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**UNITED NATIONS
ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME
MEDITERRANEAN ACTION PLAN**

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First Steering Committee of the SEMPA project

Athens, Greece 7 February 2024

Report of the Meeting

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Introduction

1. The First Steering Committee of the EU-funded “Bolstering Mediterranean biodiversity and Marine and Coastal Protected Areas for Nature” (SEMPA) Project was organized by UNEP/MAP Secretariat in Athens, Greece, on 7 February 2024. The SEMPA Project is funded by the European Union’s (EU) Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR)
2. The main objectives of the Meeting are to:
 - a) Take stock of the actions taken during the first six months of the project;
 - b) To present the annual project workplan, the project budget and the communication plan; and
 - c) To provide recommendations on the way forward.

Participation

3. The SEMPA Project Steering Committee Meeting was attended by representatives of Egypt, Israel, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, the European Commission DG NEAR, the EU-Delegation in Egypt, UNEP/MAP Coordinating Unit and SPA/RAC.

Agenda Item 1: Opening of the 1st SEMPA Steering Committee

4. The Meeting was opened on Wednesday, 7 February 2024, at 14:30 (EET - UTC/GMT+2) by the UNEP/MAP-Barcelona Convention Coordinator and the European Commission DG ENV Task Manager in charge of the Project.
5. Ms. Tatjana Hema, UNEP/MAP Coordinator, warmly welcomed the participants to this Steering Committee and underscored the significance of the project funded by the European Commission. While emphasizing that Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) are a critical priority for the Barcelona Convention, she reiterated that this project builds upon on the IMAP MPA project and aims at bolstering countries in their national IMAP endeavors, with a particular focus on enhancing the effectiveness of MPAs in accordance with the 30x30 strategy, both in terms of coverage and geographic representation. She also stressed that SPA/RAC will provide support and coordinate activities related to MPAs in conjunction with the UNEP/MAP Coordinating Unit.
6. Mr. Frederic Fourtune, Task Manager at the European Commission (DG NEAR), expressed gratitude to UNEP/MAP and, in turn, extended a warm welcome to the participants attending the first Steering Committee of the project. He emphasized the urgent need to address biodiversity loss, citing it as one of the most pressing threats to the Mediterranean Sea. Mr. Fourtune reiterated the EU's unwavering commitment to supporting the implementation of this project and other initiatives under the Barcelona Convention.

Agenda Item 2: Organizational Matters

7. Recalling the Terms of References (ToRs) and relevant mandate of the Steering Committee Meeting included in the project document, the UNEP/MAP Coordinator invited all participants for a *tour de table* which allowed all participants to briefly introduce themselves to each other and to the organizations which they represent.
8. The Project Steering Committee reviewed and adopted the provisional agenda as included under UNEP/MED WG.579/1 “Provisional Agenda” and annotated under UNEP/MED WG.579/2 “Provisional Annotated Agenda”. The Meeting Agenda and timetable are included in **Annex II** to the present report.

9. Further to the adoption of the agenda, UNEP/MAP presented to the members of the Steering Committee the mandate of the project Steering Committee, which were subsequently approved by the Meeting.

Agenda Item 3: SEMPA Project: Objectives, Annual Work Plan, Budget and Progress

10. The interim UNEP/MAP Project Manager, Mr. Christos Ioakeimidis, with the support of Mr Atef Liman, SPA/RAC MPAs Projects Officer, presented the Working Documents UNEP/MED WG.579/3 “Progress Report”; UNEP/MED WG.579/4 “Annual Work Plan and Budget”; and UNEP/MED WG.579/5 “Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting”. They informed the Meeting on the progress achieved during the period August 2023 to January 2024.

11. The progress of the project's implementation encompasses the enhancement and support for the development of a comprehensive and coherent Mediterranean network of well-managed and monitored Marine and Coastal Protected Areas (MCPAs), as well as promoting and supporting the implementation of the Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme (IMAP) at regional, sub-regional, and national scales.

10. The interim UNEP/MAP Project Manager, Mr. Christos Ioakeimidis, informed the meeting that the PCA with SPA/RAC is in the finalization process, and that Small Scale Funding Agreements (SSFAs) have been prepared by the Coordinating Unit and sent to partner countries for signature.

