

PROGRAMME: 1. TOWARDS A POLLUTION AND LITTER FREE MEDITERRANEAN SEA AND COAST EMBRACING CIRCULAR ECONOMY

General introduction

43. The elimination and improved management of marine and coastal pollution from sea and land-based sources, using ecosystems-based management, remains a core priority for the Mediterranean through cooperation amongst countries and partnerships for effective implementation of the Protocols addressing pollution, the thematic Regional Plans, Strategies and the NAPs. The importance of this issue is highlighted in a number of recent assessment reports, such as the EEA-UNEP/MAP joint Horizon 2020 Mediterranean report, the 2015 Marine Litter Assessment in the Mediterranean, the 2016 SAP-Med evaluation, the 2017 Quality Status Report and the 2020 EEA-UNEP/MAP Towards a cleaner Mediterranean report and the 2019 State of the Environment and Development report. Whilst levels of major pollutants show a decreasing trend important issues remain, especially for heavy metals in coastal sediments, as well as in known hotspots associated with urban and industrial coastal areas and wastewater. There is a recognized need to also assess the threat emerging pollutants, such as plastic additives, cosmetics, plasticizers, microplastics, nanoparticles, and pharmaceuticals, to ecosystems and human health. In addition, further work will be undertaken regarding the impacts of underwater noise. Major attention is also needed with regards to marine litter, as the Mediterranean is one of the areas in the world most highly affected by marine litter due to an increase in plastic use, littering, inadequate and ineffective waste management, the lack of proper separate collection and recycling, unsustainable consumption patterns, high pressures from tourism and shipping, coupled with significant riverine inputs. More than 730 tonnes of plastic enter the Mediterranean Sea every day, and plastics account for up to 95 to 100% of total floating marine litter, and more than 50% of seabed litter. Single-use plastics represent more than 60% of the total recorded marine litter on Mediterranean beaches, which is typically generated from beach recreational activities. Lost, abandoned or otherwise discarded fishing gear (ghost-gear) in particular is a major concern and source of marine litter, resulting also in entanglement of marine animals, including sharks, dolphins, seals and turtles, and risks of disseminating invasive species, disease and parasites in endemic habitats.

44. This Programme, aims to provide effective support to the Contracting Parties in delivering concrete achievements in the strategic directions explained above, using up-to-date integrated, ecosystem approach-based management and nature-based solution tools, as well as One Health approach. This will lead to ensure a transformational change towards an environmentally-sustainable and socially-inclusive integration into sectoral policies of pollution prevention and control including the ICZM Protocol, the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development, the Strategy on Pollution from Ships and the Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) Action Plan, translated onto actions on the ground in the respective up-to-date NAPs. Key consideration is given in particular to the impacts of pollution and marine litter on human health, building upon long cooperation with WHO, and also in line with UNEP/MAP's Strategic response to the COVID-19.

45. This is achieved through the effective implementation of the Regional Plans adopted in the framework of LBS Protocol of the Barcelona Convention and NAPs as also facilitated through the SAP MED Policy Framework and associated targets, the Mediterranean Strategy for the Prevention of and Response to Marine Pollution from Ships (2022-2031); the Offshore Action Plan; and the Regional Action Plan on SCP and the Common Regional Framework for Integrated Coastal Zone Management.

Contribution to global and regional priorities and targets

46. Programme 1 directly contributes to a number of **global and regional objectives and targets** including the SDG's and multilateral environmental agreements (the Minamata Convention, the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions, and the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer) and the International Maritime Organization (IMO) Conventions (e.g., MARPOL, OPRC and Dumping Conventions). It also considers the resolutions of UNEA 3 (2017) and UNEA 4 (2019) towards a pollution-free planet including with regards to innovative pathways to achieve Sustainable Consumption and Production and environmental sound management, Marine Plastic Litter and Microplastics and, Environmentally Sound Management of Waste and Sound Management of Chemicals and Waste and Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-Based Activities. It also contributes to the implementation of relevant EU Directives and Strategies, including the Green Deal zero-pollution ambition, the Marine Strategy Framework Directive, where applicable, the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) and relevant UN regional priorities. Finally, Programme 1 is in line with UNEP's Marine and Coastal Strategy 2020-2030 Strategic Objective 2.

47. For the development of Programme 1, due consideration was given to the recommendations of two reports on Analysis of Existing Regional Measures identifying gaps vis a vis the achievement of Good Environmental Status and potential new/updated regional and national measures, building on the work that has been since undertaken in line with these recommendations, envisaging measures development and implementation in a number of sectors such as agriculture, aquaculture, desalination etc., further consideration of microplastics, integration of circular economy approaches into marine litter management, etc.

