

10th Meeting of the Ecosystem Approach Coordination Group

Istanbul, Türkiye, 11 September 2023

Agenda Item 4: 2023 Mediterranean Quality Status Report

**Report of the Meeting of the Ecosystem Approach Correspondence Group on Monitoring (CORMON)
Biodiversity and Fisheries – Videoconference, 28-29 March 2022**

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UNITED NATIONS
ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME
MEDITERRANEAN ACTION PLAN

21 June 2022
Original: English

Meeting of the Ecosystem Approach Correspondence Groups on Monitoring (CORMON), Biodiversity and Fisheries

Videoconference, 28 - 29 March 2022

Report of the Meeting of the Ecosystem Approach Correspondence Groups on Monitoring (CORMON), Biodiversity and Fisheries

SPA/RAC
Tunis, 2022

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Introduction

1. In the framework of the UNEP/MAP-SPA/RAC Programme of Work 2022-2023 adopted by the 22nd Ordinary Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols, Antalya, Turkey, 2-5 December 2021, the Meeting of the Ecosystem Approach Correspondence Group on Monitoring (CORMON) for Biodiversity and Fisheries was organized on 28 and 29 March 2022 via videoconference, by the Specially Protected Area Regional Activity Centre (SPA/RAC).

Participation

2. The following Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention were represented at the Meeting: Albania, Algeria, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Croatia, Cyprus, France, Greece, Israel, Italy, Lebanon, Libya, Malta, Montenegro, Morocco, Slovenia, Spain and Turkey.

3. The Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and Contiguous Atlantic Area (ACCOBAMS), the Mediterranean Science Commission (CIESM) and European Environment Agency (EEA) were represented as observers.

4. The Coordinating Unit for the Mediterranean Action Plan - Barcelona Convention Secretariat (UNEP/MAP), the Information and Communication Regional Activity Centre (INFO/RAC), the Programme for the Assessment and Control of Marine Pollution in the Mediterranean (MED POL) and The Priority Actions Programme/Regional Activity Centre (PAP/RAC) were represented at the Meeting.

5. The full list of participants is attached as **Annex I** to the present report.

Agenda Item 1: Opening of the Meeting

Information Document	UNEP/MED WG.520/Inf.1
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6. The Meeting was opened on 28 March 2022 at 08.30 (UTC+1) by Mr. Khalil ATTIA, SPA/RAC Director, on behalf of UNEP/MAP-Barcelona Convention Coordinating Unit and on behalf of SPA/RAC.

7. The SPA/RAC Director welcomed the broad participation irrespective of the constraints attributed to the COVID-19 Pandemic and recalled the main objective of the Meeting to guide the Ecosystem Approach process from a technical point of view, to ensure a coherent collection and reporting of quality assured data on Biodiversity cluster, towards an efficient 2023 Mediterranean Quality Status Report (2023 MED QSR). While highlighting the relevance of the Ecosystem Approach implementation in the framework of the MAP/Barcelona Convention system, he commended the full engagement of the Contracting Parties to reach the common objectives through the regional and sub-regional cooperation. He also recalled the Secretariat's commitment to guide and harmonize the efforts towards the delivery of the scales of monitoring, assessment and reporting for all Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme (IMAP) common indicators clustered per Ecological Objectives. Mr. Attia closed his welcome remarks by inviting all participants to discuss as openly as possible about the technical documents while seeking their feedback and advice on the way forward.

Agenda Item 2: Organizational Matters

Working Documents	UNEP/MED WG.520/1 UNEP/MED WG.520/2
Information Document	UNEP/MED WG.520/Inf.2

a) *Rules of Procedure for the Meeting of the Ecosystem Approach Correspondence Groups on Monitoring (CORMON) for Biodiversity and Fisheries*

8. The Meeting agreed that the rules of procedure for Meetings and conferences of the Contracting Parties to the Convention for the Protection of the Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean and its Protocols (UNEP/IG.43/6, Annex XI) would apply mutatis mutandis to their deliberations.

b) *Election of Officers*

9. Subject to Rule 20 of the rules of procedure mentioned at para. 2(a), the Meeting unanimously elected the following officers from among the representatives of the Contracting Parties:

Chairperson: Mr Abdulmula Hamza (Libya),

Vice chairpersons: Ms. Sabah Tahari (Morocco),
Mr. Leonardo TUNESI (Italy),
Mr. Rezart Kapedani (Albania),

Rapporteur : Mr Lavrendios Vasiliades (Cyprus).

c) *Adoption of the Provisional Agenda*

10. The Meeting adopted its agenda based on the Provisional Agenda and Provisional Annotated Agenda, including the proposed timetable, circulated in documents UNEP/MED WG.520/1 and UNEP/MED WG.520/2, respectively.

11. The agenda is attached as **Annex II** to the present report.

12. The discussions were held in line with the agenda. Simultaneous interpretation in English and French was provided during the Meeting.

