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Agenda Item 3: Progress achieved since the MedProgramme Inception Meeting

Child Project 4.1 Progress report

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UNEP/MAP
Athens, 2021

Child Project 4.1 Progress report

1. Background on the MedProgramme and unique role of Child Project 4.1

The “Mediterranean Sea Programme (MedProgramme): Enhancing environmental security” (2020-2025) (GEF ID 9607) is the first GEF multi-focal area programmatic approach in the Mediterranean, the result of more than 20 years of cooperation among countries, UNEP/MAP and GEF in the Mediterranean region. It builds on the successful implementation of previous GEF projects and on the legal framework provided by the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols. Through a set of eight Child Projects spanning the GEF focal areas of Biodiversity, Chemicals and Waste, Climate Change and International Waters, the MedProgramme aims to accelerate the implementation of agreed upon priority actions to reduce the major transboundary environmental stresses affecting the Mediterranean Sea and its coastal areas while strengthening climate resilience and water security, and improving the health and livelihoods of coastal populations. The MedProgramme is designed to achieve its expected outcomes through a combination of regional, national and subnational activities undertaken in collaboration with ten countries sharing the Mediterranean Sea: Albania, Algeria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Egypt, Lebanon, Libya, Montenegro, Morocco, Tunisia and Turkey.

UNEP/Mediterranean Action Plan (MAP) is the leading executing Agency of the MedProgramme; the GEF Implementing Agencies are UNEP and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) and the executing partners are UNESCO/IHP, European Investment Bank (EIB), IUCN Med, GWP Med, WWF Med, Plan Bleu, PAP/RAC, SCP/RAC and SPA/RAC.

The MedProgramme outcomes, components and Child Projects are set forth in Annex I. An overview of the countries participating in each of the Child Projects as well as the associated focal areas, implementing agencies, executing agencies and executing partners is set forth in Annex II.

The GEF’s programmatic approach is based on the tenet that a coordinated set of projects applying multidisciplinary approaches across several focal areas is more effective than standalone projects in implementing lasting solutions that address the complex root causes of environmental problems. Child Project 4.1 ensures this critical coordination function for the MedProgramme and serves as the regional hub for the programme’s other seven Child Projects, providing a set of programme-wide services to promote effective knowledge management, to mainstream gender equality and women’s empowerment and to monitor progress towards expected results. These services are rendered through the functions of the MedProgramme Coordinating Unit (MedPCU), which is embedded in Child Project 4.1 and hosted by the UNEP/MAP-Barcelona Convention Secretariat.

2. Brief overview of progress across the MedProgramme portfolio

UNEP/MAP executes seven of the Child Projects of the MedProgramme, including Child Project 4.1 which is responsible for coordination and monitoring of progress at the programmatic level. The following paragraphs provide a high-level overview of the notable progress made on the Child Projects since the Inception Meeting of the MedProgramme in July 2020.

Child Project 1.1 (GEF ID 9684)

This project aims to achieve measurable reductions in levels of POPs and mercury in priority Mediterranean coastal hot spots and catchment areas, through a combination of activities that promote sound management and disposal of POPs and mercury wastes, as well as prevention of new wastes through pilot activities on reduction and alternatives for POPs and mercury. It will also produce an updated Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis (TDA) for the Mediterranean Sea, amongst other outputs.

To date, progress has been achieved on the foundational activities for management and disposal of chemicals and wastes in two countries (Algeria and Lebanon), including identification of national counterparts, preparation of legal instruments to guide the cooperation between UNEP/MAP and national partners, and confirmation of the inventories of PCBs for storage and export. Tendering

documents for the contractors to transport the PCB waste from these countries are under preparation, with services estimated at \$1.1 million in value. Additional substantive progress includes the establishment of the legal instruments with the project's two executing partners (Plan Bleu and SCP/RAC) and the recruitment of the expert that will lead the analyses and consultations for the TDA. Finally, a gender action plan for Child Project 1.1 has been drafted and is under review by the participating countries and the executing partners.

Child Project 1.2 (GEF ID 9717)

This project is designed to reduce nutrient pollution in the sea by mobilizing investments for the upgrading of wastewater treatment plants, wastewater reuse and depollution of catchment areas in Egypt, Lebanon and Tunisia, in addition to related capacity building in the wastewater sector at the national level. It will also produce a set of regional standards on desalination, aquaculture, and on the management of wastewater and sludge for the deliberation of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention. Gender will be mainstreamed across the project activities and outputs.

