



UNITED  
NATIONS

EP

UNEP/MED WG.508/Inf.4



UNITED NATIONS  
ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME  
MEDITERRANEAN ACTION PLAN

19 May 2021  
Original: English

Second Meeting of the Working Groups of Experts on developing the new Regional Plans on Urban Wastewater Treatment and Sewage Sludge Management, and for updating the Regional Plan on Marine Litter in the Mediterranean

Videoconference, 25-26 May 2021

**Agenda item 5: Updated Regional Plan on Marine Litter Management in the Mediterranean**

**DRAFT REPORT**

**First Meeting of the Working Group of Experts on Upgrading the Regional Plan on Marine Litter Management in the Mediterranean**

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UNEP/MAP  
Athens, 2021

**REPORT**

**First Meeting of the Working Group of Experts on Upgrading the Regional Plan on Marine  
Litter Management in the Mediterranean**

**FINAL DRAFT**

**17 May 2021**

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## Introduction

1. In accordance with the United Nations Environment Programme/Mediterranean Action Plan (UNEP/MAP), Programme of Work 202-2021 adopted by the 21<sup>st</sup> Ordinary Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols (Napoli, Italy, 2-5 December 2019), the Secretariat organized the First Meeting of the Working Group of Experts on Upgrading the Regional Plan on Marine Litter Management in the Mediterranean (hereafter referred to as the Regional Plan). The Meeting, which was held by videoconference, was organized by UNEP/MAP Secretariat (MED POL Programme).

2. The objective of the Meeting was to review the draft upgraded Regional Plan with the aim to reaching consensus on the proposed updates which were prepared by MED POL in collaboration with MAP components, as appropriate, taking fully into consideration the Main Elements of the Six Regional Plans to Reduce/Prevent Marine Pollution from Land-Based Sources included in Decision IG.24/10 (COP 21).

## Participation

3. The meeting was attended by representatives from the following Contracting Parties: Algeria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Cyprus, Egypt, European Union, France, Greece, Israel, Italy, Lebanon, Libya, Malta, Montenegro, Morocco, Slovenia, Spain, Tunisia and Turkey. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), including the Mediterranean Action Plan/ Barcelona Convention Secretariat (UNEP/MAP) were also represented, along with the following Mediterranean Action Plan Components: the Mediterranean Pollution Assessment and Control Programme (MED POL); the Regional Activity Centre for Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP/RAC); the Regional marine Pollution Emergency Response Centre for the Mediterranean Sea (REMPEC); the Information and Communication Centre of the Barcelona Convention (INFORAC); and the Priority Actions Programme Regional Activity Centre (PAP/RAC)

6. The following non-governmental organizations and other institutions were represented: Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and Contiguous Atlantic Area (ACCOBAMS); the Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission – the Helsinki Commission (HELCOM); the French Research Institute for Exploitation of the Sea (INFREMER); the Hellenic Centre for Marine Research/ Institute of Oceanography (HCMR); the Hellenic Marine Environment Protection Association (Helmepa); the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN); the Mediterranean Association to Save the Sea Turtles (MEDASSET); the Mediterranean Information office for Environment, Culture and Sustainable Development (MIO-ECSDE); the Mohammed VI Foundation for Environmental Protection; PlasticsEurope; and the World Wide Fund For Nature (WWF Mediterranean)

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

## Agenda item 1: Opening of the Meeting

8. The Meeting was opened at 10:00 AM (EST) on 31 March 2021 by MED POL Programme Officer, Mohamad Kayyal, on behalf of the Coordinator of the United Nations Environment Programme/ Mediterranean Action Plan - Barcelona Convention Secretariat, Mr. Gaetano Leone. He provided an overview of the impact of the marine litter problem on the Mediterranean highlighting the key pivotal role of the existing Regional Plan for creating a coherent approach to regional implementation of legally binding measures, mirroring global work and developments on marine litter pollution. He emphasized key emerging issues including plastics and microplastics, and the need to integrate approaches, such as circular economy, into the measures of the upgraded Regional Plan. He also explained the mandate given to MED POL in COP 21 (Decision: IG.24/10) which endorsed the main elements of six new/updated Pollution Reduction Regional Plans constituting the framework for

the proposed updates for upgrading this Regional Plan. He also explained that the update of the Regional Plan has been undertaken through a cooperation agreement with UNEP GRID Arendal.

**Agenda item 2: Organizational matters**

*a) Rules of Procedure for the Meeting*

10. The Rules of Procedure for Meetings and Conferences of the Contracting Parties to the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean and its Protocols was applied mutatis mutandis to the present Meeting (UNEP/IG.43/6, Annex XI).