Agenda Item 3: 2023 Med QSR structure and outline content template, and status of Common Indicators and Ecological Objectives

Working Documents	UNEP/MED WG.520/3
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13. Ms. Joanne Foden UNEP/MAP presented the document UNEP/MED WG.520/3 “*2023 Med QSR structure and outline content template, and status of Common Indicators and Ecological Objectives*” that provides detailed information on the structure and contents of the 2023 Med QSR template and status of common indicators and ecological objectives. She highlighted that this template was built on the methodology, structure, and content as approved by the 8th EcAp Coordination Group (WG.514/12 Meeting Report Annex II, 9 September 2021). She concluded her speech by encouraging Contracting Parties to make every effort to upload useful data collected after 2017 into the Info system platform for a successful delivery of the 2023 Med QSR with the agreed roadmap and milestones.

14. The meeting noted that the 2023 Med QSR will be more quantitative, less narrative than the 2017 Med QSR, and highlighting its synergy with the assessment exercises of other Regional Seas Conventions and welcomed the use of all possible assessment tools in addition to NEAT as an assessment tool suitable for biodiversity cluster.

15. Recognizing its importance for the Programme of work of the ongoing biennium, one Contracting Party requested the Secretariat to share the information on the ongoing projects (i.e. IMA-PMPA, EcAp-MEDIII, Marine Litter II) managed by UNEP/MAP Secretariat that will contribute to the elaboration of the 2023 Med QSR.

16. The Meeting conclusions and recommendations regarding this agenda item are presented in **Annex III** to this Report.

Agenda item 4: Monitoring and Assessment Elements for the IMAP Common Indicators related to sea birds

Working Documents	UNEP/MED WG.520/4
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17. Mr. Mehdi AISSI, SPA/RAC Secretariat presented the document UNEP/MED WG.520/4.

18. The Secretariat introduced the document UNEP/MED WG.520/4 “*Monitoring and Assessment Scales, Assessment Criteria, Thresholds and Baseline Values for the IMAP Common Indicators 3, 4 and 5 related to sea birds*”, which proposes refinement to the monitoring scales and proposes assessment scales, reference and thresholds values for the IMAP Common Indicator (CI) 3 (Species distributional range), CI 4 (Population abundance of selected species abundance) and CI 5 (Population demographic characteristics) for sea birds. The document provides as well baseline and threshold values for the same indicators and a list of recommendations on future work to be carried out within the IMAP implementation.

19. Recognizing the work done by the recruited experts to provide the following document, the support provided by the informal Online working Group (OWG) on sea birds as well as the valuable scientific contribution of the different experts, the secretariat stressed that considering the evolving nature of this document, a step wise approach is adopted through testing these findings during the preparation of the 2023 MEDQSR and then make adequate proposals for refinement, when needed, and then validating them.

20. The Meeting welcomed the document, acknowledged the efforts made to its delivery and agreed to send written comments before 7th April 2022. One Contracting party stressed that they couldn’t assess the proposed thresholds for the IMAP common indicators on biodiversity and bilateral discussion will be organised to further detail the threshold status and the synergy with the ongoing work under the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD).

21. The Meeting endorsed the document and agreed on its submission for consideration to the EcAp Coordination Group Meeting (videoconference, 5 July 2022).

Agenda item 5: Baseline for the IMAP Common Indicator 6 related to Non-Indigenous Species

Working Documents	UNEP/MED WG.520/5
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Information Document	UNEP/MED WG.520/Inf.3
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22. Under this agenda item, the Secretariat (SPA/RAC) presented the document UNEP/MED WG.520/5 “*Baseline for the IMAP Common Indicator 6 related to Non-Indigenous Species*”, that provide a common reference to support the implementation and improvement of national monitoring programmes of Contracting Parties in line with the Decision IG.22/7 on the IMAP, adopted by COP 19 (Athens, Greece, February 2016). The Secretariat explained that this document has been developed in synergy with the EU MSFD and that a common template was agreed to be used in close collaboration with the Joint Research Centre (JRC) of the European Commission to avoid duplication of work as recommended in the previous CorMon (10-11 June 2022).

23. The secretariat reminded that the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention were invited to appoint national experts to compile a national inventory/baseline of NIS which will be utilized as a reference point for future NIS introductions throughout the next assessments (2023) under the

Ecosystem Approach methodology and the IMAP requirements. The outcome will be the result of a collaborative process at national and regional levels, involving detailed exchange of information between designated experts and the building of consensus on the final lists, as these will constitute a tool for the determination of thresholds for CI6 and will have management implications for the Contracting Parties.

24. Recognizing the work done by the recruited experts to provide the following document and the collaboration of national experts, the secretariat highlighted the importance of national inventories of EU Mediterranean countries that were submitted to JRC in January 2021 for the purposes of the 2012-2017 assessment cycle and were made available to form the starting point for the revision process of these countries. Revisions of these inventories were made according to recently published literature and checklists and regular exchange is made by the experts in charge of this analysis and the national experts.