12. Several Contracting Parties took the floor and expressed their gratitude to the EU for the funding and to the CU and SPA/RAC for the collaboration. They emphasized the importance of continuing boosting the network of MCPAs in the Mediterranean as well as the monitoring of IMAP in the same pilot sites of the IMAP/MPA project.

13. In response to countries representatives queries, Ms. Hema emphasized that the indicators selection will involve discussions with countries while maintaining flexibility. She clarified that IMAP sites coincide with those selected for the IMAP/MPA project and national IMAP, stressing the need of flexibility in choosing common indicators.

14. The Meeting reviewed and approved the first annual work plan and budget of the SEMPA project.

15. The Meeting's conclusions and recommendations concerning this agenda item are presented in **Annex III** to this report.

Agenda Item 4: SEMPA Project: Communication Strategy

16. The Secretariat presented the project's communication and visibility plan (UNEP/MED WG.579/5) including specific information on its objectives and target groups, the regular communication activities, and the required resources. Special attention was provided by the Secretariat on the proposed innovative communication activities.

17. Several Contracting Parties and the EU representative took the floor, welcomed the updated communication and visibility plan and commended the Secretariat's efforts towards introducing innovative communication activities and streamlining project's aspects and goals into simple-language communication messages.

18. The Meeting reviewed and approved the communication plan while stressing the importance for disseminating its products at both national and local levels and tailoring the communication messages for each target group in particular for local communities.

19. The Meeting's conclusions and recommendations concerning this agenda item are presented in **Annex III** to this report.

Agenda Item 5: Synergies with other initiatives and projects

20. Under this agenda item, the Secretariat presented the identified and foreseen synergies between other EU-funded projects and initiatives, including the newly approved EU-funded EcAp MED PLUS and ML MED PLUS projects.

21. Several Contracting Parties welcomed the information provided by the Secretariat pertinent to upcoming projects (i.e., EcAp MED PLUS, Marine Litter MED PLUS etc.), and pointed out the importance of ensuring full complementarity and synergies between those projects and the SEMPA project.

22. The Meeting's conclusions and recommendations concerning this agenda item are presented in **Annex III** to this report.

Agenda Item 6: Any Other Business

23. No other business was raised under this agenda item.

Agenda Item 7: Conclusions and Recommendations

24. The Meeting reviewed the draft conclusions and recommendations and adopted them as revised and presented in **Annex III** to this report.

Agenda Item 9: Closure of the Meeting

25. Following the customary exchange of courtesies, the Meeting was declared closed at 17:30 on Wednesday, 07 February 2024 by the Coordinator of UNEP/MAP.

Annex I

List of Participants

List of Participants**REPRESENTATIVES OF THE CONTRACTING PARTIES /
REPRESENTANTS DES PARTIES CONTRACTANTES**

EGYPT / EGYPTE	<p>Mr. Mohamed Said Abdelwarith ATTEA Department Manager at the Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency (EEAA).</p> <p>E-mail: mohamed7j@hotmail.com</p>
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MOROCCO / MAROC	<p>Mr. Mohammed El BOUCH Directeur du Laboratoire National des Etudes et de Surveillance de la Pollution. Secrétariat Général, Département du Développement Durable Ministère de la Transition Energétique et du Développement Durable</p> <p>E-mail: elbouch@environnement.gov.ma</p>
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DONOR/ DONNEUR

EUROPEAN COMMISSION/ COMMISSION EUROPÉENNE	<p>Mr. Frederic FOURTUNE (online participation) Programme manager, Environment, Water & Biodiversity European Commission DG. NEAR</p> <p>E-mail: Frederic.Foutun@ec.europa.eu</p>
EUROPEAN DELEGATION/ DÉLÉGATION EUROPÉENNE	<p>Ms. Sylvie FONTAINE (online participation) Project Officer for Environment and Climate Change Delegation of the European Union to Egypt</p> <p>E-mail: Sylvie.FONTAINE@eeas.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**

UNEP MAP COORDINATING UNIT/ PNUE PAM UNITE DE COORDINATION	<p>Ms. Tatjana HEMA (online participation) MAP Coordinator</p> <p>E-mail: tatjana.hema@un.org</p> <p>Mr. Christos IOAKEIMIDIS QSR Programme Management Officer (Temporary)</p> <p>E-mail: christos.ioakeimidis@un.org</p>
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Annex II