To date, efforts have been focused on the establishment of the legal instrument with the European Investment Bank (EIB) which will lead the project activities on the mobilization of investments in the partner countries. Negotiations with EIB are expected to conclude in February 2021, and the legal instrument should enter into force no later than Q2 of 2021.

Child Project 2.1 (GEF ID 9687)

The objective of Child Project 2.1 is to improve water security, human and ecosystem health, and climate resilience in coastal hot spots by expanding the uptake of integrated coastal zone management (ICZM) approaches and by promoting the sound management of coastal aquifers and their related ecosystems. Targeted support for the implementation/ratification of the ICZM Protocol will be provided to five countries (Algeria, Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco and Tunisia), in addition to the formulation of national ICZM strategies in Egypt and Lebanon and the development of ICZM plans in Montenegro and Morocco. The work on coastal aquifers will focus on five priority aquifers in the region, and will include the preparation of detailed indicator-based assessments of the aquifers, evaluation of vulnerability, management plans and the testing of aquifer monitoring networks and protocols. A series of national assessments of submarine groundwater discharges will also be carried out for all participating countries in this Child Project. Finally, an integrated management plan will be developed in the Damour region of Lebanon using the "source to sea" approach for the coordinated management of the coastal zone, surface water and aquifers.

The primary progress achieved to date is the establishment of the legal instruments with the executing partners of the Child Project: GWP-Med, PAP/RAC, Plan Bleu and UNESCO-IHP. A gender action plan for Child Project 2.1 has also been drafted and is under review by the participating countries and the executing partners.

Child Project 2.2 (GEF ID 9685)

This project aims to build countries' capacity to balance competing water uses in priority coastal areas through water, food, energy and ecosystems integrated governance (the 'nexus' approach), with the aim of enhancing environmental security and sharing of benefits. Activities include institutional strengthening, nexus assessments in three countries (Albania, Lebanon and Morocco) and associated strategies/action plans, and the testing of nexus solutions on the ground, amongst other interventions.

To date, the primary progress achieved has been the establishment of the legal instrument with the project's executing partner, GWP-Med. A gender action plan for Child Project 2.2 has also been drafted and is under review by the participating countries and the executing partners.

SCCF Project (GEF ID 9670)

This project, financed through the Special Climate Change Fund (SCCF), will enhance capacities of countries in the Mediterranean region to adapt to climate change, with a view to influencing wider development processes in the region. It will achieve these aims through a combination of activities

including climate risk assessments in priority coastal hotspots in two countries (Montenegro and Morocco), identification of actions to build coastal resilience in these coastal hotspots (mainstreamed into ICZM plans that will be prepared in Child Project 2.1), local capacity building on climate change adaptation solutions, guidelines for the preparation of finance plans for climate change adaptation in coastal areas, and the preparation of a proposal to access international funding support for climate change adaptation in Mediterranean coastal zones.

The Internal Cooperation Agreement between UNEP and UNEP/MAP for this project was established in December 2020. Efforts since then have been focused on preparations for dialogues with the participating countries and the executing partners to reconfirm and update the priority areas for intervention. The legal instruments for the executing partners have been initiated, and it is anticipated that these will enter into force no later than Q2 of 2021.

Child Project 3.1 (GEF ID 10158)

This Child Project will expand seascapes under protection and improve protected area management in Libya. This will be achieved through the development of a national governance structure for Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) supported through on-site management units, sustainable management plans and monitoring programmes and networks. The governance and sustainable management of MPAs will be reinforced through engagement of Libyan stakeholders and the strengthening of institutional capacities for MPA management and related monitoring activities.

In terms of progress achieved thus far, an advanced draft of the Internal Cooperation Agreement between UNEP and UNEP/MAP for this project has been developed and will enter into force no later than Q2 2021. The legal instruments for the executing partners have been initiated and will likewise enter into force in Q2 2021.