25. The Meeting reviewed the document and agreed to provide the SPA/RAC with written comments, to be considered as appropriate, before the closure of the CORMON Meeting. These comments concerned some updates and amendments to some sections of the report.

26. The participants appreciated the work and pointed out the dynamic and living aspect of this document that should be therefore updated continuously as appropriate and agreed on the updates made to the national lists as communicated to SPA/RAC. They agreed to consider December 2021 as final date to consider new inputs that will be considered as new records compared to the established baseline in this document.

27. Under this agenda item, the Secretariat (SPA/RAC) also presented, for information, the document UNEP/MED WG.520/Inf 3 “*Monitoring and Assessment Scales, Assessment Criteria and Thresholds Values for the IMAP Common Indicator 6 related to non-indigenous species*” that aims at proposing monitoring and assessment scales, assessment criteria and thresholds values for the IMAP common indicators 6 related to non-indigenous species. This document was reviewed and endorsed by the previous Biodiversity CORMON meeting (Videoconference, 10-11 June 2022), as amended. All the comments were integrated in this present document that is submitted to this CORMON meeting as information document for its use for the purpose of the 2023 Med QSR.

28. While the meeting welcomed the work, a member suggested that the thresholds be updated to reflect the national monitoring plan and the additional marine protected area monitoring plan allowing an adequate submission of the monitoring data for the upcoming MED QSR 2023.

29. The Meeting endorsed the documents and agreed on their submission to the Meeting of SPA/BD Focal Points (TBC) for consideration and possible approval.

Agenda Item 6: Agenda item 6: Data Dictionaries and Data Standards for the Common Indicators 3, 4 and 5 related to species

Working Documents	UNEP/MED WG.520/6 UNEP/MED WG.520/7 UNEP/MED WG.520/8
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6.1. Data Dictionaries and Data Standards related to Marine Mammals

30. The INFO/RAC Deputy Director, Arthur Pasquale, presented the document UNEP/MED WG.520/6 “Data Dictionaries and Data Standards for the Common Indicators 3, 4 and 5 related to Marine Mammals, which was a revised version reflecting comments raised during and after the previous CORMON meeting on biodiversity and fisheries (9-10 June 2021). He highlighted that this document takes into account as well inputs and comments provided by the ACCOBAMS and the informal OWG on marine mammals.

31. The representative of the ACCOBAMS Secretariat thanked the SPA/RAC for the invitation to the meeting and for the good collaboration through the OWG on marine mammals for the development

of the document WG 520/6 on data dictionaries and data standard on marine mammals. She informed the participants on the activities coordinated within the framework of the ABIOMMED project “Support coherent and coordinated assessment of biodiversity and measures across Mediterranean for the next 6-year cycle of MSFD implementation” that was selected for funding by the European Commission in 2021. Within this project, the ACCOBAMS Secretariat coordinates a work package dedicated to the MSFD criteria on cetaceans under the Descriptor 1 Biodiversity. In particular, the ACCOBAMS Secretariat coordinates a working group composed of national appointed experts in charge of the definition/implementation of their country’s MSFD cetacean monitoring programme. The main purpose is to support regional coordination between EU Mediterranean countries, by capitalizing on available information on the species groups on the basis of the information already acquired by EU Countries throughout their national monitoring programmes, by promoting harmonization of monitoring/analytical methods and by progressing in the definition of thresholds. During this project, full coordination with EcAp and IMAP will be ensured through regular exchanges with SPA/RAC - which is also a partner of ABIOMMED - in particular in view of a face-to-face meeting to be organized in 2023 with experts from Mediterranean EU and non-EU countries. She concluded by reiterating ACCOBAMS support to the development of the 2023 Med QSR with the results on cetaceans’ distribution and abundance from the ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative.

32. A representative of a Contacting Party thanked INFO/RAC for putting together this document noting the huge amount of data that were being requested to provide by these standards and asked the UNEP/MAP QSR Programme Officer about the plan on how to translate all the data reported to the IMAP Info System into an assessment product.

33. In response, the Secretariat (UNEP/MAP and SPA/RAC) explained that thematic experts will be hired by SPA/RAC to collate available datasets from the IMAP Info System and other sources in case of insufficient data reported into the system, analyse the data, and elaborate a regional assessment for each common indicator.

34. The representative of one Contracting Party commented that this plan is extremely ambitious noting that it could take years to provide a complete assessment. She also highlighted that the analysis of the raw data could be highly challenging bringing issues very different from assessing the status of a species or common indicator of species. She recommended to rather than collecting raw data to be more focused on obtaining a certain/specific type of aggregated data for example the abundance of a given species collected through standardized methods in one area at a given time.

35. A representative of a Contracting Party provided comments with regards to the Mediterranean monk seal section indicating that this part was discussed in the OWG. She noted that some of the collective proposals provided by the monk seal experts were missing from this updated version and suggested sending written comments on the missing information after the meeting. In addition, she underlined the need to make an attentive reflexion with regards to defining the levels of disclosure of the provided data and how to secure the sensitivity of some of that information in order to safeguard aspects of species’ protection.

