

PROGRAMME 4: TOWARDS THE SUSTAINABLE USE OF COASTAL AND MARINE RESOURCES INCLUDING CIRCULAR AND BLUE ECONOMY

General introduction

88. The circular and blue economy concept, which includes Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) is a response to the aspiration for sustainable development, given the growing pressure of consumption and production on the world's resources and environment. The Regional Action Plan on Sustainable Consumption and Production in the Mediterranean and the SoED Report both recognize that patterns of consumption and production need to be changed to decouple human development from degradation of the marine and coastal environment. The SCP Action Plan gives guidelines for a shift towards sustainable consumption and production patterns, long-term sustainability, a circular economy and new paradigms in the use of resources, while taking into account climate change and contributing to the United Nations 2030 Agenda. Furthermore, as the SoED Report highlights, the increasing attractiveness of coastal regions and cities comes with a concentration of the population in urban coastal areas, with a decline in rural economic and population dynamics, with less than 50% of national populations living in rural areas in all but two Mediterranean countries today. Recently, new activities such as renewable marine energies or the extraction of marine minerals and organisms have emerged and coexist with other maritime activities, such as offshore oil and gas, maritime transport, and with Marine Protected Areas. This multiplication and intensification of sometimes conflicting maritime uses represents new challenges for achieving or maintaining Good Environmental Status of the Mediterranean. A good planning of the sea space is essential to avoid conflicts between current and emerging sectors, while creating synergies and enhancing cost effectiveness of activities at sea.

89. Programme 4 brings together essential, integrated and cross-cutting approaches to ensure the sustainable use of coastal and marine resources, implementation of the Mediterranean Strategy on Sustainable Development, the – worldwide unique – ICZM Protocol and the Common Regional Framework for Integrated Coastal Zone Management (adopted in 2019 at COP 21), the Regional Action Plan on Sustainable Consumption and Production in the Mediterranean (adopted in 2016 at COP 19), and in line with the Conceptual Framework for Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) in the Mediterranean, Blue economy and related COP decisions and recommendations. ICZM and MSP have a special role to play, as a transversal policy, with strategic options, plans and management measures, which can integrate and reflect on the same coastal geographic unit (with its terrestrial and marine parts) all thematic policies and horizontal dimensions, encompassing development measures, environmental protection, SCP, adaptation to climate change etc. Furthermore, a combined implementation of diverse actions, involving policy makers, businesses, retailers, academia and civil society is needed, in order to redesign in an innovative manner, the way in which goods and services are produced and consumed to drive the revitalisation of industrial and socio-economic development towards non-pollutant, no-waste, low-carbon, resource efficient, socially inclusive, green and circular economies. A regional approach to planning at sea is essential, especially for environmental impacts and renewable energy production.

Contribution to global and regional priorities and targets

90. Programme 4 directly contributes to all SDG Goals 14 and in particular Goals 6, 8, 9, 11 and 12. It also considers a number of UNEA resolutions, in particular UNEA 4 (2019) resolutions on Innovative pathways to achieve sustainable consumption and production; Addressing environmental challenges through sustainable business practices; and Ecosystem-based adaptation. The outcome of UNEA 5 with its theme of “*Strengthening Actions for Nature to Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals*” is of particular relevance. At the regional level, Programme 4 contributes to the work of all partners in the region including the objectives of the European Green Deal, EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030, zero-pollution ambition, MSFD and MSPD, where applicable, as well as UfM’s work on Blue Economy. It is also in line with UNEP’s Marine and Coastal Strategy 2020-2030 Strategic Objective 4.

91. For the development of Programme 4, 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, i.e. integrate circular economy in the policy and regulatory instruments implementation, strengthen the application of MSP linked with ICZM, enhance implementation of the Offshore Protocol, etc.

Programme 4 key relevant SDG targets:

Goal 12. Responsible Consumption and Production:	Targets 12.1, 12.2, 12.4, and 12.5 and 12a
Goal 11. Sustainable Cities and Communities:	Targets 11.4, et 11.6
Goal 8. Decent Work and Economic Growth:	Targets 8.3, 8.4 and 8.9
Goal 9. Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure:	Target 9.4
Goal 6. Clean Water and Sanitation:	Targets 6.5 and 6.6

Objectives

92. Programme 4, in addition to the contribution to the objectives of programme 1, addresses the following strategic objectives, linked to the objectives of the ICZM Protocol and its Common Regional Framework adopted by COP 21, and the objectives of the Regional Action Plan on Sustainable Consumption and Production in the Mediterranean adopted by COP 19 and the MSSD:

1. To facilitate the sustainable development of coastal zones by ensuring that the environment and landscapes are taken into account in harmony with economic, social and cultural development;
2. To ensure the sustainable use of natural resources, particularly with regard to safe water use, though, notably, more sustainable consumption and production patterns and the promotion of the circular economy;
3. To achieve coherence between public and private initiatives and between all decisions by the public authorities, at the national, regional and local levels, which affect the use of the coastal zone;
4. To provide innovative services and products, taking advantage of the significant advances with regards to digital technology, and strengthen technical capacities of businesses, entrepreneurs, financing agents, and civil society organisations, contributing to the conservation and sustainable management of biodiversity and ecosystems;

93. These in turn also contribute to the following Ecological Objectives adopted by COP 17:

Relevant Ecological Objectives:

- EO 6. Sea-floor integrity is maintained, especially in priority benthic habitats;
- EO 7. Alteration of hydrographic conditions does not adversely affect coastal and marine ecosystems;
- EO 8. The natural dynamics of coastal areas are maintained and coastal ecosystems and landscapes are preserved;

Outcomes

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

Outcome 4.1. Sustainability of coastal and marine resources achieved through the synergetic implementation of planning and management approaches, including the adequate consideration of Land-Sea Interactions (LSI).