Child Project 4.1 (GEF ID 9686)

Child Project 4.1 is the regional hub for the MedProgramme and is designed to foster programme-wide learning and dissemination of knowledge, effective portfolio coordination and synergistic interactions among the Child Projects, gender mainstreaming and the monitoring of progress to impacts. The uptake of lessons and sharing of knowledge generated by the programme will be promoted through the development of a knowledge management platform, a robust menu of communication, outreach and awareness raising products and activities, and an innovative set of replication atlases that will highlight areas where replication of successful MedProgramme interventions should preferentially occur. Coordination and synergies across the programme will be achieved through an integrated set of monitoring mechanisms (including a semi-annual journalistic-style MedProgramme Bulletin and a more formal results-based reporting framework), Annual Stocktaking Meetings, semi-annual Coordination Group Meetings and cooperation with IW:LEARN. Furthermore, a specific monitoring mechanism to assess progress on gender actions across the MedProgramme will be implemented.

To date, the activities of Child Project 4.1 have focused on the recruitment of the MedPCU, the establishment of legal instruments with the executing partners of the Child Projects, and setting the foundations for delivery of the project's programme-wide services for knowledge management, gender mainstreaming and coordination and monitoring. Complete details on the progress achieved on Child Project 4.1 are presented in Section 3 of this report.

Forthcoming additions to the MedProgramme

In addition to the eight Child Projects already endorsed under the umbrella of the MedProgramme, UNEP/MAP is also developing two new interventions with the GEF that will enhance the delivery of the programme's environmental and socioeconomic benefits. An overview of these interventions is presented below.

Fisheries and Ecosystem Based Management for the Blue Economy of the Mediterranean - (FishEBM MED) (GEF ID 10560) (BD and IW)

The objective of this full-sized GEF project is to reverse the overexploitation of select commercial living marine resources by enhancing the capacity of Mediterranean countries to manage fisheries, including through the application of ecosystem-based management tools, in their blue economy development pathway. This will be achieved through five outcomes: (i) strengthened capacity to manage commercial fisheries, with particular focus on sustainable small-scale fisheries (SSF); (ii) Enhanced integration of emerging monitoring, control and surveillance technologies in the fight against illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing; (iii) integrated ecosystem based management tools and ecosystem approach to fisheries; (iv) innovative blue economy solutions accounting for the fishery sector; and (v) knowledge management and outscaling. The project's implementing agencies are UNEP and FAO and it will be executed jointly by the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) and UNEP/MAP.

The project concept for the FishEBM MED project was cleared by the GEF on 4 May 2020 and a project preparation grant was approved. Efforts are currently under way at UNEP/MAP and FAO to recruit experts to draft the full-fledged CEO endorsement request for this project, which should be submitted to the GEF in December 2021. A series of consultations with the participating countries and the executing partners is anticipated to begin in Q2 of 2021.

Enhancing Mediterranean Pollution Reduction and Resource Recovery through Mobilizing Private Sector Investments (MedPSI Project) (IW)

The objective of the MedPSI Project (a medium-sized GEF project) is to enhance Mediterranean pollution reduction through mobilization of private sector investments for wastewater treatment and resource recovery, in order to support implementation of NAP priorities for the reduction of land-based sources of pollution and to demonstrate potential for scaling up innovative blended financing instruments in the region. Indicative activities include the identification of two pre-investment-ready wastewater treatment and resource recovery infrastructure projects (one each in Egypt and Tunisia) as well as a set of activities to engage stakeholders and build local and national capacities on private/blended financing and the water-energy-food-ecosystem nexus approach in this context. The MedPSI Project will complement the wastewater treatment and pollution reduction activities foreseen in Child Projects 1.2 and 1.3 of the MedProgramme, and will interact synergistically with the water-energy-food-ecosystems nexus activities of Child Project 2.2. The project's implementing agency is UNEP and it will be executed jointly by UNEP/MAP, GWP-Med and Climate Investor Two (CI2).

To date, the GEF has approved the project concept and UNEP/MAP is working with the two executing partners on the preparation of the CEO endorsement request. As a medium-sized project, the MedPSI project is not eligible for a project preparation grant. It is anticipated that the CEO endorsement request will be submitted to the GEF before the end of Q2 2021.