36. Thanking all speakers for their interventions, the INFO/RAC Deputy Director explained that the approach used by the Barcelona Convention was collecting national raw data to be used for a regional and/or subregional assessments however INFO/RAC was open for any suggestion to consider reporting certain level of aggregated data based on experts’ recommendations. In addition, with regards to the data sensitivity, he indicated that INFO/RAC would consider this important aspect and would further revise the standards to specify which data should remain partially public.

37. Following more discussions, several participants raised concern on the fact that the data processing (both data handling and data analysis) of currently required data (raw and aggregated data) requires a scientific and technical infrastructure and advice making procedures that are not completely developed with the Barcelona Convention system. In particular, the procedures involving the treatment of original and aggregated data and their interpolation towards the assessment of GES is a long and complex process, which requires several different types of expertise (from experts proficient on data

handling to expert on several different data analysis approaches, on regional evaluation of results for each Common Indicator, each species, each Ecological Objective and drafting of overall conclusions). This process requires a degree of logistic and political organization and harmonisation that is only partially available at present. Hence, this requires a specifically designed set up including appropriate human and financial resources.

38. One representative of a Contracting Party requested the Secretariat to strengthen synchronization between the different regional assessment initiatives during the forthcoming exercises to avoid duplication of efforts and ensure harmonization at the regional level.

39. Several participants underlined the need to prioritize which data to be reported and asked to review the mandatory and non-mandatory fields in the data standards and data dictionaries.

40. As a conclusion, the Secretariat thanked all the participants for their suggestions indicating that their proposals would be captured in the conclusions and recommendations of the meeting and asked them to send their written comments by 7 April 2022. Meetings with the OWG will be organised to discuss the updated version of the document that will take in consideration all the raised comments.

6.2. Data Dictionaries and Data Standards related to Marine Turtles

41. The INFO/RAC Deputy Director presented the document UNEP/MED WG. 520/7 “Data Dictionaries and Data Standards for the Common Indicators 3, 4 and 5 related to Marine Turtles” noting that document reflected comments received during and after the CORMON meeting on biodiversity and fisheries in 2021 and the discussions of the informal OWG on marine turtles.

42. A representative of a Contracting Party thanked the INFO/RAC for their efforts on trying to incorporate many of the comments and proposals raised during the OWG meetings, however she suggested to have the inputs of the high-density sea turtles nesting countries specially with regards to table 11 on nesting and demography which included a lot of different types of data and requested to check if the way data organized in this table were fully aligned with the criteria provided in the working document elaborated by SPA/RAC on monitoring assessment scales, assessment criteria, thresholds and baseline values. In addition, the representative of the Contracting Party requested the possibility to organize a mock trial attempt to fill in this table in order to ensure its suitability with the data reporting needs.

43. A representative of a Contracting Party raised concern on how many data should be reported by the country into the system. She underlined that it would be extremely difficult to report this level of detailed information due to the lack of human resources and requested to adopt a more simplified and practical approach for reporting not only for sea turtles but for all the other data standards.

44. In response, the INFO/RAC deputy director welcomed all the proposals to make the standards more practical and simplified without losing the information and indicated that the INFO/RAC agreed with the suggestions to further discuss the document within the OWG.

45. A representative of Contracting Party highlighted the need to review the mandatory and non-mandatory fields in the Data Standards and Data Dictionaries marine turtles considering the requirements of the countries with high- density nesting and the countries with low-density nesting.

46. As conclusion, the Secretariat recommended that the document should be further discussed with the informal OWG underlining the possibility to invite national experts representing the high-density nesting countries in the future meetings to give their insights with regards to nesting data that should be considered for the reporting.

6.3. Data Dictionaries and Data Standards related to Sea Birds

47. The INFO/RAC Deputy director presented the document UNEP/MED WG. 520/8 “Data Dictionaries and Data Standards for the Common Indicators 3, 4 and 5 related to Sea Birds” indicating that these standards were provided for one species representing each functional groups and highlighted that these standards were a living document that could be updated to consider other species reported in the Annex II of the SPA/BD Protocol.

48. A representative of a Contracting Party recommended that these data standards and data dictionaries should be aligned with the working document UNEP/MED WG.520/4 “Monitoring and Assessment Scales, Assessment Criteria, Thresholds and Baseline Values for the IMAP Common Indicators 3, 4 and 5 related to sea birds” and raised concern about the feasibility of applying the indicated monitoring methods by all the countries underlining the fact that these data standards were quite demanding.

49. The Secretariat invited the participants to send their comments by written no later than 7 April 2022 and underlined that the revised documents that would be updated following the comments raised by the participants during and after the meeting would be further discussed and finalized during the OWG meetings.

50. A representative of a Contracting Party requested the support of INFO/RAC on the use of the IMAP Info System and on how to upload the data into the platform by organizing dedicated trainings at the national level.

