



UNITED  
NATIONS

EP

UNEP/MED BUR.91/3



**Mediterranean  
Action Plan**  
Barcelona  
Convention

7 June 2021  
Original: English

91<sup>st</sup> Meeting of the Bureau of the Contracting Parties to the  
Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment  
and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean and its Protocols

Teleconference, 7-8 July 2021

**Agenda Item 3: Progress Report for October 2020-May 2021**

**Progress Report by the Secretariat on the Activities Carried Out for the Period October 2020-May 2021**

For environmental and cost-saving reasons, this document is printed in a limited number. Delegates are kindly requested to bring their copies to meetings and not to request additional copies.



## Table of contents

	<b>Page</b>
<b>I. Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>II Main Activities/Outputs per PoW theme linked to specific outcome.....</b>	<b>1</b>
1 <i>Overarching Theme: GOVERNANCE.....</i>	1
2 <i>Core Theme I: LAND AND SEA-BASED POLLUTION.....</i>	12
3 <i>Core Theme II: BIODIVERSITY AND ECOSYSTEMS.....</i>	17
4 <i>Core Theme III: LAND AND SEA INTERACTIONS AND PROCESSES.....</i>	22
5 <i>Cross-cutting Theme I: INTEGRATED COASTAL ZONE MANAGEMENT (ICZM)...</i>	23
6 <i>Cross-cutting Theme II: SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION (SCP)</i>	24
7 <i>Cross-cutting Theme III: CLIMATE CHANGE.....</i>	25



## I. Introduction

1. This report covers the activities and outputs carried out between October 2020 and May 2021. The Reports by the Secretariat on Specific Issues and on Financial and Administrative Issues are prepared as separate documents, namely UNEP/MED BUR.91/6 and UNEP/MED BUR.91/5 respectively. The complementing “Progress Report by the Secretariat on the Implementation of COP 21 Decisions”, is presented as document UNEP/MED BUR.91/4.

## II. Main Activities/Outputs per Programme of Work (PoW) theme linked to specific outcome

### II.1 Overarching Theme: GOVERNANCE

#### **Strategic Outcome 1.1: Contracting Parties supported in the implementation of the Barcelona Convention, its Protocols, Regional Strategies and Action Plans**

##### Governance meetings

2. Two working meetings of the ECP took place in this period: ECP 44 (Teleconference, 19-20 January 2021) and ECP 45 (Teleconference, 29-30 March 2021). Both ECP meetings had the preparation of the new MTS as a main agenda item. Detailed information is available in the reports of the ECP Meetings (document UNEP/MED BUR.91/Inf.4).
3. The 22<sup>nd</sup> Meeting of the MCSD Steering Committee was held online on 15-16 December 2020. The meeting reviewed the work of the MCSD and MSSD related activities for the period May – October 2020. It also addressed specific issues deriving from relevant COP 21 Decisions and the mandate of the MCSD, such as the MSSD and SCP Action Plan mid-term evaluations, MSSD Flagship Initiatives (including *inter alia* the WeMed Green Business Award and the Istanbul Environment Friendly City Award), assessment studies (i.e. SoED, MED 2050, MedECC MAR1 Report), the Mediterranean Sustainability Dashboard and the integration of SCP indicators. It also included a live demonstration by the UNEP Science Division of the World Environment Situation Room (WESR), as well as a discussion on the UNEP/MAP Strategic Response to COVID-19 crisis in the Mediterranean. This meeting also discussed the preparation of the 19<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the MCSD, that will be virtually hosted by Slovenia on 7-9 June 2021.
4. The resumed session of the 16<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Compliance Committee of the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols was held on 27-28 January 2021, by teleconference. The 17<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Compliance Committee is held virtually on 10-11 June 2021. Further information is provided in the Report on Specific Issues (UNEP/MED BUR.91/6).
5. Regarding the MAP Component/Thematic Focal Points Meetings:
  - The Plan Bleu / RAC Focal Points meeting was held by video conference on 19-20 May 2021
  - The PAP/RAC Focal Points meeting was held by video conference, on 24-25 May 2021.
  - The MED POL Focal Points meeting was held by video conference on 27-28 May 2021.
  - The Meeting of Focal Points of REMPEC, was held by video conference on 31 May-2 June 2021
  - The SCP/RAC Focal Points meeting was held by video conference on 1-3 June 2021.
  - The tThird Meeting of the Barcelona Convention Offshore Oil and Gas Group (OFOG) Sub-Group on Environmental Impact was held by video conference on 3-4 June 2021.
  - The INFO/RAC Focal Points meeting is held by video conference on 14-15 June 2021.
  - The SPA/BD Thematic Focal Points meeting will be held by video conference on 22-25 June 2021.

##### Ratification of Barcelona Convention and its Protocols by all Contracting Parties supported

6. The section addressing ratification is included in document Report on Specific Issues (UNEP/MED BUR.91/6).

##### Resource mobilization, project proposals recently approved or submitted, project implementation

7. Following the kickoff meeting (20-22 July 2020) of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) – UNEP “Mediterranean Sea Programme (MedProgramme): Enhancing Environmental Security” and the seven Child Projects executed by UNEP/MAP, the Secretariat has focused efforts on the establishment of the legal instruments with executing partners to move ahead with the implementation of activities on the ground. In the present reporting period, seven of the 14 legal instruments foreseen have been established; the remaining seven are under development and anticipated to enter into force by 31 July 2021. Furthermore, the first Project Steering Committee meetings were organized for four of the MedProgramme’s Child Projects in March 2021 to take stock of progress achieved and to obtain approval from the Project Steering Committees on the annual budgets, budget revisions and annual workplans for 2021-2022.
8. Following the May 2020 approval of a Project Preparation Grant for a new GEF Project “Fisheries and Ecosystem Based Management for the Blue Economy of the Mediterranean - (FishEBM MED – GEF ID 10560), the Secretariat has initiated the preparation of the project document, in cooperation with the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM). The Implementing Agencies for the project are UNEP and FAO; the Executing Agencies are UNEP/MAP and GFCM. The full-fledged project document will be submitted to the GEF Secretariat for endorsement in

December 2021. The project financing by GEF is 7,273,973 EUR.

9. The EU-funded IMAP-MPA (4 million Euros) project execution is progressing well. The kick-off meetings in the beneficiary countries for the establishment of the National IMAP Steering Committees are progressing well (Israel, July 2021; Tunisia, October 2020; Libya, October 2020; Algeria, March 2021; Morocco, March 2021), while 2 additional meetings are under preparation in Egypt and Lebanon. & regional experts were recruited on Eutrophication (IMAP-EO5), Coast and Hydrography (IMAP-EO7/EO8), Contaminants (IMAP-EO9), Marine Litter (IMAP-EO10), and 3 regional experts for Biodiversity-NIS (IMAP EO1, EO2). Other activities in progress include the organization of the 2020 Forum of Marine Protected Areas in the Mediterranean (postponed for 2021/2022) and the development of a strategic document on MPAs and other effective area-based conservation measures in the Mediterranean, in line with the CBD Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework. The Second Steering Committee Meeting was held successfully on March 2021 with a broad participation from all beneficiary countries.
10. The two projects EU funded projects namely: “Efficient Implementation of the Ecosystem Approach-based Integrated Monitoring and Assessment of the Mediterranean Sea and Coasts in synergy with the EU MSFD” (EcAp-MED III) and Marine Litter MED II, were officially launched at the Integrated Meetings of the Ecosystem Approach Correspondence Groups on IMAP Implementation (CORMONs), which were held on 1-3 December 2020 via videoconference. The EcAp-MED III project has two aims: to further assist the seven beneficiary countries (namely Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Tunisia) to implement the Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme (IMAP); and to contribute to the preparation and delivery of the 2023 Mediterranean Quality Status Report (MED QSR), in line with the 2023 MED QSR Roadmap milestones at national, sub-regional and regional level.
11. The Legal Instruments for the activities to be executed by the MAP Components that are Implementing Partners, have been signed in April 2021. In parallel, the activities to be performed by the national Implementing Partners in the seven beneficiary countries have been identified in close consultations with two other EU-funded projects, IMAP-MPA and Marine Litter MED II. The First Steering Committee of the Project was held on 28 April 2021. It welcomed the good progress in the implementation of Project activities, despite constraints including COVID-19 restrictions; approved the revised work plan for 2021-2022, providing strategic guidance and recommendations for project implementation; and welcomed the project Communication and Visibility Plan 2021-2022.
12. The Marine Litter MED II Project has completed all administrative-related preparations and is moving ahead with the preparation of the relevant legal instruments (with SPA/RAC, BSC and with the beneficiary countries), including the nomination of dedicated project focal points. The job opening for the recruitment of a project manager was initiated in April 2021 and is expected to be finalized by summer 2021.
13. A limited number of activities has been implemented benefiting from a last extension of the Cooperation Agreement with the Italian Ministry of Ecological Transition until the end of April 2021, including support for the signature and launch of CAMP Otranto Agreement, a report on marine litter hotspot identification, support of CORMON meetings held in December 2020 and communication/dissemination activities. Discussions with Italy are ongoing for the development and signature of a new Cooperation Agreement by the end of 2021.
14. Plan Bleu/RAC submitted to the Région Sud – Provence-Alpes-Côte d’Azur (French local government) a project proposal on “Prospective méditerranéenne MED 2050 en Région SUD et participation au nouvel exercice de prospective du Plan Bleu à l’échelle du bassin méditerranéen” to support funding of MED 2050 roadmap Phase 2, as approved by COP 21, with particular focus on the module on trends: i.e. identifying structural long-term trends and possible disruptions that will be determining factors for the future of the Mediterranean basin. The total budget requested from the Région Sud – Provence-Alpes-Côte d’Azur is 80,000 Euros. The proposal has been accepted and official notification has been received in December 2020. A first assessment report has been drafted and two webinars with elected officials from Région Sud took place in April and May 2021, with a third to take place in June 2021.
15. Plan Bleu / RAC submitted, as lead entity associated with Association Air Climat and Région Sud, a project proposal on “Approche participative pour l’adaptation au changement climatique sur le territoire de la Communauté d’Agglomération Sophia – Antipolis” to Fondation de France. The project proposal went through the first screening and final evaluation is scheduled on 30 June 2021. The budget requested from the Fondation de France by the consortium amounts to 150,000 Euros.
16. Plan Bleu / RAC is a partner in two consortiums answering to call for applications in the framework of the H2020 programme. The first one (30 partners led by University College Dublin) aims at restoring wetlands and peatlands in 11 pilot sites over 5 years, consortium budget 23,000,000 Euros includes 390,000 Euros for Plan Bleu. The second one (17 partners led by CSIC Spain) at restoring coastal reefs in 4 pilot sites over 4 years, consortium budget 25,000,000 Euros (includes 650,000 Euros for Plan Bleu). Plan Bleu / RAC is also a partner in a consortium applying to become for 5 years a European Topic Center on adaptation to climate change for the European Environment Agency. The lead entity is CMCC

(Italy); the result of the application will be known by August 2021. Plan Bleu signed with Agence Française de Développement an agreement as a contribution to activities aiming at further developing 1. pilot approaches for sustainable aquaculture (in collaboration with WestMed and CIHEAM); 2. criteria and a decision-making tool to evaluate the sustainability of desalination projects; 3. participatory approaches in the Moulouya Watershed in Morocco, as a focus project of Med2050. The total budget of the agreement amounts at 70,000 Euros.

17. SPA/RAC collaborated, as a project co-leader and partner, with the European Topic Centre, University of Malaga (ETC-UMA: project leader), the Mediterranean Cities Network (MedCities), the Network of Marine Protected Areas Managers in the Mediterranean (MedPAN), the Tyre Coast Nature Reserve, Lebanon, the Municipality of Sfax, Tunisia, and the Mediterranean Coast and Sea Foundation (MEDSEA Foundation) in developing and submitting a project proposal entitled “ENhancing Socio-Ecological RESilience in Mediterranean coastal area” (ENSERES) to the EC ENI CBC MED Programme. The total budget requested from EC is 1,027,929 Euros, from which 200,000 Euros are for SPA/RAC. In April 2021, the project leader has been notified about the positive evaluation of the project. During the second half of May a negotiation phase aiming at the signature of the grant contract between the project leader (ETC-UMA) and ENI took place. The project is expected to start in June 2021.