3. Detailed progress of Child Project 4.1 since July 2020

The MedProgramme was officially launched by UNEP/MAP during a virtual Inception Meeting in July 2020. Since the Inception Meeting, the activities of Child Project 4.1 have focused on: (i) recruitment of human resources for the MedPCU; (ii) establishment of legal instruments to operationalize the Child Projects; and (iii) setting foundations for the delivery of programme-wide services for knowledge management, gender mainstreaming and coordination and monitoring.

3.1 Recruitment of human resources for the MedPCU

The MedPCU draws on a combination of expertise from staff and consultants to carry out its mandated functions. It consists of four staff positions (the MedProgramme Coordinator; the Financial Management Officer; the Programme and Administration Assistant; and the Finance and Budget Assistant) and three consultants (Specialists for International Waters, Knowledge Management and Gender Mainstreaming). All staff positions were filled between July 2020 and February 2021, with the exception of the MedProgramme Coordinator which is expected to be recruited by Q2 of 2021. The aforementioned consultants were brought on board in mid-October 2020.

3.2 Establishment of legal instruments with the executing partners

The first step to operationalize the Child Projects of the MedProgramme is the establishment of legal instruments with the executing partners to define the cooperation modalities that will guide the execution of activities. To date, UNEP/MAP has established a total of seven legal instruments with the executing partners of three Child Projects: Child Project 1.1 (two executing partners), 2.1 (four executing partners) and 2.2 (one executing partner). UNEP/MAP is currently preparing seven additional legal instruments for the executing partners of three Child Projects: the SCCF Project (three executing partners), Child Project 1.2 (one executing partner) and Child Project 3.1 (three executing partners). These remaining legal instruments are expected to enter into force no later than Q2 2021.

The legal instruments also set forth the details on the allotment of financial resources to the executing partners, including the conditions for transfer of the first instalments. In January 2021, UNEP/MAP processed the first instalments for all executing partners of Child Projects 1.1, 2.1 and 2.2, and these should be received by 28 February 2021.

3.3 Setting foundations for the delivery of programme-wide services

Child Project 4.1 will deliver its programme-wide support services along three lines of action:

- Knowledge management and dissemination
- Coordination and monitoring
- Gender mainstreaming

The following paragraphs provide a summary of the progress made since October 2020 with respect to these support services.

Knowledge management and dissemination

A series of consultations with key stakeholders of the MedProgramme was undertaken during the inception phase of the program and its findings were instrumental in preparing the KM strategy approved in 2018. Two years have lapsed between the PPG phase and the actual start of the MedProgramme, therefore new rounds of consultations are envisaged during this inception phase - to collect technical and strategic inputs and help refine the scope of activities as well as validate the design of the envisaged products. Initial contacts with partners and stakeholders started since November 2020 and these will be intensified in the coming months when all Child Projects will begin their implementation. Stakeholders will be consulted through an active two-way process of engagement and dialogue and their views will be captured, documented, and considered in the update of the KM Strategy. Particular attention is devoted to explore how to respond to the Covid-19 crises and assess its implication on program/project activities.

Actions have been taken to begin the planning and execution of KM services, notably to develop the program knowledge platform, create the program visual identity, prepare first outreach products (short movie, infographic, brochure), select a project management software for the portfolio, design targeted capacity building for the MedProgramme portfolio and for the partners at large. Knowledge Management activities will increasingly interact with and strengthen the monitoring and reporting functions of Child Project 4.1, placing particular emphasis on how to improve the effective sharing of information across the portfolio and test innovative methodologies to capture, document and disseminate lessons learned (for example through data visualization, the MedBulletin, the production of Replication Atlases, Good Practice Briefs, among others). A framework to measure success and performance of the KM activities is under development with a set of qualitative and quantitative indicators which will be monitored through the above-mentioned mechanisms. The organization of the Coordination Group Meeting (CGM) in 2021 will provide a major opportunity to gather inputs from the partners on the first year of execution and will represent an important knowledge sharing exchange to reinforce the programmatic approach of the MedProgramme. A concept for the structure and scope of this CGM is currently being developed by the MedPCU.