51. The Meeting’s final conclusions related to these agenda items are presented in Annex 3 of this report.

Agenda Item 9: Any Other Business

52. No other matters were raised for discussion.

Agenda Item 10: Conclusions and Recommendations

53. Under this Agenda Item, the participants were invited to review the draft Conclusions and Recommendations. The Meeting approved the Conclusions and Recommendations as slightly amended by the Meeting and contained in **Annex III** to the present report.

Agenda Item 11: Closure of the Meeting

54. Mr Khalil ATTIA, welcomed the progress achieved by Contracting Parties in the implementation of the roadmap for the 2023 MED QSR. After the expression of usual courtesies, the Chair declared the Meeting closed on Tuesday, 29 March 2022, at 11.30.

Annex I
List of Participants

List of Participants

ALBANIA / ALBANIE (<i>vice president 3</i>)	Mr Rezart KAPEDANI E-mail: r.kapedani@gmail.com
ALGERIA/ ALGERIE	Ms. Naïma Ghalem E-mail: ghalem_nm@yahoo.fr Ms. Souad Boustila E-mail: soad-cnl@hotmail.fr Ms. Yasmine Fadli E-mail: fadjass@gmail.com Ms. Naïma Aït Mesbah E-mail: namesbah@yahoo.fr Ms. Assia Brahmi E-mail: brahmiassia66@gmail.com assia.oualikene@mpeche.gov.dz
BOSNIA & HERZEGOVINA / BOSNIE-HERZÉGOVINE	Mr. Admir ALADŽUZ E-mail: admir.aladzuz@heis.ba
CROATIA/CROATIE	Ms. Martina Marić E-mail: martina.maric@mingor.hr Mr. Jakov Dulčić E-mail: dulcic@izor.hr Mr. Branko Petričević E-mail: brankop@izor.hr
CYPRUS / CHYPRE (Rapporteur)	Mr. Lavrentios VASILIADES E-mail: lvasiliades@dfmr.moa.gov.cy
FRANCE / FRANCE	Mr Laurent GUERIN E-mail: laurent.guerin@mnhn.fr Ms. Anna LIZINSKA E-mail : anna.lizinska@mnhn.fr
GREECE/GRECE	Mr Christos MATHIOUDAKIS E-mail: ch.mathioudakis@prv.ypeka.gr Mr Georgios KARRIS E-mail: gkarris@hotmail.com
ISRAEL/ISRAEL	Ms. Ruthy YAHIEL E-mail: ruthy@npa.org.il Mr Dror E-mail: DrorZ@sviva.gov.il

<p>ITALY/ITALIE (<i>Vice President 2</i>)</p>	<p>Mr Leonardo TUNESI E-mail : leonardo.tunesi@isprambiente.it</p> <p>Ms. Giulia MO E-mail: giulia.mo@isprambiente.it</p> <p>Mr Luca CASTRIOTA E-mail: luca.castriota@isprambiente.it</p> <p>Mr Giancarlo LAURIANO E-mail: giancarlo.lauriano@isprambiente.it</p> <p>Ms. Silvia LIVI E-mail: silvia.livi@isprambiente.it</p> <p>Mr Nicola Baccetti E-mail : nicola.baccetti@isprambiente.it</p> <p>Mr Francesco Pezzo E-mail : francesco.pezzo@isprambiente.it</p> <p>Ms. Caterina Maria Fortuna E-mail : caterina.fortuna@isprambiente.it</p> <p>Ms. Angela Paglialonga E-mail : angela.paglialonga@isprambiente.it</p>
<p>LEBANON/LIBAN</p>	<p>Mr Jeff GERGES E-mail: j.gerges@moe.gov.lb</p>
<p>LIBYA/LIBYE</p>	<p>Mr Abdulmula HAMZA E-mail - abdhamza@gmail.com</p> <p>Mr Esmail SHAKMAN E-mail: shugmanism@yahoo.com</p>
<p>MALTA/MALTE</p>	<p>Ms. Roberta DEBONA E-mail: roberta.a.debono@era.org.mt</p> <p>Ms. Maria Clara CREMONA E-mail: maria-clara.cremona.1@era.org.mt</p>
<p>MOROCCO/MAROC (<i>Vice president 1</i>)</p>	<p>Ms. Sabah TAHARI E-mail: sabah_tahari@yahoo.fr</p>
<p>MONTENEGRO / MONTÉNÉGRO</p>	<p>Ms. Slavica PETOVIC E-mail: kascelanslavica@gmail.com</p> <p>Ms. Slađana GVOZDENOVIĆ NIKOLIĆ E-mail: sladjana87gvozenovic@gmail.com</p>
<p>SLOVENIA/SLOVÉNIE</p>	<p>Ms. Tina CENTRIH GENOV E-mail: tina.centrih-genov@zrsvn.si</p> <p>Mr Borut MAVRIČ E-mail: borut.mavric@nib.si</p>