18. The implementation of the activities of the second phase of the MAVA MedBycatch project “Understanding Mediterranean multi-taxa” (or ‘Bycatch’) of vulnerable species and testing mitigation-a collaborative approach started in October 2020 and will end in October 2022. The main activities are to continue the data collection programmes started in phase 1 and related to the incidental catch (bycatch) of the vulnerable species with the aim of developing and testing bycatch mitigation measures in the five beneficiary countries (Croatia, Italy, Morocco, Tunisia, and Turkey) that may be proposed for replication at regional level. The project provided additional support for the elaboration of the Post-2020 SAP/BIO with regard to marine living resources and to the new GFCM strategy for fisheries and aquaculture. The Project implementing partners are SPA/RAC (lead in Tunisia), GFCM, ACCOBAMS (lead in Morocco), BirdLife Europe and Central Asia (coordinator of the project), IUCN-Med, MEDASSET (lead in Turkey) and WWF (lead in Croatia and Italy). The total budget provided by MAVA is 3,976,087.29 Euros from which 415,013 Euros are for SPA/RAC.

19. Within the framework of the “Co-managed No-Take Zones/MPAs project” (July 2020-October 2022), SPA/RAC is supporting the relevant national authorities of Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia and Turkey, through a participatory approach, in updating, developing and implementing management plans for Al Hoceima National Park (Morocco), Kuriat Islands future Marine and Coastal Protected Area (MCPA) (Tunisia), Foça Special Environment Protection Area (SEPA) (Turkey) and Rachgoun Island future MPA (Algeria), to reduce the impact of fishing activities on species and habitats, based on the results of the MAVA-funded MedKeyHabitats I and II projects. Supporting national and local authorities in implementing MPA management plans is involving several types of activities going from surveillance, monitoring, engaging local stakeholders, and establishing sustainable financing mechanisms to information, communication, awareness-raising, capacity-building, networking and exchange of experience, through twinning programmes, scientific events and workshops. Furthermore, the second phase of the MAVA funded “Conservation of marine turtles in the Mediterranean countries (Marine turtles) project has started in July 2020, and is progressing well. SPA/RAC will continue strengthening good practices in Kuriat Islands (Tunisia) and scale up in new priority areas such as the Tyre Nature reserve (Lebanon) and Sirte -Farwa (Libya) through promotion of awareness and ecotourism actions.

20. The two-year 2019-2020 EU-funded Project Western Mediterranean Region Marine Oil and HNS Pollution Cooperation (West MOPoCo) was completed on 31 April 2021. A follow-up project proposal, addressing Chemical incidents in ports, is being prepared under the leadership of France, with REMPEC as a member of the Project Steering Committee, for submission to the EC's Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection department's (ECHO) call for proposals. In the second half of 2021, REMPEC in consultation with partners, will prepare a project proposal addressing the gaps identified in the West MOPoCo project, through capacity building activities and exercises, for its submission to the DG ECHO 2022 call for proposals for Union Civil Protection Mechanism full scale exercises.

21. In the context of the preparation of the Mediterranean strategy for the prevention, preparedness, and response to marine pollution from ships (2022-2031), and to ensure coordination and concertation in the preparation of projects supporting the implementation of the said Strategy, REMPEC compiled a set of project sheets, under document REMPEC/WG.51/INF.11/Rev.1. Taking into account these projects, the Secretariat and REMPEC, in consultation with IMO, submitted a concept note for a three-year “GHG Med” Project to UNDP for its consideration.

22. The Secretariat and REMPEC continued liaising with IOGP - the global oil and gas industry trade association to explore technical and financial support to implement the Offshore Action Plan and submitted a “Comprehensive Plan of Actions, including resource mobilization strategy” under document EP/MED WG.498/6, for consideration by the Third Meeting of the Barcelona Convention Offshore Oil and Gas Group (OFOG) Sub-Group on Environmental Impact (3-4 June 2021, Video-conference).

23. SwitchMed II Project executed by UNIDO, UNEP/ Economy Division and SCP/RAC was subject to an extension to add a specific component on Blue Economy. For this purpose, an additional €3M were allocated to complement the SwitchMed II activities with new Blue Economy-related outputs: €2.5M were provided by the European Commission (DG NEAR and DG MARE) and €0.5M by the Catalan Waste Agency. With that, the total contribution of the Spain, through the Catalan Waste Agency, to the SwitchMed II project reaches a total of 1,930,000 €. SCP/RAC's proposal, which was prepared after consultation with the MAP CU, MED POL, Plan Bleu/RAC and SPA/RAC, was accepted by the EC. On that basis, SCP/RAC secured 1,610,000 € for the Blue Economy outputs it intends to implement under the SwitchMed II project. The addendum to the SwitchMed II agreement between the EC and UNIDO, the lead partner, was signed in December 2020. The amendment to the Agreement between the Catalan Waste Agency-SCP/RAC and UNIDO is being finalized for this purpose, with activities expected to start by the first half of the current year
24. The project proposal "JUST2CE - A Just Transition to the Circular Economy", led by the Autonomous University of Barcelona and supported by SCP/RAC has been finally approved and funded by the Horizon EU-funded program. The grant contract has been signed by the project coordinator on 6 May 2021 and activities will start on 1 of September 2021. The Research & Innovation Action has been awarded 3.6 M€ and focuses on providing evidence-based decision support to policymakers, private stakeholders and civil society to promote transitional development and circular economy. The total budget that SCP/RAC will receive for JUST2CE is 383,750 EUR (out of a total project budget of 3,620,042.50 EUR).
25. The project proposal submitted by SCP/RAC to BeMed call targeting the implementation of solutions in Mediterranean islands specially affected by Plastic Pollution was selected for funding and an agreement was signed between BeMed and SCP/RAC at the beginning of 2021. The project was prepared together with SMILO (Small Islands Organization) and aims at Capitalizing BeMed initiative to reduce plastic pollution in Mediterranean Islands (CapiMed-Islands). It includes strong synergies with the transferring phase of Plastic Busters MPAs projects and as an overall budget of 110.000€.
26. The project proposal "RESET - RESULTS Enabling Transitions. Mapping, documenting and mainstreaming green and circular economy achievements in the MED region, for replication and policy-making" has been positively evaluated by the ENI Joint Monitoring Committee on 26 March; however, the project has been placed on a reserve list. The funding of the project is related to the approval of a major financial change of the Programme by the EC. The proposal has been developed within the framework of the ENI-CBC MED Capitalization Call for Proposals to promote capitalization, dissemination and policy uptake of relevant green and circular economy results in the Mediterranean. The consortium is led by SCP/RAC and composed by BEYOND Group (Lebanon); the University of Florence (Italy); LEADERS (Palestine) and INJAZ (Tunisia).
27. The project proposal "MED-IDEA: A Mediterranean, Innovation-Driven Entrepreneurship Accelerator" has been submitted to the EU on 7 April 2021 under the Call for Proposals "Strengthening innovation through supporting cluster cooperation and start-up ecosystems in the South Neighbourhood countries". The project is led by SCP/RAC in partnership with BUSINESSMED (Tunisia) and INJAZ Al-Arab (Jordan) and its main objective is to foster decent job creation and accelerate the transition to an inclusive sustainable economy in the Southern Mediterranean.
28. The project proposal "INPLASTICS" submitted by SCP/RAC under BRS Small Grant Programme on Plastic Waste was selected for funding. An agreement is under preparation. It will mainly aim at preparing a master module on additives in plastics to be integrated within a Master on Environmental Change Management running in Universities of Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia (MehMed Master – Erasmus +). The overall budget is 90.000 USD.

*Other activities under Strategic Outcome 1.1*

29. The preparation of the Programme of Work (PoW) and Budget 2022-2023, mandated by COP 22 through Decision IG.21/14 is progressing as per original plan, under a highly consultative process with the Contracting Parties and in coordination with MAP Components. The Coordinator with his letter dated 3 February 2021 informed the MAP Focal Points of the process to be followed for the preparation of the PoW and Budget 2022-2023 and shared a document developed by the Secretariat on the "Guiding elements for the preparation of 2022-2023 UNEP/MAP Programme of Work (PoW) and Budget" which contains detailed information on the rationale, key principles, guiding elements and timeline for its preparation and submission for clearance by the HQ. Following consultation with the MAP Components' Focal Points, the consolidated PoW was submitted to the MAP Focal Points for feedback with a letter sent by the Coordinator on 23 April 2021. Comments received by the Parties will be integrated into the PoW, including any additional input to be provided by the MAP Components/Thematic Focal Points meetings. In parallel, the preparation of the Budget has started in consultation with the MAP Components.
30. As mandated by Decision IG.24/3 the Secretariat proceeded with the mid-term evaluations of the MSSD and of the SCP Regional Action Plan under the guidance of the MCSDD Steering Committee. A stakeholder consultation was carried out under both evaluation processes with various decision-makers and stakeholders (MCSDD Members, UNEP/MAP Partners,



UNEP/MAP Components, and key stakeholders), through bilateral interviews, focus groups (webinars – online workshops) and a wide online survey. The following deliverables have been prepared in view of the SCP/RAC Focal Points Meeting and the 19<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the MCSD: UNEP/MED WG.493/5: Mid-Term Evaluation of the MSSD – Draft Final Report; UNEP/MED WG.493/6: Mid-Term Evaluation of the SCP Regional Action Plan – Draft Final Report; UNEP/MED WG.493/Inf.4: MSSD Mid-Term Evaluation: Outputs from the Stakeholder Consultation. Both evaluation reports are submitted to the MCSD meeting for its consideration (Teleconference, 9-11 June 2021).

31. Representatives from 21 out of 22 Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention, as well as representatives from relevant regional and international organisations, actively participated in the Regional Meeting of National Experts on the Mediterranean Strategy for Prevention of and Response to Marine Pollution from Ships (online, 10 March 2021) organised by REMPEC, which reviewed the second draft of the Strategy and agreed upon a set of [conclusions and recommendations](#) and upon the amended second draft of the Strategy, as amended by the Meeting. The third draft of the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031) was considered under document REMPEC/WG.51/5, by the Fourteenth Meeting of the Focal Points of REMPEC (31 May – 2 June 2021). Furthermore, the review of the Mediterranean Strategy on Ships' Ballast Water Management progressed through a consultation process launched by the Secretariat, REMPEC and SPA/RAC to collect feedback and comments from the Focal Points of MAP, REMPEC Prevention Focal Points and SPA/BD Focal Points, which were taken into account, in the final draft Mediterranean BWM Strategy (2022-2027) submitted to the 14<sup>th</sup> Meeting of Focal Points of REMPEC and the 15<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the SPA/BD Focal Points, for its consideration.

32. Plan Bleu/RAC continues work on regional tools, including possible guidelines on sustainable tourism with a particular focus on nautical activities, pleasure boating including cruises. The guidelines will be finalized in the framework of an Interreg project, with a capitalization workshop scheduled for June 2021.

33. A Concept Note and a guidance document for the Post-2020 SAP BIO elaboration was produced in consultation with the SPA/BD Focal Points; recruitment of additional experts was concluded to support SPA/RAC; the reactivation of the SAP BIO Advisory Committee, including a consultation with SPA/BD Focal Points on its updated composition, took place and online meetings were held on 2 April 2020, 16 April 2021 and 5 May 2021). National experts to assist Parties with their national contribution and national consultation processes, in support of the SAP BIO National Correspondents, were engaged and are already working on those tasks.

34. The elaboration of the Post-2020 SAPBIO is based on needs and priorities identified in a participatory way during a bottom-up process with the Mediterranean Countries at national level. It is aligned and harmonised with the global frameworks and processes in particular the Sustainable Development Goals and the ongoing draft CBD Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, expected to be adopted in October 2021 by CBD COP 15. SPA/RAC attended a series of CBD virtual sessions since July 2020 to achieve that alignment, including thematic consultations, the pre-SBSTTA 24 (Feb 2021) and SBSTTA 24 (May-June 2021) meetings, and contributed to the review of Post 2020-related CBD documents with Mediterranean views.

### **Strategic Outcome 1.2: Contracting Parties supported in compliance with the Barcelona Convention, its Protocols, Regional Strategies and Action Plans**

35. Information on reporting is provided in the “Report on Specific Issues” (document UNEP/MED BUR.91/6).

#### *Implementation of Ecosystem Approach Roadmap*

36. The implementation of the Ecosystem Approach Roadmap marked considerable progress in the reporting period and was boosted by three EU-funded projects namely IMAP MPA, EcAp MED III and Marine Litter MED II activities of which are implemented in a coordinated manner with the relevant PoW activities, ensuring complementarities and avoiding any possible overlapping.