Programme 1 key relevant SDG targets:

Goal 14. Life below Water:	Target 14.1
Goal 6. Clean Water and Sanitation:	Target 6.3
Goal 8. Decent Work and Economic Growth:	Targets 8.3 and 8.4
Goal 9. Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure:	Target 9.4
Goal 11. Sustainable Cities and Communities:	Target 11.6
Goal 12. Responsible Consumption and Production:	Targets 12.4 and 12.5

Objectives

48. Programme 1 includes the following strategic objectives linked to the Pollution control related Protocols of the Barcelona Convention:

1. To eliminate to the extent possible, prevent, reduce, monitor and control selected/regulated pollutant inputs, oil discharges and spills;
2. To prevent, reduce, monitor and control marine litter generation and its impact on the coastal and marine environment;
3. To consolidate the development and implementation of national programmes for circular economy businesses (including the polluter pays principle) addressing main sources of pollution, including plastics and promote SCP in key economic sectors and lifestyles which are upstream drivers of chemicals and plastic pollution

49. This will also contribute overall to the Ecosystem Approach achievement of Good Environmental status and the Ecological Objectives and indicators defined in the Integrated Monitoring

and Assessment Programme of the Mediterranean Sea and Coast and Related Assessment Criteria as well as the objectives of the 2016-2025 Mediterranean Strategy on Sustainable Development.

Relevant Ecological Objectives:

- EO5. Human-induced eutrophication is prevented, especially adverse effects thereof, such as losses in biodiversity, ecosystem degradation, harmful algal blooms, and oxygen deficiency in bottom waters;
- EO9. Contaminants cause no significant impact on coastal and marine ecosystems and human health;
- EO10. Marine and coastal litter does not adversely affect coastal and marine environments;
- EO11. Noise from human activities causes no significant impact on marine and coastal ecosystems;

Outcomes

50. The 2022-2027 MTS will achieve the following outcomes and associated Indicative targets/Indicators.

Outcome 1.1. Strategies and Action plan addressing marine litter and plastics developed and implemented through comprehensive, coherent and collaborative approaches

51. The Mediterranean Sea is one of the most marine litter affected areas in the world. To achieve this outcome the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona will be supported to implement the UNEP/MAP Regional Plan on Marine Litter Management in the Mediterranean, considering other global and regional processes i.e., the IMO Action Plan to address marine plastic litter from ships, the Global Partnership on Marine Litter (GPML) and Basel Convention Plastic Waste Partnership. Actions will include the development and application of harmonised approaches and tools, the provision of technical support for the drafting of legislation and cooperation agreements between public and private stakeholders (i.e. Regional and National Plastic Pacts), as well as capacity building, pilot actions and awareness raising activities. Through these activities UNEP/MAP will strengthen prevention and control measures to reduce Land- and Sea-based sources marine litter and plastic pollutions in the Mediterranean, thus contributing to the GES. Priority will be given to actions which address: 1) single-use plastics which represent more than 60% of the total recorded marine litter on Mediterranean beaches; 2) recycling, including support to the private sector for the creation of a lucrative market based on recycled products (subsidies, incentives, etc.); 3) the harmonization of technical standards., 4) Strengthened control and regulation of recycled plastic; 5) Collection of beach litter including technical and financial support from municipalities, campaigns, etc.

Outcome 1.2. A holistic and efficient response to land and sea-based pollution, as a part of overall Ecosystem Approach policy for the Mediterranean, (chemicals, contaminants, eutrophication, noise, oil and emerging pollution) for a sustainable Mediterranean coastal and marine ecosystem is implemented

52. Outcome 1.2 focuses on measures dealing with land-based pollution including negotiating and adopting new/update legally binding Regional Plans containing measures and timetables for their implementation in a number of sectors; updating national actions plans, pilot actions on the national level to eliminate hazardous chemicals; updated guidelines and technical standards developed and implemented to facilitate transfer of knowhow, sharing best practices and promoting transfer of