SPAIN/ESPAGNE	Mr Francisco MARTINEZ E-mail: Ms. Aina CARBONEL E-mail: ana.carbonell@ieo.es Ms. Lydia PNG-GONZALEZ E-mail: lydia.png@ieo.es Mr. Jose Carlos BAEZ E-mail: josecarlos.baez@ieo.es
TURKEY/TURQUIE	Mr Emrah MANAP E-mail: emrah.manap@csb.gov.tr emrah.manap@gmail.com

**REPRESENTATIVES OF OTHER INTERGOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS REPRESENTANTS
D'AUTRES ORGANISATIONS INTERGOUVERNEMENTALES**

<p>ACCOBAMS Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and Contiguous Atlantic Area <i>Accord sur la Conservation des Cétacés de la Mer Noire, de la Méditerranée et de la Zone Atlantique Adjacente</i></p>	<p>Ms. Célia LERAVALLEC E-mail: cleravallec@accobams.net</p> <p>Ms. Julie Belmont E-mail: jbelmont@accobams.net</p> <p>Ms. Lea David E-mail : lea.david2@wanadoo.fr</p>
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**REPRESENTATIVES OF NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS AND OTHER INSTITUTIONS
REPRESENTANTS D'ORGANISATIONS NON-GOUVERNEMENTALES ET AUTRES INSTITUTIONS**

<p>CIESM Mediterranean Science Commission <i>Commission internationale pour l'exploration scientifique de la mer Méditerranée</i></p>	<p>Mr. Mohamed Hichem KARA E-mail: kara_hichem@yahoo.com</p>
<p>EEA European Environment Agency <i>Agence européenne pour l'environnement</i></p>	<p>Ms. Natacha CARVALHO E-mail: natacha.carvalho@eea.europa.eu</p>

**UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME - COORDINATING UNIT AND COMPONENTS
OF THE MEDITERRANEAN ACTION PLAN PROGRAMME DES NATIONS UNIES POUR
L'ENVIRONNEMENT - UNITÉ DE COORDINATION ET COMPOSANTES DU PLAN D'ACTION
POUR LA MÉDITERRANÉE**

<p>UNEP/MAP - PNUE/PAM United Nations Environment Programme /Mediterranean Action Plan <i>Programme des Nations Unies pour</i> <i>l'Environnement/Plan d'Action pour la</i> <i>Méditerranée</i></p>	<p>Ms Joanne Foden E-mail: joanne.foden@un.org</p> <p>Mr Lucas Cyran Spieser E-mail: lucas.spieser@un.org</p> <p>Mr Philippe Theou E-mail: philippe.theou@un.org</p> <p>Mr Christos Ioakeimidis Email: christos.ioakeimidis@un.org</p>
<p>MED POL-The Programme for the Assessment and Control of Marine Pollution in the Mediterranean <i>Programme d'évaluation et de contrôle de la</i> <i>pollution marine en Méditerranée</i></p>	<p>Ms. Jelena KNEZEVIC E-mail: jelena.knezevic@un.org</p>
<p>INFO/RAC-Regional Activity Centre for Information and Communication <i>Centre d'Activités Régionales pour</i> <i>l'Information et la Communication</i></p>	<p>Ms. Lorenza Babbini E-mail: lorenza.babbini@info-rac.org</p> <p>Mr Arthur PASQUALE E-mail: arthur.pasquale@info-rac.org</p> <p>Ms. Francesca CATINI E-mail: francesca.catini@info-rac.org</p> <p>Mr Alessandro Lotti E-mail : alessandro.lotti@info-rac.org</p>
<p>PAP/RAC - Priority Actions Programme/Regional Activity Centre <i>Centre d'Activités Régionales du Programme</i> <i>d'Actions Prioritaires</i></p>	<p>Mr Ivan SEKOVSKI E-mail: ivan.sekovski@paprac.org</p>