95. Action under this outcome will focus on the implementation of ICZM and MSP at national, regional and as appropriate sub-regional level, as the most effective approach to manage potential conflicts among various sectoral policies (such as conflicts for space, resources, infrastructures etc.), as well as between maritime and terrestrial policies. In line with the Common Regional Framework for ICZM adopted by COP 21, Contracting Parties will be supported in the development or update of national and as appropriate sub-regional strategies for ICZM, and the implementation of national and/or transboundary Coastal Area Management Plans (CAMPs) and other integrated coastal and marine plans. In this context, special emphasis will be placed on the application of MSP, particularly addressing Land-Sea Interaction and adaptation to climate change. Another important operational direction will go towards the main coastal and marine sectors in order to increase their ownership of sustainability and ecosystem-based management principles and objectives. The achievement of this outcome's objectives will be strengthened with targeted support provided to priority coastal areas for the development of water, food, energy and ecosystems nexus assessments and endorsement of relevant Strategies and Action Plans.

Outcome 4.2. Sustainable Blue and Green Economy tools and approaches in the context of Sustainable Development and MSSD implementation.

96. In order to adapt human activities to the carrying capacity of the Mediterranean ecosystems and to achieve their Good Environmental Status (GES), it is necessary to accelerate the dynamics embracing Circular and Green Economy approaches. A particular attention should be given to the sectors having a main impact in the coastal and marine ecosystems, including sectors of the Sustainable Blue Economy, as the population continues to grow in coastal and urban areas and as Mediterranean countries, communities (societies) and economies are dependent on natural coastal and maritime resources to create wealth, provide jobs, and continue local development (SoED). A regional strategy on sustainable tourism will be developed. The implementation of this Outcome will be framed within the context of the implementation of the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development and its flagship initiatives and the SCP Regional Action Plan; those regional strategic and forward-looking frameworks will be reviewed in 2024-2025, taking into account inter alia scenarios of the MED 2050 foresight study and regional measures supporting the development of green and circular businesses. Technical support will be provided to strengthen national policy frameworks, support the green and blue economy sectors in integrating circular economy measures, and develop

pilot actions, flagship initiatives and dissemination activities. Regional mechanisms for monitoring the implementation of the MSSD and SCP Regional Action Plans will be strengthened.

97. Measures to increase the efficiency and sustainability of Mediterranean ports, including marinas (Green ports initiative) will be envisaged as Blue economy concrete tools to respond, in particular, to the adverse effects of the maritime and tourism sectors in the Mediterranean, and with the view to contribute to the decarbonisation and reduction of air pollutant emissions in the Mediterranean. The Green ports initiative, which aims at adapting port infrastructures to environmental sustainability standards, will be explored and promoted in the Mediterranean.

Outcome 4.3. Innovative environmental management and economic instruments implemented for the protection and efficient use of coastal and marine resources.

98. Limiting environmental degradation largely relies on proper planning of the use of coastal and marine space and resources. Instruments such as land stewardship, environmental fiscal instruments, payment for ecosystem services, compensation schemes, etc., come to support policy- and decision-making processes; this calls for a detailed elaboration of these instruments, economic analysis for the assessment of various policy options and measures, and strengthening of the Mediterranean stakeholders' capacities to use them. Innovative solutions can be also linked to pilot activities in Mediterranean countries as identified through relevant initiatives, such as the BlueMed Initiative for Research and Innovation for Blue Jobs and Growth. Regarding "innovative services and products" could you, please, add a point to digitalization, too.

Outcome 4.4. Measures defined within the Mediterranean Offshore Action Plan applied at regional level and by each Contracting Party within their jurisdiction to ensure the safety of offshore activities and reduce their potential impact on the marine environment and its ecosystem.

99. The increase of offshore activities in the Mediterranean region, in particular in countries with little experience in the field could lead to long term adverse consequences on the fragile ecosystems and biodiversity of the Mediterranean Sea, and to negative consequences on the economies of the Mediterranean coastal States, especially in relation to tourism and fisheries, should these activities not be regulated and monitored adequately. Offshore renewable energy sources also present a great potential in terms of energy production and job creation. It is therefore important to have a long-term planning of these developments already today, so as to balance this opportunity with sustainability. The actions foreseen under this outcome pursue the effort of Contracting Parties to the Offshore Protocol through the implementation of the Mediterranean Offshore Action Plan by strengthening its governance framework leading to a sustainable and operational cooperation and partnership framework, with a view to delivering common guidelines and standards, and capacity building program, while also defining the way forward for the period after 2024, being the end date of the current Action Plan's implementation timeframe, which will include the formulation of a new/updated Action Plan to effectively implement the Offshore Protocol in coherence with relevant global commitments.