37. A milestone on IMAP implementation in the reporting period was the organization of the Integrated CORMON Meetings, held virtually in December 2021 which reviewed important documents for the implementation of IMAP and the preparation of the 2023 MED QSR, in particular the state of play of the implementation of the 2023 QSR Roadmap including an operational plan, and main elements of the 2023 MED QSR methodological approach, outline, structure and contents. In parallel, a number of IMAP-related technical documents, including on monitoring and assessment scales, monitoring protocols, integrated assessment methodologies etc. were reviewed by the thematic CORMON meetings for validation and potential application during the QSR preparation. Key outcome documents validated from a technical point of view from the CORMON meetings will be submitted for review by the Ecosystem Approach Coordination Group Meeting in September 2021.

38. Finally, meetings of the Ecosystem Approach Task Force are held on a monthly basis including the UNEP/MAP Coordinating Unit, MED POL, SPA/RAC, PAP/RAC, INFO/RAC, REMPEC and Plan Bleu/RAC, to discuss key issues of implementation of the Ecosystem Approach Roadmap, including the organization of the Integrated and thematic CORMON

meetings and the implementation of the 2023 MED QSR Roadmap, through ongoing and planned projects, and through activities planned as part of the Programme of Work for 2020-2021, for the preparation of the 2023 MED QSR.

### **Strategic Outcome 1.3: Strengthening participation, engagement, synergies and complementarities among global and regional institutions**

39. MED POL participated in the 8<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Working Group of the Parties to the Protocol on PRTRs (16-18 December 2020, Geneva) and presented the needs and challenges for capacity building in relation to pollutant release and transfer registers (PRTRs) and experience gained during the 4<sup>th</sup> Cycle of NBB Update. MEDPOL also participated in the 13<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the International PRTR Coordinating Group (ICG-13), on 27 January 2021, and shared ongoing efforts on updating the LBS annexes and development of estimation techniques and methodologies for NBB/PRTR for diffuse sources and aquaculture. Future cooperation activities that can be carried out between the UNECE Secretariat and the UNEP/MAP Secretariat were discussed, including joint measures to promote PRTR in the Mediterranean countries in synergy with ongoing efforts and sharing of experiences on estimation techniques for better data reporting.

40. The Secretariat has built a strong cooperation with the Secretariat of the Project “EU Environment Partnership Programme for Accession (EPPA) in the Western Balkans and Turkey” which is supporting countries in the phase of accession to the EU (including Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Turkey) to achieve reforms and developments in environmental policy and governance, enhance compliance with the EU legislation and strengthen regional cooperation. Following participation of UNEP/MAP at the TAIEX EPPA Online Sub-Regional Workshop on the implementation of the Barcelona Convention held in February 2021, a bilateral call was organized with the EPPA Secretariat aiming at setting the grounds for possible further cooperation. Willingness was expressed by both sides to continue and strengthen this cooperation including through organization of regular bilateral meetings to provide update on work undertaken and possible joint actions, as well as with participation of UNEP/MAP in Ministerial Meetings organized by the EPPA Secretariat and, accordingly, participation of EPPA representatives in UNEP/MAP governance meetings with the status of observer if feasible. Thematic areas of common interest were identified including on ecosystem approach implementation, monitoring and assessment, pollution and marine litter, with a focus on microplastics, wastewater management and water retention measures, nature based solutions (and green infrastructure), climate -proof measures, MPAs and other area-based management measures etc. The Secretariat, including relevant MAP Components (MED POL, REMPEC, SPA/RAC) has participated and delivered presentations in EPPA organized workshops on the implementation of Sulphur Directive (9-10 March 2021), MPAs management (20-21 April 2021) and the second workshop on the implementation of the Barcelona Convention (4-5 May 2021) and was also invited to participate in the Regional Workshop on Managing Marine Litter to be held on 16-17 June 2021. The Secretariat has informed the MAP Focal Point of the EU on these developments.

41. Plan Bleu/RAC is preparing, with partners, four events in the context of the IUCN World Conservation Congress (on climate change/MedECC report, nature-based solutions, SoED 2019, and tools to protect biodiversity in touristic areas), including three events on a Mediterranean Stand in coordination with SPA/RAC, to highlight the Mediterranean specificity. The Congress has been first postponed to January 2021 and is now planned in the beginning of September 2021, in a hybrid format (half presential half virtual). Plan Bleu also renewed its agreement with the Union for the Mediterranean for joint support to the Mediterranean Experts on Climate and environmental Change (MedECC) activities for the period 2021 – 2023, in line with the previous agreement which expired on 31 December 2020.

42. Following a bilateral meeting between the EEA Executive Director and UNEP/MAP Coordinator, held on 18 September 2020, which reaffirmed the important results from the Joint Work Plan implementation and willingness to continue cooperation, the two Organisations jointly developed a Concept Note with key strategic priorities for future cooperation beyond 2021, i.e. building strengthened knowledge base, responding to political priorities, supporting digital transformation, ensuring coordinated networking, communication and stakeholder interaction, which was approved in a bilateral meeting held on 6 April 2021. Work is ongoing for the preparation of a Joint Work Plan around the above-mentioned strategic priorities with the aim of having it signed by COP 22.

43. REMPEC and UNEP/MAP established synergies with several organizations, as follows: with HELCOM and the Bonn Agreement in the preparation of the HNS Inter-regional Response Manual; with the Bonn Agreement, HELCOM as well as other regional seas programmes and the EU to exchange on best practice on CI19 with a view to better defining “acute pollutions” and related level to trigger monitoring of the impact to the environment; with the EC (DG ECHO), to establish a Common Emergency Communication System for the Mediterranean; with IMO, HELCOM, the Bonn Agreement, Cedre, Transport Canada, and the Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences, to review and upgrade MIDSIS-TROCS; with IMO, SCP/RAC, UfMS, the WestMED Initiative, the European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA) (through SAFEMED IV Project), and MTCC Africa to mobilize resources for the implementation of the Initial IMO Strategy on the reduction of GHG emissions from ships and support low carbon shipping and clean ports in the Mediterranean; and with REMPEC’s Partners for the drafting of the Mediterranean Strategy for the Prevention of and Response to Marine Pollution

from Ships (2022-2031) and its Action Plan focused on inter-linkages/interplay/synergies.

44. More information on partnerships is provided in the Report on Specific Issues (document UNEP/MED BUR.91/6).

**Strategic Outcome 1.4: Knowledge and understanding of the state of the Mediterranean Sea and coast enhanced through mandated assessments for informed policy-making**

45. As a follow up to the Regional Workshop “The Mediterranean Sea We Need for the Future We Want” (Venice, Italy, 21-23 January 2020), organized in the framework of the preparations for the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development 2021-2030 (Decade), the strategic orientations and related initial set of actions of relevance for UNEP/MAP were considered by the Integrated CORMONs Meeting that was organized from 1 to 3 December 2020. This Meeting provided recommendations regarding further contribution of UNEP/MAP to the achievement of the objectives of the Implementation Plan of the Decade. In this regard it should also be noted that MED POL has identified the strategic directions and orientations to guide science-policy interface within implementation of new Medium-Term Strategy of UNEP/MAP, and has participated in the preparation of the “Science We Need for the Mediterranean Sea We Want (SciNMeet)” Programme Proposal that has been submitted within the 1st Ocean Decade Call for Action of UNESCO in the context of establishing the implementation framework of the UN Decade.

46. The first draft study on trends and outlook of marine pollution from ships and activities and of maritime traffic and offshore activities in the Mediterranean, prepared by REMPEC in collaboration with MED POL, SPA/RAC, the EcAp Project Team, and the CU, was reviewed by the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention. The second draft Study submitted to the 14<sup>th</sup> Meeting of Focal Points of REMPEC was prepared integrating comments from the Contracting Parties and elements from the complementary study related to ship movement forecast for the next 5, 10, 20 and 30 years. The Study will contribute to the preparation of MED QSR 2023 and Med2050.

47. Plan Bleu/RAC has continued implementing activities included in the Med 2050 Roadmap. New members were invited to join the foresight group to improve its composition, and the scientific and advisory committees were composed, including with representatives of Parties through a call shared with all Contracting Parties. Foresight group meetings take place regularly (December 2020, January 2021, March 2021, April 2021). The Advisory Committee met in January 2021. Four publications have been issued: (i) a methodological note (ii) a publication on demographic trends; (iii) a publication comparing projected trends in the 2005 report and actual trends; (iv) a dashboard of long-term trends. The work on Fact Sheets has been initiated to collect in a synthetic way some major data and draw up hypotheses on the future challenges for 38 key themes of the “Mediterranean System”, as identified by the Foresight Group, using the DPSIR model (Driving forces - Pressures - State - Impacts - Responses). The Med 2050 platform is now fully deployed, and the MED 2050 newsletter is disseminated periodically through the MED 2050 network (more than 300 people registered to this network).

48. Plan Bleu/RAC has finalized in March 2021 an updated populated version of the Mediterranean Sustainability Dashboard for monitoring the implementation of the MSSD. This version informs all indicators, including indicator 8 which has been lacking up to now: “proportion of fish stocks within biologically sustainable levels (SDG Indicator 14.4.1)” using as main reference the 2020 GFCM / State of Mediterranean and Black Sea Fisheries (SoMFi) report. Furthermore, the Dashboard, including data and maps, is hosted on a newly designed website [obs.planbleu.org](http://obs.planbleu.org), until the migration to the UNEP central platform “World Environment Situation Room” is finalized. A pilot project to test the potential of the migration has been funded by the French agency ADEME and successfully completed by May 2021. SCP/RAC undertook the update of the SCP indicators’ list to reflect this work within the Mediterranean Sustainability Dashboard, strengthening the dashboard on green, blue and circular economies. All the information is gathered in the Regional Observatory of the Environment and Sustainable Development website, facilitating the access to information, including factsheets, publications, and thematic maps. Finally, Plan Bleu/RAC raised external funding to design a series of 9 thematic maps to illustrate the relationships between the state of environment and human activities. The series of maps allows to update the MSSD dashboard and to contribute to the 2023MED QSR. They cover the following topics: 1. Impacts of leisure boating on coastal habitats (in particular the Posidonia herbarium); 2. Location of discharge points / outlets at sea (WWTP, industries, etc.) and fishing areas; 3. Impact of prospecting and offshore drilling of fossil products on areas of biological interest at sea; 4. Impact of offshore renewable energies (wind power) on migration corridors (birds); 5. Quality of surface water and coastal ecosystems in and around large coastal towns.

49. As indicated above, the EU-funded EcAp MED III and Marine Litter MED II projects, providing a significant support in the implementation of IMAP, were officially launched in December 2021, and are now fully operational. The design of monitoring plans and preparation of field survey programmes for Pollution, Marine Litter, and Biodiversity started, with the aim to report the first sets of data by the end of 2021 for use in the 2023 MED QSR. Legal instruments with MAP Components involved in the implementation of the two projects have been signed and negotiations with the beneficiary countries are ongoing for the definition and launch of the national activities.

50. In view of ensuring that the 2023 MED QSR is based on IMAP reported data, particular attention has been paid on the further upgrade of the IMAP InfoSystem, and the provision of technical support to the Contracting Parties for the validation and upload of data. It is expected that the IMAP Info System will be fully operational to host data for all IMAP Common indicators by June 2022, which will allow Contracting Parties to report all the necessary data in time for the preparation of the 2023 MED QSR. In this respect and following relevant discussions during the Integrated CORMONs, an informal meeting was organised by the Secretariat with the Contracting Parties that are EU Member States in March 2021; the meeting reaffirmed the commitment for data submission required for the preparation of the 2023 MED QSR and raised some specific technical issues for which additional support from the Secretariat would be needed. In addition, the Secretariat undertook a preliminary mapping of relevant complementary sources, projects and partners for the development of 2023 MED QSR in line with identified data gaps, and is planning to organize a meeting with the identified partners in June/July 2021.