SECRETARIAT / SECRÉTARIAT

<p>SPA/RAC Specially Protected Areas Regional Activity Centre <i>Centre d'Activités Régionales pour les Aires</i> <i>Spécialement Protégées</i></p> <p>E-mail : car-asp@spa-rac.org</p>	<p>Mr Khalil ATTIA Director E-mail: director@spa-rac.org</p> <p>Mr Mehdi AISSI Project Officer- EcAp/IMAP E-mail: mehdi.aissi@spa-rac.org</p> <p>Ms. Asma YAHYAOU Associate Project Officer- IMAP-MPA (IMAP component) E-mail: asma.yahyaoui@spa-rac.org</p> <p>Ms. Samar KILANI Project assistant – EcAp MED III E-mail: samar.kilani@spa-rac.org</p> <p>Mr Atef OUERGI Programme Officer - Ecosystem Conservation</p>
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	<p>E-mail: atef.ouerghi@spa-rac.org</p> <p>Ms. Lobna BEN NAKHLA Programme Officer - Species Conservation E-mail: lobna.bennakhla@spa-rac.org</p> <p>Ms. Dorra MAOUI E-mail: dorra.maaoui@spa-rac.org</p> <p><u>SPA/RAC's consultants</u></p> <p>Ms. Argyro ZENETOS Non-indigenous species' expert E-mail: zenetos@hcmr.gr</p> <p>Ms. Marika GALANIDI Non-indigenous species' expert E-mail: marika.galanidi@gmail.com</p> <p>Mr Benjamin METZGER Sea birds' expert E-mail: ben.lanius@gmail.com</p> <p>Ms. Dilek SAHIN Sea birds' expert E-mail: dileksahin88@gmail.com</p> <p><u>Interpreters</u></p> <p>Ms. Hanem ATTIA E-mail: sonovision.services@planet.tn</p> <p>Ms. Hela GAIDA E-mail: itis.interpretation@gmail.com</p> <p>Ms. Nadia ZOUITEN E-mail: nadiazouiten555@gmail.com</p> <p>Mr Mondher KLAI E-mail : kalai_mondher@yahoo.fr</p> <p><u>Zoom technical support</u></p> <p>Ms. Catherine PICHETTE E-mail: catherinepichette@kubidez.com</p>
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Annex II
Agenda of the Meeting

Agenda

- Agenda Item 1:** Opening of the Meeting
- Agenda Item 2:** Organizational Matters
- Agenda Item 3:** 2023 Med QSR structure and outline content template, and status of Common Indicators and Ecological Objectives
- Agenda Item 4:** Monitoring and Assessment Elements for the IMAP Common Indicators related to sea birds
- Agenda item 5:** Baseline for the IMAP Common Indicator 6 related to Non-Indigenous Species
- Agenda item 6:** Data Dictionaries and Data Standards for the Common Indicators 3, 4 and 5 related to species
- 6.1. Data Dictionaries and Data Standards related to Marine Mammals
- 6.2. Data Dictionaries and Data Standards related to Marine Turtles
- 6.3. Data Dictionaries and Data Standards related to Sea Birds
- Agenda Item 7:** Any Other Business
- Agenda Item 8:** Conclusions and Recommendations
- Agenda Item 9:** Closure of the Meeting

Annex III
Conclusions and Recommendations

**Meeting of the Ecosystem Approach Correspondence Group on Monitoring (CORMON),
Biodiversity and Fisheries
Videoconference, 28-29 March 2022**

Draft Conclusions and recommendations

Introduction

1. The Specially Protected Areas Regional Activity Centre (SPA/RAC) of the United Nations Environment Programme / Mediterranean Action Plan - Barcelona Convention (UNEP/MAP) organized the Meeting of the Ecosystem Approach Correspondence Group on Monitoring (CORMON) for Biodiversity and Fisheries (hereinafter referred to as “the Meeting”), on 28 and 29 March 2022, via videoconference.

Participation

2. The following Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention were represented at the Meeting: Albania, Algeria, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Croatia, Cyprus, France, Greece, Israel, Italy, Lebanon, Libya, Malta, Montenegro, Morocco, Slovenia, Spain and Turkey.

3. The Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and Contiguous Atlantic Area (ACCOBAMS), the Mediterranean Science Commission (CIESM) and European Environment Agency (EEA) were represented as observers.

4. The Coordinating Unit for the Mediterranean Action Plan - Barcelona Convention Secretariat (UNEP/MAP), the Information and Communication Regional Activity Centre (INFO/RAC), the Programme for the Assessment and Control of Marine Pollution in the Mediterranean (MED POL) and The Priority Actions Programme/Regional Activity Centre (PAP/RAC) were represented at the Meeting.

5. SPA/RAC acted as the secretariat of the Meeting.

Agenda Item 2: Organizational Matters

6. The Meeting agreed that the rules of procedure for meetings and conferences of the Contracting Parties to the Convention for the Protection of the Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean and its Protocols (UNEP/IG.43/6, Annex XI) would apply *mutatis mutandis* to their deliberations.

7. The Meeting unanimously elected the following officers:

Chairperson:	Mr Abdulmula Hamza (Libya)
Vice-chairpersons:	Ms. Sabah Tahari (Morocco)
	Mr Leonardo Tunesi (Italy)
	Mr Rezart Kapedani (Albania)
Rapporteur:	Mr Lavrentios Vasiliades (Cyprus)

8. Following the presentation by the Secretariat, review and discussion of the relevant working documents, the Meeting agreed on the following conclusions and recommendations:

Agenda Item 3: 2023 Med QSR structure and outline content template, and status of Common Indicators and Ecological Objectives

UNEP/MED WG.520/3 (*presented for discussion by UNEP/MAP*)

9. The Meeting welcomed the work undertaken by the Coordinating Unit and the MAP Components to develop the 2023 Med QSR structure and outline content template, and the update on the status and progress of the Common Indicators and Ecological Objectives with respect to the seven Milestones in the 2023 QSR Roadmap (UNEP/MED WG.520/3).