*b) Election of Officers*

11. Subject to Rule 20 of the rules of procedure mentioned at para. 2(a) for meetings and conferences of the Contracting Parties, the Meeting elected one (1) President, three (3) Vice Presidents and one (1) Rapporteur from among the participants, as follows:

Chair: Mr. Francois Galgani, France  
Vice-Chair: Ms. Sabine Ghoson, Lebanon  
Vice-Chair: Ms. Milica Mandic, Montenegro  
Vice-Chair: Ms. Micallef Tamara, Malta  
Rapporteur: Mr. Yassine Marzoughi, Tunisia

*c) Adoption of the Provisional Agenda*

12. Subject to Rule 14 of the Rules of Procedure mentioned at para. 2(a), the proposed agenda appearing in document UNEP/MED WG.491/1 and annotated in the UNEP/MED WG.491/2 document was reviewed and accepted, as proposed by the Chair. The Annotated Agenda was adopted by the Meeting as appended to the present document.

*d) Organization of Work*

13. The discussions were proposed to be held in three plenary sessions over two days, from 10:00 to 12:00, 13:00 to 15:00, and 15:30-17:30.

14. Simultaneous interpretation in English and French was available for all sessions. All documentation was available in English and French. Participants were encouraged to download the documentation onto their computers in advance of the session. The meeting was recorded for future reference.

15. The Meeting addressed all Agenda items during the two-day meeting. The Meeting closed on 1 April 2021 after adopting its Conclusions and Recommendations appended to this present document.

**Agenda item 3: Review of draft Regional Plan on Marine Litter Management in the Mediterranean**

16. Under this agenda item, MED POL Programme Officer, Mohamad Kayyal, presented document UNEP/MED WG.491/3 “Draft Updated Regional Plan for Marine Litter Management in the Mediterranean” to the Meeting for their consideration and review. Discussions were carried out on each Article of the Regional Plan, focusing on the proposed updates and newly proposed measures with the aim of revising the Regional Plan as appropriate for further consideration at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Working Group Meeting expected to be held back-to-back with the MED POL Focal Points Meeting in May 2021.

17. With regard to Article 3 of the Regional Plan (Definitions of Terms), the Secretariat presented the new definitions. There was agreement as expressed by the meeting participants with the proposed additional definitions for microliter, microplastics, primary microplastics, secondary microplastic, abandoned, lost or otherwise discarded fishing gear (ALDFG), Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) and dumping, with some modifications on the definitions. A number of meeting participants introduced new definitions on fishing gear, garbage and leakage.

18. With regards to Article 4 (Objectives and Principles), and further to presentation of the changes in this Article by the Secretariat, there was agreement with the updated text under the “Objectives” subsection providing further clarifications to the existing list of objectives. There was also agreement on the list of “Principles.” Additional text was introduced linking the principle of sustainable consumption and production to circular economy approaches. Also a principle related to sound decision making was proposed. A number of participants requested to move references made to BAT, BEP and Circular Economy under Principles and to place them under Definitions in Article 3. At the conclusion of these discussions, the Meeting approved proposals made by the Secretariat with modifications and approved the additional recommendations made by the participants.

19. Concerning Article 7 (Integration of marine litter measures into the LBS National Action Plans (NAPs)), Meeting participants were in agreement with the proposed changes introduced by the Secretariat related to the periodic reporting on implementation of measures of this Regional Plan as part of the NAPs.

20. Regarding Article 8 (Legal and Institutional Aspects), Meeting Participants were in agreement to explicitly note that marine litter includes plastic waste and microplastics. Participants were also in agreement with proposed new measures on strengthened sanctions in case of non-compliance with national regulations, and on integrating the informal waste sector in regulated waste collection and recycling schemes.

21. Concerning Article 9 (Prevention of Marine Litter) which covers four topics: (i) economic instruments, (ii) circular economy for plastics, (iii) land-based source and (iv) sea-based sources, and further to the Secretariat’s overview of proposed updates with regards to:

- a. *Economic instruments:* Meeting participants were in agreement with proposed updates of EPR addressing prevention measures and incentives for manufacturers; as well as new measures related to creation of safe/formal markets for recycled plastics; innovative business practices to prevent plastic waste generation; and best practices to create incentives for fishing vessels and for delivering waste in port reception facilities.
- b. *Circular economy for plastics:* Meeting participants were in agreement with proposed new measures, with modifications, on aspects related to management and regulating plastic waste including phasing out chemical of concerns used as additives in plastic produced. Meeting participants also agreed on the proposed updating of the existing measure related to sustainable procurement policies to reflect the need to prioritize the phase out of single use plastic products and promoting reuse options.
- c. *Land-based sources:* Several Meeting participants expressed their objection to the new proposed measure promoting replacement of plastics in accordance with national waste management policies. Participants recommended deletion of measure. With regards to the proposed measure to identify and assess impacts of marine litter accumulations in upstream regions of rivers, participants accepted this proposal with minor modifications. Finally, a number of Meeting participants requested that the measures related to closing the existing illegal dump sites and enforcement of measures to combat dumping, which are included under the subsection of sea-based sources be moved to the subsection under land-based sources. The Meeting agreed with all proposals.
- d. *Sea-based sources:* Meeting participants accepted the proposed new measure aiming at preventing and reducing marine litter impacts in MPAs, adding also SPAMIs. A number