**Strategic Outcome 1.5: MAP knowledge and MAP information system enhanced and accessible for policy-making, increased awareness and understanding**

51. INFO/RAC, in consultation with MEDPOL, has successfully completed the migration process of the MEDPOL Info System database into IMAP Info System. The migration involved the information standards of EcAp indicators 13-14 (eutrophication) and 17 (contaminants) and the MEDPOL monitoring data for nutrients and contaminants (sediment and biota). The monitoring data have been received from Mediterranean countries over the last 15 years from 2005 to 2015-2017 and include some MEDPOL Info System datasets dating back to the early 1990s, in compliance with the LBS Protocol. The entire dataset is now available on the IMAP system in a standardised format and stored on an infrastructure able to guarantee its integrity and preservation over time. The IMAP Info System will be able to accommodate the submission of data for all Common Indicators by June 2022, in time for the Contracting Parties to submit new data sets for finalization of 2023 MED QSR.

52. The information standards related to the 11 Common Indicators selected for the pilot phase of the IMAP Info System, have been updated taking into account the criticalities found by the Countries during the testing phase of the system and the official call for the collection of monitoring data of the Mediterranean Countries has been launched in view of the next 2023 MED QSR that will have to be based essentially on monitoring data acquired according to the IMAP protocols. In the IMAP Info System, the GIS standards for the Common Indicators related to hydrographic alterations induced by coastal and offshore infrastructures and to the level of coastal artificialization have also been updated.

53. Several activities have been initiated by SPA/RAC during this period: a concept note on the governance and updating of the Marine Mediterranean Invasive Alien Species Database (MAMIAS) is prepared; the a new version of MAMIAS web application is available as beta version for internal testing purposes at <http://dev.mamias.org>; The development of a new web application for the Standard Data-entry Form is under ay; the improvement of the Mediterranean Biodiversity Platform (MBP) is underway and is expected to be ready for testing by early July 2021. The SPAMI Evaluation System web application is under development to be ready for testing in June 2021. Furthermore, SPA/RAC produced 1) The Arabic version of the Booklet "The Science of Marine Protected Areas", with the financial support of The Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation and the European Union through the IMAP-MPA and MedMPA Network projects, 2) Posters on the Kuriat Islands future MPA in Tunisia (themes: fish / non-indigenous species / birds / marine turtles) in collaboration with APAL (Agence de Protection et d'Aménagement du Littoral) and NGB (Notre Grand Bleu) association, within the Kuriat project funded by MAVA, 3) Video on the IMAP marine survey in Patok-Rodoni Bay within the GEF Adriatic project, disseminated during a national online meeting for Albanian authorities (6 April 2021) and on social media.

54. SCP/RAC has contributed to the Massive Online Open Course (MOOC) on Green Entrepreneurship launched by UNDP. The course draws on the training methodology for green entrepreneurs developed by SCP/RAC, namely the Handbook for Green Entrepreneurs "Create your Green Business". The course counts on the support from SCP/RAC, EcoEnterprises Fund, FaithInvest, Fordham University's Gabelli School of Business, Lehigh University, SEED, and The GEF Small Grants Programme.

55. REMPEC Country Profiles were reviewed and updated by partners of the EU-funded West MOPoCo Project (i.e. Algeria, France, Italy, Malta, Morocco, Spain, and Tunisia as well as Monaco) together with their respective list of response equipment and experts on MEDGIS-MAR. In cooperation with the IMO, HELCOM, the Bonn Agreement, Cedre, Transport Canada, and the Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences, REMPEC finalised the revision and upgrade of the Maritime Integrated Decision Support Information System on Transport of Chemical Substances (MIDSIS-TROCS), within the framework of the EU-funded West MOPoCo Project. REMPEC also launched a consultation process, through the Mediterranean Technical Working Group (MTWG), for the establishment of a Common Emergency Communication System for the Mediterranean within the framework of the EU-funded West MOPoCo Projec, and produced a report on the outcome of the consultation process (survey), carried out through the MTWG, which was discussed at MEDEXPOL 2020 (Monaco, 27-29 October 2020). A concept note is presented to the 14<sup>th</sup> Meeting of Focal Points of REMPEC for its

consideration.

### **Strategic Outcome 1.6: Raised awareness and outreach**

56. The content offered on the UNEP/MAP website has continued to grow. In the period from 13 October 2020 to 19 May 2021, 25 items were published in the news section, deploying the UNEP/MAP 'green renaissance' narrative (as part of the ongoing advocacy endeavour) and providing updates on the Secretariat's work and on progress achieved by Contracting Parties in several fields, including the implementation of projects and COP 21 decisions. Special features were prepared with the support of the MAP Communication Taskforce to mark International Day for Biological Diversity, World Environment Day and World Oceans Day. Visitors can now gain access to an array of knowledge products newly listed under the 'Resources' section, including flagship reports and a set of new factsheets on cross-cutting themes (climate change, biodiversity, blue economy and pollution). A new section labelled "Sustainability Awards" presents the two MSSD flagship initiatives that reward accomplishments by cities (Istanbul Environment Friendly City Award) and green entrepreneurs (MedAward). The rollout of the Arabic and French versions of the website is underway and will be finalized prior to COP 22. During the period from 1 July 2020 to 31 March 2021, 21,905 users undertook 101,010 pageviews on the UNEP/MAP website. Most viewed pages include 'Who we are' and 'What we do'. Visits are expected to further grow in the last quarter of 2021 as COP 22 approaches and interest rises from a broader range of audience groups.

57. The following of the UNEP/MAP twitter account (created in October 2019) continues to grow. The account has passed the symbolic milestone of 1,000 followers. It has also acquired the "verified account" seal by Twitter following a formal request by the Secretariat. By securing a digital presence on Twitter for the UNEP/MAP-Barcelona Convention system, the account is not only boosting institutional visibility, but also enabling new forms of digital engagement with regional actors and stakeholders, and the uptake of the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols as a regional public good. INFO/RAC strengthened MAP's presence on Twitter by adopting new communication tools such as twitter cards. Particular attention was given to the dissemination of information on the COVID-19 pandemic and the necessary transition towards a more sustainable and resilient future in the "post-COVID Med Region" (Green Renaissance).

58. With the support of the MAP Communication Taskforce, a presence is being secured for the UNEP/MAP-Barcelona Convention System through the RACs' accounts on other social media platforms, including Facebook and LinkedIn. Consistent messaging and use of relevant hashtags (#BarcelonaConvention #Act4Med) on those platforms establish linkages between activities that RAC publicize on social media and the broader UNEP/MAP-Barcelona Convention system's mandate.

59. Two issues of the quarterly newsletter MED News of the UNEP/MAP – Barcelona Convention Secretariat was prepared by INFO/RAC based on an editorial programme agreed upon by the Publishing Board chaired by the UNEP/MAP Deputy Coordinator. The newsletter features a policy-oriented editorial by the Coordinator and presents readers with a curated assortment of updates from the Components. The published issues of January 2021 and April 2021 are available on the INFO/RAC website.

60. With the support of the MAP Communication Taskforce, INFO/RAC designed and organised Digital Campaigns for UN Oceans Day, International Air Day, Mediterranean Coast Day, Earth Hour, Raise Your Voice For Nature, Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment on the occasion of International Woman Day, the dissemination of MAP's flagship publication, the SoED report, and the UN Biodiversity Day campaign. The campaigns included the development of specific initiatives aimed at the Mediterranean region, including dedicated web pages, key messages, articles on featured topics, online video libraries, storymaps and infographics, extensive networking with Mediterranean partners and countries, photo competitions, quizzes for children, vademecums on sustainable behaviour, online thematic dictionaries, and a video message from the Ambassador for the Coast on the occasion of the appointment.

61. SoED was presented to representatives of international and regional media organisations on 21 October 2020 during a media briefing that the Secretariat co-organised with UNEP and the EC in the context of EU Green Week 2020. The Secretariat worked with UNEP on preparing a press release, issued on 19 October 2020 along with the press kit prepared by PB/RAC with support from the Coordinating Unit. The press release and press kit capture the main findings of SoED and reiterate a call for a green renaissance in the Mediterranean, based on evidence contained in the report. SoED has received global attention when the Spokesperson for the UN Secretary-General mentioned the report in the daily noon briefing and through coverage on the UN website and social media accounts. In addition, the Secretariat received a request to upload SoED on the global UN iLibrary, which offers the report in English and French to a large global audience. The Secretariat delivered, with PB/RAC and the support of the MAP Communication Taskforce, a system-wide communication plan on SoED, thus increasing the report's visibility. Several journalists came forward with requests for interviews. ERT (Greece) and Casa Mediterraneo (Spain) were granted interviews by the Coordinator on themes pertaining to SoED findings. PB/RAC organized an event on the launch of the French version of SoED during the Med2020 science-policy videoconference (16-18 November 2020), with substantial discussion between scientists and policymakers towards filling knowledge gaps identified

in SoED. The Med2020 conference gathered more than 280 scientists and decision-makers. On 16 February 2021, PB/RAC co-organized with the Ministry of Local Affairs and Environment of Tunisia, with the contribution of SPA/RAC and support by ADEME, a national dissemination event on SoED, focusing on decentralisation, development planning, and integrated approach of sustainable development in Tunisia.

62. On 14 December 2020, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean (PAM), in cooperation with the Secretariat, organized an online encounter with its members and with lawmakers from across the region. Titled “Supporting the Science-Policy Interface for a green renaissance in the Mediterranean”, the meeting provided participating parliamentarians with insights into climate and environmental change in the region. On behalf of the MAP – Barcelona Convention system initiatives for science – policy interface, the PB/RAC director presented the MedECC Mediterranean Assessment Report 1 and its key findings, and the SoED.

63. Marking the 2021 edition of International Women’s Day (8 March), the Secretariat published a special feature, prepared in cooperation with SCP/RAC and SPA/RAC. “Heroes of sustainability in the Mediterranean” is a compilation of six stories highlighting the accomplishments of some of the everyday female heroes who embody the principles enshrined in the Barcelona Convention through their work. This was complemented by an article introducing gender mainstreaming in the GEF-funded MedProgramme implemented by MAP.

64. On 8 April 2021, a panel discussion titled “Making peace with nature and delivering on the SDGs in the Mediterranean” was organized within the framework of the Geneva Environment Network jointly with UNEP Europe Office. Considering the Mediterranean as a region at the crossroads, this virtual event shed light on the findings of the ‘twin reports’ sponsored by the UNEP/MAP (namely SoED and MedECC MAR1), and served as a platform to advocate for a post-COVID green renaissance centered around the SDGs and driven by a greater compliance with, and enforcement of the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols. The narrative prepared for this event, which will remain accessible from the Geneva Environment Network website along with the session’s recording, is an important asset in the UNEP/MAP pro-sustainability advocacy endeavour.

65. Having organized a MAP system-wide participation in the workshop titled “Paving the way for collective Ocean Literacy initiatives in the Mediterranean Sea”, which coincided with Mediterranean Coast Day on 25 September 2021, the Secretariat continues to take part in activities organized as part of the EU4Ocean Platform with a view to engage with partners in coordinated “Mediterranean literacy” initiatives and to deploy the UNEP/MAP narrative as part of outreach and advocacy. The Secretariat notably contributed to the first preparatory meeting on the concept of an “Ocean Literacy Mediterranean Network” on 11 May 2021.

66. Since May 2020, the Secretariat participated in the monthly meetings of the UNEP Sustainable Blue Economy (SBE) Coordination Group, established by the Marine and Fresh Water Branch, Ecosystems Division. Working with Regional Seas and other partners, this group supports the UNEP’s Sustainable Blue Economy Initiative, which aims to facilitate sustainable ocean-based economic, social and environmental benefits. An important focus of the initiative is to support UNEP’s strategic response to COVID-19, building a recovery that uses oceans within safe operating space of planet for humanity and helps deliver the Paris Agreement on climate change.

67. The Secretariat, including UNEP/MAP Components (MED POL and SPA/RAC), contributed to the preparation of the SDG14 Regional Seas Report in view of the next UN Ocean Conference. Mediterranean cases studies related to the Marine Litter Regional Plan and the Roadmap towards an ecologically representative and efficiently managed network of Mediterranean Marine Protected Areas are included in that report and detailed in its supplementary annex.

68. The Secretariat received accreditation to the Intergovernmental Conference on an international legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ Intergovernmental Conference). Process is ongoing to secure the same status to other events and processes such as the UN Ocean Conference.