Coordination and monitoring

The MedProgramme encompasses at present eight Child Projects, which will be carried out in partnership with 10 countries working with a wide set of implementing and executing agencies, executing partners and other stakeholders. Effective coordination across this diverse portfolio is therefore a crucial function of Child Project 4.1 and is ensured through the mandate of the MedPCU. To that end, the MedPCU is currently preparing the development of a Coordination Group as a flexible mechanism to strengthen delivery of programme-wide services, and to provide a platform for convening the project partners (on a semi-annual basis) to discuss and agree on matters that have implications across the entire portfolio of Child Projects. This modality follows the successful experience of the coordination group established during the MedPartnership (GEF ID 2600), the predecessor of the MedProgramme. A concept note on the MedProgramme Coordination Group is currently under preparation and dedicated consultations with the project partners on the salient features and functions of this body will be conducted in the coming months.

Another of the key functions of Child Project 4.1 is the establishment of monitoring mechanisms for the MedProgramme. Templates have been prepared to track progress and expenditures of the executing partners of Child Projects 1.1, 2.1 and 2.2. Similarly, planning documents to guide executing partners in the preparation of their annual work plans and budgets for 2021-2022 have been developed and rolled out. Templates for Child Projects 1.2, 3.1 and the SCCF Project are under development and will form integral parts of the legal instruments with the executing partners of these projects.

An important activity that underpins the MedProgramme's monitoring mechanisms is the organization of the annual Project Steering Committee Meetings. UNEP/MAP, as the programme's leading executing agency, is responsible for the organization of these meetings and serves as their Secretariat. UNEP/MAP is currently preparing the Project Steering Committee Meetings for Child Projects 1.1, 2.1, 2.2 and 4.1. These will take place in March 2021 and will provide the Project Steering Committees with the opportunity to review and approve the work plans and budgets for the forthcoming year's activities (1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022).

Child Project 4.1 also seeks to promote synergies and disseminate progress and best practices across the portfolio and beyond. To that end, the MedPCU will organize Annual Stocktaking Meetings to provide a forum for peer-to-peer learning among the Programme portfolio; to catalyze regional and global attention on the progress made towards impact in the entire Mediterranean region; and to enable adaptive management at the Programme level. A concept note on the Annual Stocktaking Meeting is under preparation and will serve as the starting point for consultations with partners on this annual event, which will be celebrated for the first time during the second year of implementation of the MedProgramme. At present, it is anticipated that the First Annual Stocktaking Meeting will take place in Q2 of 2022. The reasons for the proposed timing for this event are three-fold. First, it will allow sufficient time following programme inception for substantive results to be generated across all of the MedProgramme focal areas (CW, IW, CCA, and BD). Second, it is aligned with the reporting within the GEF's Project Cycle, namely the production of the Project Implementation Review (PIR) which evaluates progress achieved within the GEF's fiscal year (1 July to 30 June). Finally, the organization of the Annual Stocktaking Meeting in Q2 allows for a more even spacing of programme-wide events throughout the year, specifically avoiding Q1 during which the annual Project Steering Committee Meetings are held.

Gender mainstreaming

Another functional pillar of the MedProgramme is its innovative programmatic approach on the promotion of women's empowerment and gender equality. Progress on gender mainstreaming will be tracked through the gender monitoring template that has been prepared, in line with the GEF and UNEP Gender Policy documents, as well as UN-SWAP. This will allow the MedPCU and executing partners to aggregate results from all the Child Projects and report progress on gender at the programme-level.

The Gender Mainstreaming Strategy of the MedProgramme is operationalized through Gender Action Plans for each Child Project that outline specific gender activities to be undertaken in a set timeframe, with assigned targets, budget and responsibilities to the relevant executing partners. Gender Action Plans

have been prepared for Child Projects 1.1, 2.1, 2.2 and 4.1, to guide specific project activities on women's empowerment and gender equality and ensure a gender-responsive approach to monitoring and evaluation is applied.

Consultations with executing partners focusing on the state of play on women's empowerment and gender equality is currently being undertaken and is expected to intensify when all Child Projects enter the implementation phase. In parallel, the gender expertise available at the MedPCU is enhancing gender mainstreaming capacity and outcomes at the UNEP/MAP level.

One key gender output will be the establishment of the MedProgramme's Gender Community of Practice by Q2 2021 to build the capacity of key MedProgramme partners on women's empowerment and gender equality and, specifically, to: increase understanding of gender issues in selected environmental sub-sectors, promote the achievement of gender results, identify opportunities to support women and girls' opportunities in the Mediterranean region, promote learning and cross-fertilization by sharing lessons learned, and align with the political momentum for gender equality goals (SDG5) and associated financial commitments.

