023 Mediterranean Quality Status Report) to support the preparation of the future MSSD.

¹ Strengthening partnerships with major regional and global actors and scientific and academic networks/institutions; Enhancing participation and engagement of the civil society, as well as of the private sector.

39. The main objective of the draft PoW 2022-2023 for this Programme is to provide, through the Environment and Development Observation and IMAP, updated and quality assured data in support of decision-making by Contracting Parties. Proposed activities aim at supporting the preparation of foresight exercises and other regional assessments, as well as the development of monitoring and assessment tools and infrastructure, taking also into account COVID-19 impacts in the framework of the One Health approach. That includes the following outcomes: Delivering a data-based 2023 MED QSR and initiate the work for 2029 MED QSR.

Enabling Programme 7: For Informed and Consistent Advocacy, Awareness, Education and Communication

40. Echoing draft conclusions of the MSSD mid-term evaluation which pledge for more accurate advocacy, awareness, education and communication activities, this enabling programme is fully aligned with the MSSD approach on stakeholders' engagement: the MSSD implementation is a collective process in which the involvement of all stakeholders and partners is critical, from national and local governments to civil society, academia, private sector, and regional institutions. This is also in line with SDG 17 "Partnerships for the Goals".

41. The main objective of the draft PoW 2022-2023 for this Programme is to properly inform stakeholders and policymakers about the state of the Mediterranean Sea and coast and to make them aware of the environmental priority issues, and to disseminate knowledge and raise general public awareness and outreach, including through citizen science and digital campaigns.

42. This programme also aims at contributing to a digital transformation using new technologies to improve networking and UNEP/MAP – Barcelona Convention system's visibility. That includes *inter alia* the following outcomes: Updating and implementing the UNEP/MAP Communication Strategy and the Operational Communication Strategy; Publishing and disseminating the 2023 MED QSR, results from the MED 2050 Foresight, and other environmental assessment products; Producing and disseminating communication material and organizing outreach events; Celebrating dedicated recognized Days of importance to the Mediterranean (i.e. Mediterranean Coast Day, SPAMI Day, etc.); Developing and promoting a Digital Transformation Strategy for the UNEP/MAP – Barcelona Convention system; Enhancing UNEP/MAP internal and external communication and staff digital capacity; Strengthening networking among key stakeholders; Developing and implementing a concrete communication and visibility plan towards COP 23.

43. The following proposed outcomes include activities directly relevant to the MSSD:

- Upgrading and implementing a central UNEP/MAP knowledge management platform integrating information and knowledge from the entire UNEP/MAP system: *this is in line with the MSSD Strategic Direction 6.5 on Enhancing regional capabilities for information management and the MSSD Flagship Initiative 6.5.5 on Establishing a publicly accessible Mediterranean integrated information system to collate and transparently display information on the state of the environment;*
- Delivering environmental awards and certificates, i.e. WeMed Mediterranean Sustainability Award and Sustainable Cities Award (*which are successfully launched as MSSD Flagship Initiatives*) to enhance public awareness and outreach;
- Preparing and implementing education and awareness programmes on key issues (*echoing MSSD Strategic Direction 6.4 Promote education and research for sustainable development, of which the Mediterranean Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development is an integral part*).

III. Consultation on the preparation of the Draft Ministerial Declaration of COP 22

44. The provisional agenda of the 19th Meeting of the MCSD covers all the missions of the Commission's mandate, as set out in Decision IG.22/17 adopted at COP 19 in February 2016, providing a forum for debate and advocacy on multilateral action and regional solidarity for a post-COVID green renaissance that puts the region back on track to achieving the SDGs, within the UNEP/MAP – Barcelona Convention system, addressing environmental and developmental challenges affecting the basin.

45. The SoED and MedECC MAR1 reports brought new evidence of the hefty toll that the global triple crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution is taking on Mediterranean ecosystems. Rising inequality, biodiversity loss, growing impact of climate change and unrelenting pressure on ecosystems from economic sectors can lead to irreversible environmental damage. Unless urgent and resolute action is taken to halt current trends, environmental degradation could have serious consequences for human health and livelihoods.

46. Those publications during a global pandemic of zoonotic origin provided a “wake-up call” in favor of the one-health approach to bolster the region's resilience. This is a renewed call for “Investing in environmental sustainability to achieve social and economic development” (MSSD subtitle), through national action on enforcement and climate-smart, pro-sustainability investment of COVID-recovery funds to prepare the region's resilience to future shocks.

47. The two following complementary priorities are identified: ensuring that the COVID-induced disruptions do not result in a lax approach to environmental regulations; and, advocating for practical ways in which Mediterranean countries can recover in a more sustainable, inclusive and resilient fashion.

48. COP 22 will serve as a regional forum to take stock of this year's major conferences, including UNEA-5, Climate and Biodiversity COPs, the IUCN World Conservation Congress, and the High-level Political Forum (HLPF) in the context of the Decade of action for the SDGs, and to discuss pathways towards a sustainable, resilient and inclusive future in the Mediterranean.

49. As part of the inclusive process to prepare the Antalya Ministerial Declaration of COP 22, the 19th Meeting of the MCSD is invited to provide inputs on priority issues and key areas that would be reflected in the Declaration.