69. The Secretariat contributed with substantial inputs, based on commitments of the Naples Ministerial Declaration and other relevant UNEP/MAP strategic documents, to the UfM consultation on common post-2020 priority thematic areas for the UfM Environment and Climate Action Agenda. The Secretariat, including UNEP/MAP Components, also contributed to the UfM consultation on the Blue Economy towards the preparation of the Second UfM Ministerial Meeting on Blue Economy.

70. The Secretariat closely collaborated with SDSN Med-University of Siena, Italy in the context of their “Call For Submissions of Youth Solutions for the SDGs: Mediterranean Youth Solutions Report”. The SDSN Med Youth Solutions Report 2021 will address students, young innovators and researchers from the Mediterranean region, in order to display transformative, youth-led solution projects contributing to the achievement of the SDGs in the Mediterranean.

71. Between January 2020 and 15 April 2021, PB/RAC has produced 16 publications, 11 infographics (translated in



French, English and Arabic), 2 press releases, 1 digital campaign, 75 press appearances in the media in France and internationally and 29 news on the PB/RAC website. SPA/RAC produced 1) The Arabic version of the Booklet "The Science of Marine Protected Areas", with the financial support of The Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation and the European Union through the IMAP-MPA and MedMPA Network projects; 2) Posters on the Kuriat Islands future MPA in Tunisia (themes: fish / non-indigenous species / birds / marine turtles) in collaboration with APAL (Agence de Protection et d'Aménagement du Littoral) and NGB (Notre Grand Bleu) association, within the Kuriat project funded by MAVA; 3) Video on the IMAP marine survey in Patok-Rodoni Bay within the GEF Adriatic project, disseminated during a national online meeting for Albanian authorities (6 April 2021) and on social media.

72. SPA/RAC established a partnership with the Tunisia Cinema Foundation to organize the 2020 edition of EnviroFest, the Environmental film festival in Tunisia, with the support of MedKeyHabitats II, MedBycatch, Turtles projects funded by MAVA, in order to raise awareness on marine habitats and species conservation in several coastal cities, through film screenings, debates, mini-workshops for kids, photo exhibition on marine habitats. The estimated number of spectators for the whole event is 4600. During the event of Tunis (25-29 December 2020), the SPA/RAC organised a debate, partially held online, with the participation of sharks and fisheries experts. On this occasion, the film Sharkwater extinction was made available online for a week and contributed to raise awareness about shark's conservation of more than 3K users.

73. SPA/RAC and MedPAN organized a webinar to present the new edition of MAPAMED (22 April 2021). The webinar was attended by 120 participants. SPA/RAC contributed also to several other national and regional webinars on biodiversity-related issues.

74. In November 2020, SCP/RAC organised a public webinar for the launch of the "The Business Case for tackling Plastic Packaging" <http://www.cprac.org/en/news-archive/general/the-business-case-for-tackling-plastic-packaging-is-now-available-download-it>. The report is intended as a starting point in capturing inspiring practices and accompanying resources that can assist Food & Beverage processors, brand-owners, retailers, hotels, food outlets and their suppliers in moving towards more sustainable use of plastic packaging and becoming active part of the solution to today plastic pollution crisis.

75. SCP/RAC released a publication with IPEN (International Pollutants Elimination Network) on "Plastic's Toxic Additives and the Circular Economy", based on a document prepared by SCP/RAC (BRS COP Information Document). The Publication was translated in five languages (EN, FR, ESP, AR, RUS, CHIN) and includes a joint foreword by Rolph Payet, BRS Secretariat Executive Secretary and the UNEP/MAP Coordinator. A press release was prepared, and the publication has been well received by social network and the press.

76. SCP/RAC published and distributed the publication "Circular business opportunities in the south Mediterranean: how can businesses lead the way to sustainable fashion?" developed in cooperation with the World Business Council for Sustainable Development, under the framework of the SwitchMed project. The publication has been presented in the webinar "Fostering Circular Textiles & Fashion in the Mediterranean" hosted by the Recó Festival and co-organized by SCP/RAC with TEXFOR and Confindustria Tuscany. The event had more than 400 registered attendees. The publication of the report has been part of a micro-campaign implemented by SwitchMed on Circular Textiles & Fashion. A social media campaign has been conducted in March-April 2021, following the launch of the Switcher.org the new SCP/RAC digital portal for sustainably business support programs. The campaign reached approximately 35.000 persons in the Mediterranean and engaged more than 1,100 men and women to discover key features of the new-brand platform. A demo session has also been held on 28 of April with more than 100 registered participants.

77. Together with its partners from the EU-funded ADRIADAPT project, PAP/RAC produced several awareness-raising videos related to risks of climate change and possible adaptation options, which will be uploaded to the ADRIADAPT platform to be used by the Adriatic countries and the entire Mediterranean region. Another series of video material has been produced within the GEF Adriatic project including interviews, short videos about surveys made and GES, all to be shown at the Final Conference of the project and made available through several web sites.

78. PAP/RAC has participated in more than 20 online meetings and webinars to speak about ICZM but also about the entire MAP-Barcelona Convention experience and results, e.g. as a panelist during the Climate Europe Festival organized by Met Office on 25 October 2020; the EU Green Week on 22 October 2020 to present the "Mediterranean Coastal Wetlands Governance Handbook"; the Israeli Coastal Authorities Forum on 16 December 2020 to deliver a presentation on "Climate change effects in coastal areas – vulnerability and adaptation"; the International Coastal Symposium held from Seville on 3-5 May 2021; and many more.

79. PAP/RAC hosted in its premises, on 11 November 2020, an Italian delegation led by the Italian Ambassador to Croatia, as well as a delegation from Montenegro led by the Secretary of State for Physical Planning on 19-20 April 2021. In consultation with the Maltese authorities that were supposed to host the 2021 Mediterranean Coast Day celebration, it was decided that it would be too risky to keep it planned face-to-face. Therefore, the event in Malta will be once again postponed for 2022 and this year a digital campaign similar to the one from 2020 will be organized. Some initial ideas have already been

exchanged with the MAP Information Officer.

80. MEDPOL continued to contribute to regional initiatives such as: i) support provided to ACCOBAMS Permanent Secretariat regarding organization of the workshops within Quiet Med 2 Project; ii) contribution to the final conference of HARMONIA Project; iii) participation at the EEA meetings organized for Copernicus and EMODNet Projects; iv) identification of the areas of cooperation for closer cooperation with EMODNet; v) building the interrelations of International Ocean Governance process under EU actions with preparation of new MTS; vi) creating synergies between UNEP/MAP activities and UNEP Capacity Development & Innovation Branch, SDGs and Statistics Unit; vii) consultation on the World Environment Situation Room (WESR) in relation to further upgrade of Info MAP System; viii) establishing interrelation of Global Reporting and Assessment of the State of the Marine Environment with IMAP implementation.

81. REMPEC, in consultation with the IMO's media team, launched the production of a promotional video on the work of the Barcelona Convention on the possible designation of the Mediterranean Sea, as a whole, as a SOx ECA pursuant to MARPOL Annex VI, and initiated the procurement process for a video on the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031), co-financed by MTF and IMO ITCP.

82. More information on outreach and communication is provided in the Report on Specific Issues (document UNEP/MED BUR.91/6).

## **II. 2 Core Theme I: LAND AND SEA-BASED POLLUTION**

### **Strategic Outcome 2.1: Strengthening regional implementation of the obligations under the Barcelona Convention and four pollution-related Protocols, and of programmes of measures in existing relevant Regional Strategies and Action Plans**

83. Further to the preparation of the "Evaluation report on the implementation of the Regional Plans for reduction of BOD5 from Urban Wastewater and in the Food Sector; Reduction of Inputs of Mercury; Elimination of POPs; and Marine Litter Management in the Mediterranean", reflecting the status of implementation of legally binding measures in the aforementioned Regional Plans for the biennium 2018-2019, a final evaluation of the implementation of targeted measures by the Contracting Parties (by 2021) is currently underway. This work will complement the current ongoing NAP midterm evaluation targeting to assess the implementation of the NAPs which were updated nationally based on the requirements of the legally binding measures of the Regional Plans.

84. On 13 May 2021, Cyprus announced to the Secretariat, the ratification of "The Implementation Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Cyprus, the Government of the Hellenic Republic and the Government of Israel on the sub-regional marine oil pollution contingency plan", following the "Joint Declaration of Intent on Cooperation in the Field of Environmental Protection" signed between Cyprus, Greece and Israel on 6 April 2016. The organisation of the Sub-Regional Training and the meeting of the national operational authorities responsible for the implementation of the Plan, is tentatively scheduled for 28-30 September 2021.

85. The following activities were implemented within the framework of the EU-funded West MOPoCo project: (a) REMPEC contributed to the preparation of a first draft Study, led by France, aimed at identifying and establishing operational and administrative synergies between existing sub-regional agreements in place in the Western Mediterranean region; (b) The initial draft Inter-regional HNS response was submitted to the HELCOM Response Group (Vejle, Denmark, 26-28 February 2020) and to MEDEXPOL 2020 (online, 27-29 October 2020) for consideration. The final version was produced and published in April 2021 and disseminated to REMPEC, HELCOM and the Bonn Agreement for submission to the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention, the Helsinki Convention, and the Bonn Agreement; (c) The manual and tools to evaluate oil spill management capabilities introduced in 2019 were used by Algeria, France, Italy, Malta, Morocco, Spain, and Tunisia; (d) REMPEC contributed to the development of the template for the Manuals on National Mechanisms for the mobilisation of response equipment and experts in case of emergency, supervised the completion of the assessment by Algeria, Malta, Morocco Spain, and Tunisia and assisted the completion by France and Italy, whilst suggesting it to Monaco.

86. Further to the announcement by PAP/RAC of the signature of CAMP Bosnia and Herzegovina, REMPEC relaunched the activity for the development of the National Contingency Plan (NCP) of Bosnia and Herzegovina. A [National training and Meeting for the development of the National Contingency Plan of Bosnia and Herzegovina](#) was organized by REMPEC on 27-28 April 2021. REMPEC also renewed its agreements with Sea Alarm within the Mediterranean Assistance Unit, and initiated the renewal process with other MAU Members, i.e. Cedre and the Mediterranean Operational Network for the Global Ocean Observing System (MONGOOS). In accordance with Decision IG 3/5, the MAU special revolving fund reached a level equivalent to the average expenses of a one-month mission.

87. The MAU was activated to provide remote expertise to Israel in March 2021. On 9 March 2021, REMPEC received a request for assistance from the Lebanese authorities regarding the oil spill incident affecting the Lebanese shoreline since 22 February 2021. Upon receipt of the request for assistance, under UNEP leadership, a coordination team was established



involving representatives from the United Nations Resident Coordinator (UNRC), UNEP, United Nations Interim Force In Lebanon (UNIFIL), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UNHABITAT) and REMPEC. REMPEC deployed onsite two MAU experts from ATRAC from 23 March to 2 April 2021. The objectives of the ten-day mission were to assess the extent of the pollution, assist national and local authorities in ongoing clean-up and remediation operations, and to provide guidance on oiled waste management. Follow-up will include an online training course for supervisor of clean-up operation and a final assessment mission by the MAU expert.

88. The Fourth Meeting of MENELAS originally planned for September 2020 was organised remotely by REMPEC on 21 and 22 April 2021, in particular to review the draft common marine oil pollution detection/investigation report, the draft decision to apply criteria for a common minimum level of fines for each offense provided for under the Annexes to MARPOL, as well as to discuss about the modalities of possible creation and operation, including in terms of governance and financing, of a regional "Blue Fund". REMPEC invited the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention to share information on any coordinated aerial surveillance operations for illicit ship pollution discharges.

89. UNEP/MAP is in the advisory board of the Water and Environment Support (WES), a regional project designed to contribute to the implementation of an integrated approach to "pollution reduction and prevention". The project aims to increase capacity of stakeholders in formulating and implementing the environmental and water policies. In collaboration with the WES Project, MED POL undertook individual countries' surveys (participating in the WES Project) on the status of urban storm water management in the Mediterranean with a focus on storm water management plans; risk management; design, operation and maintenance aspects; run-off water, sustainable design elements; availability of technical standards, and regulatory measures governing design, operation and maintenance of urban storm water networks in the Mediterranean. The assessment would serve to develop appropriate measures for inclusion in the new Regional Plan on Urban Storm Water Management to be submitted for adoption by COP 23 (2023). WES is covering Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Libya, Palestine and Tunisia. The project governance structure includes, inter alia, UNEP/MAP, the UfM Secretariat and the EEA.