of participants introduced three new measures related to cruise ships entering their ports to ensure implementation of procedures for minimizing collection, storage, processing and disposal of garbage; promoting best practices to prevent plastic waste in tourism and leisure activities; and response and remediation regarding litter from maritime accidents. A number of participants also requested that the existing measure for implementing “fishing for litter” environmentally sound practices is moved to Article 10. The Meeting agreed with all proposals.

22. With regard to past deadlines for completion of measures included in the existing Regional Plan under Article 10, a number of participants requested that these dates be updated. The Secretariat argued that these past dates reflect measures which should have been completed already, and as such they should be maintained in case some countries did not meet them; noting that as such they would constitute a national priority necessitating immediate implementation. The Meeting concurred with the explanation of the Secretariat.

23. Concerning Article 10 (Removing Existing Marine Litter and its Environmentally Sound Disposal), Meeting participants did not agree to two proposals made by the Secretariat regarding promoting new technologies for removal or marine litter and for receiving, delivering and treating marine plastic litter from ships. These were removed. Regarding the proposal for deleting the measure related to charging reasonable costs for use of port reception facilities (as this measure is duplicated under another Article), REMPEC requested to maintain this measure as reference is made to it specifically in their ongoing work. Meeting participants agreed to this request. They also agreed for moving existing measure dealing with “fishing for litter” from Article 9 under sea-based sources to this Article 10 further to in-depth discussion and arguments between the proposing country and others.

24. Under Article 12, a number of Meeting participants introduced minor modifications related to IMAP and to basing work on EcAp Correspondence Group on Marine Litter. The Meeting participants agreed to proposed new measures whereby national monitoring programmes include aspects related to monitoring litter originating from riverine inputs and litter monitoring in high sensitivity areas, as well as in MPAs and SPAMIs.

25. Under Article 16 (Enhancement of Public Awareness and Education), the Meeting did not reach conclusion on the actions to be taken for enhancing public awareness and education. One Country raised concern that actions proposed are focusing mainly on ships and fishing vessels, noting that additional actions can be proposed for land-based sources too. The Secretariat suggested to prepare additional measures for the consideration of the Working Group during the 2<sup>nd</sup> Working Group Meeting to be held in May 2021. The Meeting agreed to the proposal of the Secretariat.

26. Under Article 17 (Major groups and stakeholder participation), the Meeting participants embarked on an extensive discussion regarding the nature of the groups and stakeholders that should participate for the effective implementation of the Regional Plan. Many proposals were submitted, discussed and reviewed; however, no conclusions were reached with regards to proposals set forth in the Regional Plan. The Secretariat suggested to undertake further work to identify the appropriate stakeholder groups for the consideration of the Working Group during the 2<sup>nd</sup> Working Group Meeting to be held in May 2021. The Meeting agreed to the proposal of the Secretariat.

27. Concerning the annexes, there were agreement by the Meeting for the Secretariat to update the work plan in Annex I, update potential research topics in Annex II, delete the section on elements for national biennial report in Annex III. The Meeting also agreed with the proposal of the Secretariat to provide a list of potential guidelines that may be considered for potential Annex IV.

28. Following questions and concerns raised by the floor on the proposed timetables for implementation of some measures under Articles 8 and 9, the Secretariat recommended that these proposals should be left in square brackets for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Meeting of the Working Group, and even for the consideration of the Meeting of the MED POL Focal Points, if necessary, because the issue of

implementation timetable is not only technical in nature, but also requires other important considerations on the national level, including aspects of political and socioeconomic nature. Having explained this aspect, the Secretariat encouraged members of the Working Group to express their concerns from a technical point of view for the suggested timetable. Further to receiving their inputs by 20 April at the latest, the Secretariat will incorporate their suggestions into the Regional Plan.

29. The conclusions and recommendations under this agenda item are presented in Annex III of this report.

**Agenda item 4: Preliminary review of socioeconomic data for key measures of the Marine Litter Regional Plan**

30. Under this agenda item, the Secretariat gave a short presentation on the survey questionnaire to be disseminated to members of the working group with the aim to answer pertinent questions contained in this questionnaire for undertaking the socioeconomic assessment.