10. The Meeting noted that the proposed structure of the 2023 Med QSR is built on the methodology, structure, and content of the QSR approved by the 8th EcAp Coordination Group (WG.514/12 Meeting Report Annex II, 9 September 2021). The Meeting endorsed the proposed structure for the chapters of the 2023 Med QSR, with the understanding that it is a living document and will be adapted, as appropriate, during the process of the Ecological Objective–Common Indicators assessments.

11. The Meeting agreed that written comments should be shared by no later than 7th April 2022.

12. The Meeting recognized the necessity of Contracting Parties to upload their quality-controlled data collected since the last QSR in 2017 to the IMAP Info System platform managed by INFO/RAC, particularly on habitats and non-indigenous species so as to ensure the quantitative assessment nature of the 2023 Med QSR.

13. The Meeting requested further information on the projects managed by UNEP/MAP Secretariat that will contribute to the 2023 Med QSR. To this end the SPA/RAC and UNEP/MAP Secretariats will prepare and disseminate a short description of the projects. More detailed elements should notably be developed (through parallel works, as ongoing related projects) on biodiversity indicators' integration and gaps analysis and be reviewed by online experts' groups to be presented at the next CORMON.

Agenda Item 4: Monitoring and Assessment Elements for the IMAP Common Indicators related to sea birds

UNEP/MED WG.520/4 (*presented for discussion and endorsement by SPA/RAC*)

14. The Meeting acknowledged the efforts leading to the elaboration of the document, including the mobilization of national expertise through the informal Online Working Group, and endorsed the document for its use for the purpose of the 2023 Med QSR preparation, pending written comments to be provided by Contracting Parties by 7 April 2022 the latest.

Agenda item 5: Baseline for the IMAP Common Indicator 6 related to Non-Indigenous Species

UNEP/MED WG.520/5 and UNEP/MED WG.520/Inf.3 (*presented for discussion and endorsement by SPA/RAC*):

15. The Meeting acknowledged the efforts leading to the elaboration of the document, including the mobilization of national expertise through the informal Online Working Group (OWG), and endorsed the document for its use for the purpose of the 2023 MED QSR preparation, pending written comments to be provided by Contracting Parties by 7 April 2022 the latest.

Agenda item 6: Data Dictionaries and Data Standards for the Common Indicators 3, 4 and 5 related to species

UNEP/MED WG.520/6; UNEP/MED WG.520/7 and UNEP/MED WG.520/8 (*presented for discussion and endorsement by INFO/RAC*)

16. The Meeting acknowledged the work done by the INFO/RAC to complete the Common Indicator set available for the 2022 IMAP call reporting. It generally endorsed the structure and the content of Data Standards and Data Dictionaries for IMAP Common Indicators 3, 4 and 5, pending the final review expected through final inputs no later than 7 April 2022. Final documents obtained through

the revised inputs should be discussed with the support of the relevant OWGs during April 2022, to timely allow the integration of the correspondent data flows in the IMAP Info System by June 2022.

17. The Meeting highlighted the need to review the mandatory and non-mandatory fields in the Data Standards and Data Dictionaries on marine mammals, marine turtles and marine birds. It also recommended that Data Standards and Data Dictionaries include tables for key aggregated information (e.g., abundance or mortality within any relevant strata) that will be necessary to draft the next QSR and that they are given the highest priority for submission. Attention should also be placed on reporting the data ownership of the different datasets. Further work needs to be carried out on defining the levels of disclosure of the elaborated data so as to safeguard aspects of species' protection and data ownership.

18. The Meeting requested the INFO/RAC to revise the mandatory and non-mandatory fields in the Data Standards and Data Dictionaries on marine turtles to consider the requirements of the countries with high and low nesting density, in line with the document on the assessment elements of the CI on sea turtles.

19. The Meeting expressed its appreciation for the work done and requested INFO/RAC to further assist the Contracting Parties to deliver satisfactory quality-assured data to the IMAP Info System in a harmonized way through the organization of dedicated trainings. The Meeting pointed out the need of a more comprehensive picture from the Secretariat about raw data use, experts to involve and about the process in place to feed the Med QSR. In addition, the Meeting raised concern on the fact that the data processing (both data handling and data analysis) of currently required data (raw data) requires a scientific and technical infrastructure and advice making procedures that the Barcelona Convention should have in place.

20. The Meeting welcomed the efforts made towards cooperation between regional partners to exchange data and requested the Secretariat to strengthen synchronization between the different regional assessment initiatives during the forthcoming exercises.

21. The Meeting recommends that INFO/RAC and SPA/RAC coordinate to ensure the full consistency between tables contained in "Data Dictionaries and Data Standards" for the Common Indicators 3, 4 and 5 of marine mammals, sea turtles, sea birds and all specific parameters to ensure that a table is created for each feature and each species, whenever they differ from the elaborated and ongoing work on assessment elements.