90. In the framework of the EU-funded WES project, SCP/RAC was highly involved in the organisation of a Regional training on Single-Use Plastics Products (SUPs), composed of 4 webinars that took place between January and February 2021 in order to identify, prioritise and operationalise targeted measures to phase-out single-use plastics (SUPs). A parallel regional peer-to-peer (P2P) activity of WES on the same topic was launched in November 2020. The overall objective of the P2P activity was to reinforce capacity, support the sharing of experiences and expertise and stimulate cooperation among the peers for the implementation of measures to reduce consumption and leakage of SUPs into the environment. Two P2P sessions took place on 9 November 2020 and 10 December 2020, and the exchange continued until March 2021. The webinars and P2P process contributed to the development of the Regional Guidelines on measures to phase out Single-Use Plastic items as contribution to the implementation of the Marine Litter Regional Plan.

### **Strategic Outcome 2.2: Development or update of new/existing action plans, programmes and measures, common standards and criteria, guidelines**

91. In line with the mandate provided by COP21, MEDPOL developed proposals for updating three Annexes of the LBS Protocol, further to an in-depth review made during the 2018-2019 biennium, while introducing some additional amendments. These proposals were reviewed and agreed in Meeting of the Working Group of Experts on Updating the Annexes to the LBS Protocol held remotely on 10 December 2020. The Working Group recommended submission of the agreed updated text of the Annexes to the MED POL Focal Points Meeting for its approval.

92. In line with the mandate provided by COP21, MEDPOL updated the Annex of the Dumping Protocol and developed proposals for the consideration of the Working Group of experts. These proposals were reviewed and agreed on 9 February 2021 by the Working Group of Designated Experts which reviewed the proposed amendments and recommended submission of the agreed text of the Annex to the MED POL Focal Points Meeting for its approval.

93. In accordance with PoW and budget endorsed by COP21, MED POL developed three guiding documents namely on "Estimation techniques and applied methodologies for non-point sources release from agriculture", "Estimation techniques and applied methodologies for point source releases from aquaculture" and "Guideline on estimation techniques and applied methodologies for non-point sources release from catchment runoffs" aiming to complement the NBB/PRTR Methodology for 5<sup>th</sup> Cycle of NBB. The three guidelines were reviewed and agreed by the Meeting on Evaluation of Implementation of National Action Plans and Assessments, and Tools to Estimate Pollutants Loads from Diffuse Sources held on 22-23 April 2021.

94. In concurrence with its mandate, as well as with activities under the bilateral Cooperation Agreement signed on 9 October 2019, with the International Maritime Organization (IMO), MED POL developed two documents titled "Compendium of Best Practices on Implementation of Dumping Protocol" and "Common methodologies and techniques for the assessment and monitoring of adverse impacts of dumping activities." These two documents are complementary to each other; whereas the latter is intended to bring together all relevant available methodologies and techniques that can be used by

the Contracting Parties for implementation of the Dumping Protocol with a particular focus on (i) monitoring of dredging operations from harbours, ports, navigation channels and infrastructure projects such as cables and pipelines, and (ii) monitoring of disposal sites of dredged material at sea. These two documents were reviewed and accepted with number of recommendations during the Joint Meeting with IMO on Sharing the Best Practices for Implementation, Compliance and Enforcement related to Dumping Protocol, held remotely on 2 March 2021. The meeting addressed global and regional framework for dumping at sea activities, promoting Compliance and Enforcement on Dumping Protocol as well as best practices on technical aspects of Dumping protocol implementation.

95. Regarding the Regional Plan on Urban Wastewater Treatment, the 1st Working Group Meeting was held on 9-10 December 2020. The Meeting reviewed and agreed on the draft Regional Plan and recommended a number of changes. The Meeting also agreed to allow the members of the Working Group to provide written inputs after the Meeting on the proposed deadlines for implementation of measures which were not concluded in the Regional Plan; technical details of the subject matter addressed in the Regional Plan including tabulated Emission Limit Values and related technical data and information; as well as scope and outline of contents of technical Appendices which were at the drafting stage. Comments were obtained from five Contracting Parties. An updated document was prepared for submission to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Working Group Meeting to be held on 25-26 May 2021, which reviewed the above elements of the Regional Plan and recommended the final version to the MED POL Focal Points Meeting (i.e. 27-28 May 2021).

96. In concordance with PoW and budget endorsed by COP21, MED POL developed three guiding documents: “Guideline on estimation techniques and applied methodologies for non-point sources release from agriculture (UNEP/MED WG.505/3); “Guideline on estimation techniques and applied methodologies for point source releases from aquaculture” (UNEP/MED WG. 505/4) and “Guideline on estimation techniques and applied methodologies for non-point sources release from catchment runoffs” (UNEP/MED WG. 505/5), aiming to complement the NBB/PRTR Methodology for 5th Cycle of NBB. The documents were reviewed and agreed by the Meeting on Evaluation of Implementation of National Action Plans and Assessments, and Tools to Estimate Pollutants Loads from Diffuse Sources, held on 22-23 April 2021.

97. Concerning the Regional Plan on Sewage Sludge Management, the 1<sup>st</sup> Working Group Meeting was held on 9-10 December 2020. The Meeting reviewed and agreed on the draft Regional Plan on Sewage Sludge Management and recommended a number of changes. The Meeting agreed to allow members of the Working Group to provide written inputs after the Meeting on specific aspects of the Regional Plan including technical details of the subject matter; tabulated Emission Limit Values and related technical data and information; as well as scope and outline of contents of the Appendices which were at the drafting stage. Comments were obtained from four Contracting Parties. An updated document was prepared for submission to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Working Group Meeting ( 25-26 May 2021), which reviewed the above elements of the Regional Plan and recommended the final version to the MED POL Focal Points Meeting.

98. Regarding the Updated Regional Plan on Marine Litter Management, the 1<sup>st</sup> Working Group Meeting was held on 31 March and 1 April 2021. The Meeting reviewed the proposed articles and related measures of the Regional Plan and incorporated several technical modifications and amendments. At the conclusion of the Meeting, it was agreed that the Members of the Working Group would continue on-line consultations after the meeting regarding amendments entailing deadlines and/or specific commitments under specific Articles pertaining to the measures of the Regional Plan. Inputs and comments were received from four Contracting Parties and two MAP Partners. The Second Meeting of the Working Group review the above elements of the Regional Plan and recommend the final version to the MED POL Focal Points Meeting. SCP/RAC prepared the first draft of the Guidelines to tackle single use plastic items that was reviewed by SCP/RAC National Focal Points on the 1-3 June 2021. An information document was prepared with the support of Eunomia and national consultants from Egypt, Morocco and Montenegro; data and information (production, consumption, end-of-life treatment, etc.) has been gathered in four pilot countries (Egypt, Greece, Morocco and Montenegro) regarding four selected SUP items: bottles, straws, food containers and cigarette filters. This data served to model the effect on different policy options on those items. More substantive information on the Regional Plans preparation is provided in the Report on Specific Issues (UNEP/MED BUR.91/6)..

### **Strategic Outcome 2.3: Strengthening and implementation of marine pollution prevention and control legislation and policies at national level, including through enforcement and integration into sectorial processes**

99. COP19 requested the Secretariat to undertake in 2020 an indicator-based midterm evaluation of the NAPs’ implementation based on the existing reporting system and in close collaboration with the Contracting Parties. MED POL has developed the Midterm Evaluation Report of the NAPs’ Implementation using data and information sources selected in line with the NAP/H2020 indicators further to their availability in various technical studies and reports. Subsequently, the Midterm Evaluation was reviewed and agreed during the Meeting on National Baseline Budget Methodologies, Assessments of new Regional Plans and Evaluation of National Action Plans under the LBS Protocol held on 22-23 April 2021.

100. SCP/RAC provided support to Tunisia for shaping a communication strategy following the publication of the decree to ban single use plastic bags in the countries. The support was requested by Tunisia. In the framework of the WES project, SCP/RAC participated in the preparation of the following activities: (i) Morocco: Joint initiative for the establishment of a System for the management of PET Bottles through an EPR Scheme, (ii) Lebanon: Policy support to address single-use plastic items and (iii) Jordan: Development of a joint public-private roadmap to transition to reduce the use of Single-Use Plastics. Activities were validated by the EC and kicked-off in May 2021 in Jordan and Morocco. SCP/RAC also started the implementation of the work plan of activities regarding new POPs and Mercury for Child Project 1.1 of the MedProgramme (including legal support to Lebanon, Morocco and Tunisia). Furthermore, SCP/RAC prepared a concept note for the development of an initiative for the local management of organic waste to move towards circular economy in that sector in Morocco. Initial discussion took place with the SCP/RAC Focal Point and the expertise of the Catalan Waste Agency has been mobilised.

101. The National Action Plan for the implementation of the Regional Strategy for Prevention of and Response to Marine Pollution from Ships (2016-2021) was completed by Egypt; similar plans had been developed by Albania, Montenegro, Morocco, Tunisia, and Turkey.

102. The Coordinating Unit and REMPEC, in consultation with IMO, continued exploring synergies, between the Regional Plan on Marine Litter Management in the Mediterranean and the IMO Action Plan to address marine plastic litter from ships, through a continuous dialogue between UNEP/MAP and IMO, through REMPEC, to establish synergies between the (EU-funded) "Marine Litter-Med II" Project and the IMO-FAO-Norway GloLitter Partnerships Project.

#### **Strategic Outcome 2.4: Marine Pollution Monitoring and Assessment**

103. To support the development of new Regional Plans for agriculture, aquaculture, and urban storm water management, MEDPOL delivered the three respective assessments to the "Meeting on Evaluation of Implementation of National Action Plans and Assessments, and Tools to Estimate Pollutants Loads from Diffuse Sources" (22-23 April 2021). The Meeting reviewed the draft assessment documents and provided its comments and inputs, recommending submission of the agreed drafts to the MED POL Focal Points Meeting for their approval "to use as a background document" for preparation of the corresponding Regional Plans.

104. Work is in progress for operationalization of the means aimed at supporting implementation of the national IMAPs, including assistance through implementation of IMAP-MPA and GEF Adriatic Projects. An analysis was undertaken for the national IMAP Pollution and Marine Litter monitoring programmes of Algeria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Egypt, Israel, Lebanon, Libya, Montenegro, Morocco and Tunisia, as well as for the monitoring programmes prepared by the Contracting Parties that are EU Member States within 1<sup>st</sup> cycle of MSFD implementation. The most important findings on present status of IMAP implementation at national level served as a basis for proposing integration and aggregation rules for monitoring and assessment for IMAP Pollution and Marine Litter Cluster that is an important milestone for setting the GES integrated assessment methodologies for EOs 5, 9 and 10 within implementation of the 2023 MED QSR Roadmap. The initial proposal for assignment to the most appropriate scales of assessment of elements to be assessed for IMAP Pollution and Marine Litter Cluster, as agreed by the CORMON Meeting on Pollution Monitoring organized in 2019 and the 7<sup>th</sup> Meeting of EcAp Coordination Group, was elaborated by proposing upgraded aggregation scheme for the areas of assessment for EO5, EO9 and EO10 within the nested approach. To define the finer scales of assessment for the national part of the sub-divisions, the geographical information in the form of GIS based layers were proposed for provision from the countries, along with application of the criteria for coupling the geographical information.

105. Actions were undertaken to identify specific knowledge and technical needs of individual laboratories of the Contracting Parties to apply good practices for analysis of trace elements and organic contaminants. Along with the missions to two IMAP Pollution Cluster competent laboratories realized in 2020, the capacities of national laboratories in relation to monitoring of IMAP Common Indicators 13, 14, 17, 18 and 20 were assessed. The assessment findings related to 36 national IMAP Pollution Cluster competent laboratories refer to their capacities to apply the analytical methodologies, as recommended in relevant IMAP Monitoring Guidelines/Protocols. They were considered by the CORMON meeting on Pollution Monitoring (26-28 April 2021). Although only laboratories from 7 countries provided feedback for their IMAP Pollution competent laboratories, this exercise gave a good insight into their capability to comply with IMAP Guidance Factsheets and new Monitoring Guidelines/Protocols and problems laboratories face. The specific knowledge and technical needs of individual laboratories were recognized on implementing IMAP Common Indicators 13, 14, 17, 18 and 20.