Agenda of the Meeting

Agenda and Proposed Timetable

Wednesday, 7 February 2024		
Time	Agenda Item	Documents
14:15 – 14:30	Registration	
14:30 – 14:45	Agenda item 1: Opening of the Meeting	
	Agenda item 2: Organizational Matters	UNEP/MED WG.579/1 UNEP/MED WG.579/2 UNEP/MED WG.579/Inf.1
14:45 – 16:00	Agenda item 3: SEMPA Project: Objectives, Annual Work Plan, Budget and progress	UNEP/MED WG.579/3 UNEP/MED WG.579/4 UNEP/MED WG.579/5
16:00 - 16:20	<i>Coffee Break</i>	
16:20 – 16:40	Agenda Item 4: SEMPA Project: Communication Strategy	UNEP/MED WG.579/6
16:40 – 17:00	Agenda Item 5: Synergies with other initiatives and projects	
17:00 – 17:10	Agenda Item 6: Any Other Business	
17:10 – 17:20	Agenda item 7: Conclusions and Recommendations	UNEP/MED WG.579/2 UNEP/MED WG.579/3 UNEP/MED WG.579/4 UNEP/MED WG.579/5 UNEP/MED WG.579/7
17:20 - 17:30	Agenda item 8: Closure of the Meeting	

Annex III

Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions and Recommendations

First Steering Committee of the EU-funded SEMPA Project

Athens, Greece, 7 February 2024

The First Steering Committee Meeting of the EU-funded SEMPA Project took place at the Royal Olympic Hotel, in Athens, Greece on 7 February 2024 at the kind invitation of UNEP/MAP. The Meeting was attended by representatives of Egypt, Israel, Lebanon, Libya and Morocco, the European Commission DG NEAR, UNEP/MAP Coordinating Unit and SPA/RAC.

Following the presentation by the Secretariat of the working documents (WG.579/1 to WG.579/5) prepared for the SEMPA Project Steering Committee Meeting, their review and discussion, the Meeting reached the following conclusions and recommendations:

- a) The Meeting thanked the European Commission for the continuous support and contribution provided on issues related to IMAP implementation and strengthening MPA sustainability in the Mediterranean.
- b) The Meeting acknowledged the instrumental role of the SEMPA Project in introducing the integrated implementation, at country/pilot level, of IMAP coupled with enhanced MPA management, as well as consolidating the experience on integrated implementation of IMAP.
- c) The Meeting approved the Terms of References (ToRs) of SEMPA Project Steering Committee.
- d) The Meeting welcomed the preparatory work undertaken by UNEP/MAP and SPA/RAC including for the preparation of the respective legal agreements (SSFAs) and agreed to provide written feedback by end of February 2024 at the latest.
- e) The Meeting approved the annual workplan and budget as presented by the Secretariat in document WG.579/3, which are subject to further adaptations and changes in line with the priorities of Beneficiary Countries, and upon common agreement.
- f) The Meeting reviewed and approved the communication plan and stressed the importance for disseminating its products at both national and local levels.
- g) The Meeting also stressed the importance of tailoring the communication messages for each target group in particular for local communities.
- h) The Meeting welcomed the information provided by the Secretariat pertinent to upcoming projects (i.e., EcAp MED PLUS, Marine Litter MED PLUS etc.), and pointed out the importance of ensuring full complementarity and synergies among these projects.
- i) The Meeting agreed to hold the next Steering Committee Meeting in February 2025 (Venue to be confirmed).

Annex IV

Revised List of Document

Provisional List of Documents**Working Documents**

UNEP/MED WG.579/1	Provisional Agenda	Agenda provisoire
UNEP/MED WG.579/2	Provisional Annotated Agenda	Agenda provisoire Annoté
UNEP/MED WG.579/3	Progress Report	Rapport d'avancement
UNEP/MED WG.579/4	Annual Work Plan and Budget	Plan de travail et budget annuels
UNEP/MED WG.579/5	Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting	Suivi, évaluation et élaboration de rapports
UNEP/MED WG.579/6	Communication and Visibility Plan	Plan de communication et de visibilité
UNEP/MED WG.579/7	Report of the Meeting	Rapport de la réunion