knowhow among Contracting Parties; targeted support for the implementation of the Dumping and Hazardous Waste Protocols and compliance with their obligations including joint activities with London Dumping Protocol and Basel Convention Secretariats as well as with Stockholm convention for the management of obsolete chemicals. This will include the implementation of common approaches and tools to update, test, interlink and implement national and sub-regional operational systems for preparedness and response to marine pollution from ships, the establishment of a regional financing mechanism (i.e. “Blue Fund”), avoiding overlapping and maximizing synergies with existing mechanisms, through a collaborative and harmonised enforcement system, the provision of technical support as well as capacity building, and awareness raising activities. Finally, in order to avoid costly remediation actions and irreversible impacts on environment and health, this outcome will also develop strategies to prevent the use of toxic chemicals, in particular those POPs listed under the Stockholm Convention, and promote alternatives to toxic chemicals and promote zero-waste initiatives by the Contracting Parties. This will be achieved through technical assistance to strengthen national policy frameworks regulating the use of POPs and toxic chemicals and through the development of mechanisms to accompany companies in phasing out certain hazardous chemicals. Likewise, access to information on Chemicals and products and pathways for a transition to a Circular Economy Free of Toxic Chemicals will be improved. The issue of discharging the effluents of sulphur scrubbers directly into the water should also be addressed.

53. Through these activities UNEP/MAP will reinforce the prevention of, response to and the enforcement of measures to eliminate chemicals, contaminants, eutrophication, noise, oil and emerging pollution in the Mediterranean, thus contributing to the GES.

Outcome 1.3. Systemic approaches for Circular Economy, eco-innovation as well as Sustainable Consumption and Production incorporated into key sectors of activity which are main sources of pollution

54. The promotion of eco-innovation and innovative business models is a major leverage point to prevent pollution. By adopting Circular Economy and SCP approaches, sustainable business models are based on the principle of preventing pollution and saving resources. Through eco-innovation, circular, life-cycle and system thinking approaches (including the promotion of product durability reusability, upgradability and reparability) and eco-design, industrial symbiosis, businesses are able to design out waste and pollution and keep products and materials in use.

55. Actions foreseen under this Outcome will promote networking among public, private and non-profit Business Support Organizations (BSOs) and Financial Institutions (FI) gathered in National Partnerships for Sustainable/Circular Business Development. Regional exchange and networking will also be promoted at Mediterranean level. Capacities for green business development of the BSOs and FI will be reinforced through training programmes and provision of methodologies and tools. BSOs will also be supported to deliver programmes for eco-innovation, circular economy-based business development targeting green entrepreneurs, while FI will be engaged in national and regional fora and working groups. These actions will also encourage the uptake of Green Public Procurement (GPP) practices to support the systemic transition towards circular economy.

Outcome 1.4. One Health approach developed and implemented, linking human and ecosystems health with pollution reduction and prevention, taking into account lessons learnt from the COVID-19 pandemic.

56. While health has overall improved in the region, air pollutants, new lifestyles and consumption patterns are raising increasing health concerns. Climate change also affects social and environmental determinants of health – i.e. clean air, safe drinking water, sufficient food and secure shelter. The “One

Health” approach is “a cross-cutting and systemic approach to health based on the fact that human health and animal health are interdependent and linked to the health of the ecosystems in which they co-exist.”

The air polluting emissions can contribute to adverse effects on human health (e.g. lung cancer, cardiovascular illnesses and asthma), as well as on the environment. Due to lack of sufficient water resources, several Mediterranean countries revert to reuse treated wastewater for irrigation and aquifer recharge, as well as use in sludge in agriculture. These activities without harmonized minimum water quality requirements, entail significant risk on human health. Recent scientific reports have shown a direct correlation between air pollution as well as population infection with the COVID-19 virus. Infection was monitored through the quality of effluents in terms of virus load in wastewater effluents.

57. To ensure that a One Health approach is applied in the Mediterranean region, relevant partnerships will be established with regional and global organizations (e.g. WHO, World Bank, FAO, IMO, other international agencies, etc.). Actions will aim at the reduction of air polluting emissions, deriving from the maritime sector, considering the utilization of alternative energies and the implementation of the Mediterranean SO_x Emissions Control Area (ECA), as a whole, once designated, as well as, possibly widening of the work towards a cost-benefit case, including socioeconomic aspects, for NO_x ECA, covering the whole Mediterranean Sea, and possible way forward, while acknowledging the existing NO_x ECA studies; strengthen the health-related dimension of LBS Protocol and its Regional Plans; publish a study on COVID-19 impacts on environment and development in the Mediterranean. All of the above will be achieved through the organization of Med-wide conferences; the preparation of relevant feasibility technical studies; the provision of technical support, as well as capacity building and awareness raising activities.