106. The Meeting of CorMon Marine Litter (30 March 2021) agreed on the updated Baseline Values (BV) and proposed Threshold Values (TV) for IMAP Common Indicator 22 (beach marine litter), as provided in the Meeting document UNEP/MED WG.509/11, and recommended their submission for consideration of the Meeting of MED POL Focal Points. This document elaborates the conceptual and methodological approaches for defining BV and TV that are then applied for updating/proposing BVs and TVs in order to ensure a progress towards integrated GES assessment of EO10.

107. Further to the 2019 update of the sub-regional Mediterranean BAC values for heavy metals in biota and sediment, in 2021 MEDPOL has undertaken further actions to upgrade the assessment criteria. The proposals for upgrading the BC and BAC values for IMAP Common Indicator 17 and possible approaches for upgrade of EAC for IMAP Common Indicators 17, 18 and 20 were considered by the CORMON Meeting on Pollution Monitoring (26-28 April 2021) and submitted to the Meeting of MEDPOL Focal Points, considering the evolving nature of the process of the assessment criteria upgrade and additional work that needs to be undertaken within Online Working Group on EO9. Their calculation is based on new national monitoring data that have not been previously used. In relation to the development of region-wide harmonized criteria for reference conditions and threshold/boundaries values for key nutrients in water column (requested through Decision IG.23/6), the proposals for i) setting the reference conditions and boundary values for Dissolved Inorganic Nitrogen (DIN) and Total Phosphorous (TP); and ii) testing practical application of the methodological approaches for their calculation in relevant sub-areas were considered by the CORMON Meeting on Pollution Monitoring. These proposals were submitted to the Meeting of MEDPOL Focal Points, considering the evolving nature of the process of assessment criteria upgrade and additional work that needs to be undertaken within the Online Working Group on EO5.
108. The revised IMAP Guidance Factsheets for the Common Indicators 19 (CI19) and 6 (CI6), prepared by REMPEC in consultation with SPA/RAC, were submitted to the CORMON Meeting, under document UNEP/MED WG. 482/21. The revised documents were shared with the members of the Online Working Group (OWG), the 14th Meeting of Focal Points of REMPEC and the 15th Meeting of the SPA/BD Focal Points and will be discussed during the CORMON Meeting. Plan Bleu/RAC has prepared thematic products for outreach, building on the findings of the SoED Report. Ten thematic infographics are published in three languages (Arabic, English, French) on the SoED website ([www.planbleu.org/soed](http://www.planbleu.org/soed)), and it is planned to publish a booklet of SoED infographics before the end of 2021. Five themes have been selected to produce thematic notes, further detailing information contained in the SoED (maritime transport, emerging pollutants, demographic trends, offshore activities, desalination). The thematic brief on demographic trends was published in September 2020. The brief on emerging pollutants has been finalized in May 2021, in consultation with MEDPOL and with the support of the French water agency for the Rhône-Mediterranean-Corsica region. The brief on maritime transport and offshore activities are under finalization in collaboration with REMPEC and the brief on desalination is planned to be finalized before the end of 2021, in consultation with MEDPOL and with the support of the French cooperation agency AfD.
109. The CORMON Marine Litter meeting was held on 30 March 2021 via videoconference, with the aim to review the regional operational strategy for monitoring IMAP Candidate Indicator 24; address the interrelation of pressures impacts of marine litter and the status of marine ecosystem components; and analyze the potential complementarities and synergies between IMAP and the EC's new GES Decision (2017/848/EU) for marine litter. The CORMON Pollution meeting was held on 26-28 April 2021, via videoconference, with the aim to review and approve the monitoring guidelines for CI 18, the monitoring guidelines/protocols for Quality Assurance and Reporting of Monitoring Data for CI 13, 14, 17, 18 and 20; the state of play of inter-laboratory testing and good laboratory practice related to CI 5 and 9; the integration and aggregation rules for EO5, 9, and 10; and the assessment criteria for contaminants and nutrients.
110. In collaboration of the Marine Environmental Studies Laboratory (MESL) of the International Atomic Energy Agency and MEDPOL the 2019 and 2020 Proficiency Tests (PTs) were organized, along with related Training Courses on the analysis of trace elements and organic pollutants in marine samples. As a result, actions were taken to identify specific knowledge and technical needs of individual laboratories aiming to apply good laboratory practices for analysis of trace elements and organic contaminants. The results achieved in 2019 and 2020 Proficiency Tests were considered by the CORMON Meeting on Pollution Monitoring and related recommendations were provided on the way forward; the meeting recommended strengthening the present scope of the quality assurance for CI 17, as well as setting of inter-laboratory comparison for eutrophication (CIs 13 and 14) and biomarkers (CI 18).
111. MED POL prepared the Monitoring Guidelines related to IMAP Common Indicators 13, 14, 17, 18 and 20, along with the Monitoring Guidelines related to Analytical Quality Assurance and Reporting Monitoring Data. The Monitoring Guideline are composed of 98 specific Protocols prepared to support standardization and harmonization of the procedures for all the steps of analytical chain. Following on their acceptance by the Integrated Meetings of the CORMONs (1-3 December 2020) and the CORMON Meeting on Pollution Monitoring, they were submitted for approval of the Meeting of MED POL Focal Points. These Monitoring Guidelines present coherent manuals to guide technical personnel of IMAP competent laboratories of the Contracting Parties for the implementation of the standardized and harmonized monitoring practices related to the analytical procedures of sampling, sample preservation and transportation, sample preparation and analysis, along with the quality assurance and reporting of monitoring data for IMAP Common Indicators 13,14, 17, 18 and 20. Regarding marine litter IMAP Common Indicators, methodological elements for monitoring floating microplastics were reviewed by the Integrated CORMON Meetings. In addition, the Regional Operational Strategy for Candidate Common Indicator 24 was reviewed by the Meeting of the CORMON on Marine Litter Monitoring.
112. In line with COP Decisions IG.22/7 and IG.23/6, the call has been opened in June 2020 for the Contracting Parties to

start uploading and sharing their monitoring data which conform with the approved Data Dictionaries and Data Standards for 11 selected IMAP Common Indicators, respectively CI 1, 2, 6, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 21, 22 and 23. Accordingly, the Contracting Parties started to report data with the aim to report all pending data by September 2020 at the latest, and new 2020 monitoring data no later than 31 January 2021. However, only a few new data sets have been validated for IMAP Common Indicators 13,14,17, 21, 22 and 23. It must also be noted that present level of data reporting is low and does not facilitate 2023 MED QSR preparation.

113. Specific technical support was provided from INFO/RAC, with contribution of MEDPOL, in order to facilitated data reporting, whereas more substantial assistance to the countries is planned from INFO/RAC in the upcoming biennium to strengthen national capacities for data control and reporting and to increase national capacities to report data into IMAP Info System.

#### **Strategic Outcome 2.5: Enhanced capacity at regional, sub-regional and national levels including assistance and capacity building**

114. The Regional Workshop to enhance Marine Oil and HNS regional cooperation in the Mediterranean (MEDEXPOL 2020) originally to be held in Monaco, from 27 to 29 October 2020, was held online due to the COVID-19 pandemic, to present and discuss deliverables of the project for further integration at Mediterranean level. REMPEC initiated the preparation of the Sub-regional Workshop on the assessment of the level of oil spill response planning and readiness management, which will be held remotely in September 2021.

115. SCP/RAC kickstarted of activities under the Medprogramme with Morocco, Lebanon and Tunisia on prevention approaches to substitute the current use of PFOS, HBCD and PVC in the selected industries and mercury used in medical devices. In the framework of the WES projec, SCP/RAC designed a pilot activity to promote circular economy in higher education in Algeria, together with CNFE. The activity will particularly target Boumerdes University.

#### **Strategic Outcome 2.6: Enhanced cooperation at regional, sub-regional and national levels to prevent and control marine pollution**

116. SCP/RAC developed and launched the first edition of the WeMed - Mediterranean Sustainability Award as Flagship of the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development. SCP/RAC developed the Visual identity of the Award, selected a name (WeMed Mediterranean Sustainability Award), prepared the legal basis and the 2021 call for candidates, formed a gender/north-south balanced jury, developed an online platform for the management of applications, a landing page for the presentation of the Award (<https://www.wemedaward.org>) and a dissemination campaign.

#### **Strategic Outcome 2.7: Identifying and tackling new and emerging issues, as appropriate**

117. Progress in relation to the issue of the possible designation of the Mediterranean Sea, as a whole, as an Emission Control Area for Sulphur Oxides, pursuant to MARPOL Annex VI is presented in the Report on Specific Issues (UNEP/MED BUR.91/6).

118. Three online National Workshops on Ratification and Effective Implementation of MARPOL Annex VI financed by the Mediterranean Trust Fund (MTF) and the IMO's ITCP were organised by REMPEC in line with the road map to support the implementation and ratification processes, Egypt (online, 25 November 2020), Algeria (online, 26 November 2020), and Lebanon (online, 10 December 2020). These activities completed the organisation of similar events in Albania (Dures, 25-26 November 2019), Bosnia and Herzegovina (Sarajevo, 28-29 November 2019), Libya (Tunis, Tunisia, 5-6 December 2019)). A workshop is envisaged in Israel in the second semester of 2021.

119. The Maritime Technology Cooperation Centre – Africa (MTCC-Africa) organised, in collaboration with REMPEC, the Webinar for Climate Change Mitigation in the Shipping and Maritime Industry with a Focus on North African States bordering the Mediterranean Sea (online, 18 February 2021) within the framework of the Global MTCC Network (GMN) initiative.

120. SCP/RAC released the Publication on "[The business case for tackling plastic packaging. Inspiring practices from the food and beverage value chain](#)", designed to motivate organisations across the food & beverage value chain to rethink the use of plastic packaging through a circular economy perspective and contribute to the abatement of marine plastic pollution. A dedicated webinar was organised to release the report. The centre also kicked-off 'CapiMed-Islands' Project to capitalise BeMed initiatives to reduce plastic pollution in Mediterranean Islands. A Report on potential synergies among BeMed projects and support needs, including a review of resources to fight plastic pollution in islands is under preparation.

### **II.3 Core Theme II: BIODIVERSITY AND ECOSYSTEMS**

#### **Strategic Outcome 3.1: Strengthening regional implementation of the obligations under the Barcelona Convention, and its relevant Protocols and other instruments**

121. The Ad hoc Group of Experts for Marine Protected Areas in the Mediterranean (AGEM) was set up during 2020 and

its programme of work was outlined. The first meeting of AGEM took place on 8 December 2021 by videoconference and allowed the election of a chair and a vice-chair and the agreement on the AGEM programme of work for 2021 and its working modalities. The second meeting of AGEM was held on 3-4 May 2021, by videoconference. This meeting reviewed and discussed the first draft of the Post-2020 Regional Strategy for marine and coastal protected areas (MCPAs) and other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs) in the Mediterranean and agreed on draft Criteria for inclusion of Specially Protected Areas (SPAs) in the SPA directory, and on considerations for identifying and reporting OECMs in the Mediterranean marine and coastal environment.

122. The 2020 Forum of Marine Protected Areas in the Mediterranean is co-organized by SPA/RAC, MedPAN, WWF Mediterranean and the Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation, and was expected to take place on 30 November - 2 December 2020 in Monaco. However due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Forum face-to-face event is postponed to the end of 2021 and Virtual Forum Sessions will be organized in June 2021. A post-2020 roadmap for Mediterranean MPAs, part of the MPA forum collaborative process, is being prepared jointly by SPA/RAC, MedPAN and WWF, in consultation with the other partner organizations.

123. The Database of Marine Protected Areas in the Mediterranean (MAPAMED) is a joint property and is jointly administered by SPA/RAC and MedPAN. A dedicated User Manual has been drafted by SPA/RAC and MedPAN, to ease the understanding of various users of data collection methodology and contents of the database. A specific MoU defining the obligations and responsibilities of SPA/RAC and MedPAN for the development, maintenance, operation, analysis and dissemination of the MAPAMED was signed in October 2020, after a consultation with the SPA/BD Focal Points and clearance by the UNEP/MAP Secretariat. The content of MAPAMED has been updated and submitted for validation by the SPA/BD Focal Points until December 2020. In April 2021, the updated version was released online and made available for downloading to the various users on the website: <https://mapamed.org/>.