31. Following the clarifications provided by the Secretariat regarding the specific data and information required in the survey questionnaire, discussions were held with members of the Working Group and answers were provided to their enquiries by the Secretariat. Agreement was reached that members of the Working Group will attempt to complete/coordinate completion of this questionnaire by 16 April for submission of the socioeconomic assessment report for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Working Group Meeting in May 2021.

32. The conclusions and recommendations under this agenda item are presented in Annex III of this report.

**Agenda item 5: Any Other Business**

33. No issues were raised for this agenda item on “any other business”.

**Agenda item 6: Conclusions and Recommendations**

34. The Meeting participants reviewed, amended and adopted the draft conclusions and recommendations resulting from the Meeting discussions with the Rapporteur and appended to this Meeting Report.

**Agenda item 7: Closure of the Meeting**

35. The Chair closed the Meeting at 17:30 on Thursday 1 April 2021.



**Annex I**  
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**Annex II**  
**Agenda of the Meeting**

### **Agenda of the Meeting**

- Agenda item 1:** Opening of the Meeting
- Agenda item 2:** Organizational matters
- Agenda item 3:** Review of draft Regional Plan on Marine Litter Management in the Mediterranean
- Agenda item 4:** Preliminary review of socioeconomic data for key measures of the Marine Litter Regional Plan
- Agenda item 5:** Any other Business
- Agenda item 6:** Conclusions and Recommendations
- Agenda item 7:** Closure of the Meeting

**Annex III**  
**Conclusions and Recommendations**

## Conclusions and Recommendations

On 31 March and 1 April 2021, the First Meeting of the Working Group of Experts on Upgrading the Regional Plan on Marine Litter Management in the Mediterranean was held by videoconference. The meeting was organized by UNEP/MAP Secretariat (MED POL Programme).

Further to its deliberations, the Meeting reached the following conclusions:

1. The Meeting reviewed and approved the Draft “Upgraded Regional Plan on Marine Litter Management in the Mediterranean in the Framework of Article 15 of the LBS Protocol” (UNEP/MED WG.491/3), revised and contained in Annex I. The Meeting concurred with the proposed updates to the existing articles and underlying measures of the Regional Plan, with modifications incorporating legal, institutional and technical inputs and amendments.
2. The Meeting requested additional time for internal consultations at national level regarding proposed amendments entailing deadlines and/or specific commitments under Articles 9 and 10 of the Regional Plan. The Meeting indicated that the comments from the Meeting participants would be provided no later than 20 April 2021 in order to finalize the draft document for its final review by the 2<sup>nd</sup> Meeting of the Working Group of Experts on Upgrading the Regional Plan on Marine Litter Management, with the aim to be submitted to the upcoming Meeting of the MED POL Focal Points (26-27 May 2021).
3. The Meeting requested the Secretariat to update Articles 16 and 17 of the Regional Plan in line with comments received by the participants during the Meeting.
4. The Secretariat presented the scope and approach for the socio-economic assessment of the upgraded Regional Plan on Marine Litter Management in the Mediterranean, as well as the “Questionnaire for collecting countries’ specific socioeconomic data related to key measures of the Marine Litter Regional Plan” (UNEP/MED WG.491/Inf.4) aiming to collect countries’ specific information. The Contracting Parties agreed to support the Secretariat by providing adequate and specific inputs to the questionnaire to allow for a pertinent analysis of the socioeconomic aspects contributing to the cost of implementation of the Upgraded Regional Plan. The Meeting agreed to provide the requested support by duly responding to the questionnaire no later than 15 April 2021.
5. With regard to the existing annexes of the Regional Plan, the Meeting agreed to the following:
  - Annex I: *to be updated further to amendments proposed in this meeting and complemented by the results of the socio-economic assessment with particular focus on revising the cost implications deriving from the implementation of the Upgraded Regional Plan. The Final draft workplan will be submitted to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Working Group Meeting in May 2021 for review and approval.*
  - Annex II: *to be updated with additional research topics. The Final draft Annex II will be submitted to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Working Group Meeting in May 2021 for review and approval.*
  - Annex III: *The Revised Reporting Format: Section 04-LBS Protocol (Decision IG.23/1 – COP20) and its specific Parts III, IV and V to be updated, if needed, in line with the provisions of the Upgraded Regional Plan. Annex III to be removed from this Plan.*
  - Annex III bis: *to be updated with existing and future Guidelines supporting the implementation of the measures of the Upgraded Regional Plan. List to be provided during the 2<sup>nd</sup> Meeting of the Working Group of Experts.*