4. Rationale for the annual work plan

The planning, scoping activities and analyses that have been carried out thus far in Child Project 4.1 have set the foundations for work to begin in earnest on the development of tools and services that the project will begin to roll out in a phased approach across the MedProgramme. This work progress is the basis for establishing the timetable for continuing the work in 2021 as set forth in the Document UNEP/MED WG.497/3 (Work Plan 2021-2022).

Key activities that will be initiated in the forthcoming 12 months include:

- Structured consultations with partners and stakeholders to rapidly reassess capacity needs and gather strategic inputs to refine the scope of KM and learning activities as well as validate the design of the envisaged products to be delivered by Child Project 4.1.
- Conception, design and initial development of the MedProgramme Knowledge Platform.
- Establishment of the visual identity of the MedProgramme and delivery of first outreach products (short movie, infographic, brochure).
- Development of additional components of the MedProgramme monitoring mechanisms, including the MedProgramme Bulletin (a semi-annual publication intended to disseminate information on programme progress and engage a wide set of stakeholders), the Coordination Group Meeting and the MedProgramme Annual Stocktaking Meeting.
- Launch of the gender action plans for each of the Child Projects and evaluation of progress against the MedProgramme's gender monitoring framework.

Annex I

Overview of the MedProgramme Outcomes, Components, Child Projects and GEF Focal Areas

MedProgramme Outcome	MedProgramme Component	Child Project	GEF Focal Areas
1. In coastal hot spots and catchment areas, measurable reduction of harmful chemicals and wastes (POPs, Mercury) and of excess nutrients impacting human health and coastal habitats, achieved.	1. Reduction of Land Based Pollution in Priority Coastal Hotspots, and measuring progress to impacts.	1.1 “Reducing Pollution from Harmful Chemicals and Wastes in Mediterranean Hot Spots and Measuring Progress to Impacts” (GEF ID 9684)	IW and CW
		1.2 “Mediterranean Pollution Hot Spots Investment Project” (GEF ID 9717)	IW
		1.3 “Financing Advanced Environmental Technologies in the Mediterranean Sea Region for Water Systems and Clean Coasts (EnviTeCC)” (GEF ID 9691)	IW and CW
4. Coastal zone sustainability enhanced through the adoption of comprehensive national ICZM strategies, coastal plans and instruments, and the introduction of sustainable consumption and production (SCP) technical, regulatory, economic and market-oriented measures and improving gender equality.	2. Enhancing Sustainability and Climate Resilience in the Coastal Zone.	2.1 “Mediterranean Coastal Zones Climate Resilience Water Security and Habitat Protection” (GEF ID 9687)	IW
		2.2 “Mediterranean Coastal Zones: Managing the Water-Food-Energy and Ecosystem Nexus” (GEF ID 9685)	IW
		SCCF Project “Enhancing regional climate change adaptation in the Mediterranean Marine and Coastal Areas” (GEF ID 9670)	CC
5. Increased resilience to climatic variability and change, and enhanced water security of coastal populations through improved sustainability of services provided by coastal aquifers and by groundwater related coastal habitats.			
6. Balancing of competing water uses improved through water, food, energy and ecosystems integrated governance.			
7. Expansion of seascapes under protection in Libya, and improved protected area management through the implementation of the Libyan Marine Protected Areas (MPA) National Strategy.	3. Protecting Marine Biodiversity	3.1 “Management Support and Expansion of Marine Protected Areas in Libya” (GEF ID 10158)	BD

MedProgramme Outcome	MedProgramme Component	Child Project	GEF Focal Areas
8. The increased uptake of lessons and of cutting-edge knowledge generated across the portfolio of interventions, and the active participation to IW LEARN activities, Communities of Practice, and events, improve the capacity of key regional stakeholders, and of the global IW community to build climate resilience, maintain coastal resources, protect biodiversity, and restore coastal ecosystems.	4. Knowledge Management and Programme Coordination	4.1 “Mediterranean Sea Large Marine Ecosystem Environment and Climate Regional Support Project” (GEF ID 9686)	IW and CW