124. Exchanges took place with CBD marine and coastal and islands programme on envisaging work for the conservation of deep sea Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems through collaboration between RSOs and RFMOs. GFCM was approached by SPA/RAC to discuss common involvement on deep seas spatial conservation issues in areas within EBSAs, and the possibility of future collaboration with the CBD on that. Two working teleconferences, focusing on spatial management, with GFCM, ACCOBAMS, and IUCN took place on 25 June 2020 and on 2 February 2021 to draft a document on common focus of work for spatial management, including feasible deep sea areas, where work in synergy might take place for their conservation and enhanced management.

125. REMPEC and SPA/RAC developed a draft Guidance Document for the identification and designation of Particularly Sensitive Sea Areas in relation to SPAMIs, supported within the framework of the Cooperation Agreement between IMELS and UNEP. Consultations were carried out with all Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention, through REMPEC Circular Letter No. 10/2021 and a letter from SPA/RAC, respectively dated 9 and 11 March 2021. In this context, the draft PSSA Guidance Document was finalised taking into consideration the comments made by the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention. The final draft Guidance Document was submitted to the 14<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Focal Points of REMPEC and 15<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the SPA/BD Focal Points for consideration.

### **Strategic Outcome 3.2: Development of new action plans, programmes and measures, common standards and criteria, guidelines for the conservation of Coastal and Marine biodiversity and ecosystems**

126. Based on the most recent developments in the CBD Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework elaboration process and other regional and global processes, SPA/RAC started the elaboration of a Post-2020 Regional Strategy for marine and coastal protected areas (MCPAs) and other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs) in the Mediterranean. First, a strategic framework was presented and discussed during a 2-day online Stakeholder Consultation Workshop (8-9 April 2021), that was attended by 51 participants from national institutions, universities, UN and other intergovernmental organizations, NGOs and individual experts. Based on this first online consultation, a full draft was prepared and reviewed by the AGEM members at their second meeting (videoconference, 3-4 May 2021), then by an online consultation workshop with the SPA/BD Focal Points (videoconference, 18 May 2021). The final draft resulting from the input of these preparatory consultations is submitted to the 15<sup>th</sup> Meeting of SPA/DB Focal Points for review and endorsement.

127. The assessment and the updating of the Regional Action Plan concerning dark habitats and cetaceans are finalized, and two national consultations were undertaken. The updated Regional Action Plan will be presented to the 15<sup>th</sup> SPA/BD thematic Focal Points meeting in view to be submitted to the MAP Focal Points meeting and COP 22 for adoption. Related prefilled questionnaire for each country has been completed and sent to the Contracting Parties for approval and complement. The identification of the first elements for the elaboration of the list of Reference of Pelagic Habitat Types in the Mediterranean Sea are under preparation and should be disseminated among SPA/BD Focal Points by mid-May 2021. The elaboration of the "Interpretation Manual" of the new reference list of marine benthic habitats types in the Mediterranean is underway; the first draft of the manual will be ready May 2021 for national consultation.

128. SPA/RAC contributed to the updating of the draft ballast water management strategy for the Mediterranean Sea for 2022-2027. The updated strategy is presented to the 15<sup>th</sup> SPA/BD Focal Points Meeting before submission to the MAP Focal Points meeting and COP 22 for adoption. Within the MAVA Species Project, SPA/RAC (as the Project's Coordinator) and the Partners (ACCOBAMS, BirdLife Int., ICUN-Med, MEDASSET) are working on enhancing the knowledge on marine megafauna species (Marine Mammals, Sea Birds, Sea turtles and Elasmobranchs) in key areas of the Mediterranean. The Species Project is expected to continue until October 2022 and will provide a complementary data for the MAVA MED Bycatch Project based on the results of the 9 supported small projects. SPA/RAC is coordinating (2018-2022) the implementation of Tunisian activities of the MAVA funded project "Mitigating dolphin depredation in Mediterranean fisheries – Joining efforts for strengthening cetacean conservation and sustainable fisheries". A project proposal has been developed in close collaboration with several Contracting Parties and the relevant partners in response to the call launched by the MONK SEAL ALLIANCE, the main objective is to implement the regional strategy for the Monk seal conservation in the Mediterranean.

129. Within the MAVA MedBycatch project-phase 2 SPA/RAC is providing support for the harmonization and interconnection between the POST 2020 SAPBIO and the new GFCM Mediterranean and Black Sea Fishery and aquaculture strategy to ensure that both are tackling the mitigation of the incidental catches of vulnerable species in the Mediterranean. Additionally, SPA/RAC is ensuring the dissemination and use of the standardized protocol "Monitoring incidental catch of vulnerable species in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea - Methodology for data collection" elaborated by FAO/GFCM in close collaboration with SPA/RAC, ACCOBAMS, IUCN Med, BirdLife Europe and Central Asia and MEDASSET. Within this framework, SPA/RAC started in November 2020 a new observer bycatch data collection programme in Tunisia and is coordinating with FAO/GFCM ACCOBAMS, IUCN Med, BirdLife Europe and Central Asia, MEDASSET and WWF for the harmonization of the bycatch data collection programmes and bycatch data analysis as well as bycatch mitigation measures trials in Croatia, Italy, Morocco, Tunisia and Turkey.

130. For the needs of French-speaking training on impulsive noise at sea, organized in the framework of the QUIETMED project, SPA/RAC has drawn up the "manual for monitoring anthropogenic activities generating impulsive noise at sea". This manual is intended for the competent authorities of the Contracting Parties. It provides basic notions on the issue of underwater noise, its impact, legal frameworks and reporting methods at national and international levels (example: the register set up by ACCOBAMS).

### **Strategic Outcome 3.3: Strengthening national implementation of biodiversity conservation policies, strategies and legislation measures**

131. The SPA/BD Focal Point of Israel has been contacted in order to start the preparation of the elaboration of NAP on Non-Indigenous Species (NIS), with SPA/RAC assistance. With the assistance of SPA/RAC, Montenegro is preparing its NAP for the conservation of coralligenous and Malta its national Action concerning species introduction and invasive species. The NAP for the conservation of the coralligenous species in Lebanon is prepared and nationally adopted with the SPA/RAC assistance. The NAP for the conservation of marine turtles in Libya has been discussed and approved during an online national workshop held on 16 December 2020. Within the framework of the ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative, SPA/RAC supported the analysis of the field data collected in the territorial waters of Tunisia about the marine megafauna distribution, established through a student internship at La Rochelle University (France). The monitoring programme of monk seal and dolphins' population in the Inner Ionian Archipelagos and the Gulf of Ambracia in Greece has been finalized in Summer 2020 with the support of SPA/RAC. With the support of MAVA marine turtles project, coordinated by SPA/RAC, Sea turtles nesting monitoring programmes have been implemented in Tunisia, and Lebanon during summer 2020, in addition national sea turtles stranding networks are set up and reinforced in Algeria and Libya.

132. SPA/RAC is supporting the elaboration of the management and business plans of (i) Tyre Coast Nature Reserve in Lebanon, (ii) Gulf of Sirte in Libya, and (iii) Rachgoun area in Algeria through the IMAP-MPA EU-funded IMAP-MPA project. following the endorsement by the SPA/BD national focal points of the ToRs to hire national consultants to prepare complementary ecological and socio-economic studies in three respective sites, the selected candidates have been hired. These consultants have completed the field work in the three countries by December 2020. Respective synthesis of ecological and socio-economic reports has been endorsed by the respective Ministries of Environment in the three countries and are being currently edited in view of their dissemination.

133. Within the framework of the "Co-managed No-Take Zones/MPAs project" (July 2020-October 2022), SPA/RAC is supporting the relevant national authorities of Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia and Turkey, through a participatory approach, in updating, developing and implementing management plans for Al Hoceima National Park (Morocco), Kuriat Islands future Marine and Coastal Protected Area (MCPA) (Tunisia), Foça Special Environment Protection Area (Turkey) and Rachgoun Island future MPA (Algeria), to reduce the impact of fishing activities on species and habitats, based on the results of the MAVA-funded MedKeyHabitats I and II projects. Supporting national and local authorities in implementing MPA



management plans is involving activities ranging from surveillance, monitoring, engaging local stakeholders, and establishing sustainable financing mechanisms to information, communication, awareness-raising, capacity-building, networking and exchange of experience, through twinning programmes, scientific events and stakeholder workshops.

**Strategic Outcome 3.4: Monitoring, inventory and assessment of biodiversity with focus on endangered and threatened species, non-indigenous species and key habitats**

134. Progress is made in the implementation of the second phase IMAP within the EU funded IMAP-MPA and EcAp-MED III projects. National meetings were conducted online with the national stakeholders to discuss and agree on the establishment of the national IMAP steering committee and try to identify national needs in terms of technical and scientific support to deliver quality assured data to the 2023 MED QSR. Cross cutting issues, integration modalities between the IMAP clusters at national level are ongoing. The development of the monitoring and assessment scales, assessment criteria, thresholds and baseline values for the IMAP common indicators related to biodiversity and NIS are also ongoing and will be reviewed and discussed by the CORMON meeting on biodiversity and fisheries (videoconference, 10-11 June 2021).

135. Following the recommendations of the Integrated CORMON meetings (December 2020), the informal thematic Online Working Groups (OWGs) were held to provide important scientific feedback and technical support to the IMAP implementation at regional/sub-regional level, in particular on the aspects related to development of methodologies, assessment, scales, integration, protocols and guidelines in line with the approved 2020-2021 Programme of Work. These OWGs were operational for the following Ecological Objectives (EOs)/Common Indicators (CI): EO1 CI 3,4 and 5 related to marine turtles (meeting held on 29 March 2021); marine mammals (7 April 2021) and; sea birds (16 April 2021) and EO2 CI6 related to Non-Indigenous Species (20 April 2021).

136. The elaboration of baseline for NIS at national, sub-regional and regional levels is ongoing considering the results of similar work made in the framework of the EU MSFD. The National NIS inventories were already received from the Contracting Parties and are being reviewed and validated in close collaboration with the national experts designated by the Contracting Parties.

137. Within the framework of the GEF Adriatic project, SPA/RAC and PAP/RAC supported Albania and Montenegro to elaborate National Integrated Monitoring Programmes which considered interconnection between the several IMAP Ecological objectives. In the same framework support was provided to Albania and Montenegro to develop national reports towards GES. All reports are under finalization/validation process. Furthermore, SPA/RAC with PAP/RAC and MEDPOL, and the Albanian institutions' support, implemented an IMAP field survey on October 2020, in Patok Rodoni Bay in Albania which provided IMAP data and GIS Maps in line with the SPA/RAC Mediterranean Biodiversity Platform and the INFO/RAC IMAP Info System platform as well as a report assessing the status of the study area and including recommendations to reach GES. SPA/RAC and PAP/RAC are also providing support to the 1st International Conference on Water Environmental Protection and Sustainable Development planned in Tirana, Albania and online from 17 to 18 May 2021. Some of the GEF Adriatic project outputs will be presented during the conference.

138. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it was not possible to engage in SPAMI reviews as per the regular modus operandi, involving independent experts international travelling to the concerned countries, site visits and in-person meetings. Therefore, the SPAMI ordinary periodic reviews were made remotely, using the updated format for the periodic review of SPAMIs adopted by COP 21. The online final evaluation meetings took place between mid-April and mid-May 2021. The outcomes of the reviews of the following 11 SPAMIs are brought to the attention of the 15<sup>th</sup> SPA/BD Focal Points meeting: Lara-Toxeftra Turtle Reserve (Cyprus); Bouches de Bonifacio Nature Reserve (France); Capo Caccia-Isola Piana Marine Protected Area (Italy); Miramare Marine Protected Area (Italy); Plemmirio Marine Protected Area (Italy); Punta Campanella Marine Protected Area (Italy); Tavolara-Punta Coda Cavallo Marine Protected Area (Italy); Torre Guaceto Marine Protected Area and Natural Reserve (Italy); Al-Hoceima National Park (Morocco); Archipelago of Cabrera National Park (Spain); and, Maro-Cerro Gordo Cliffs (Spain).

139. Field surveys to determine the distribution of the main marine habitats, including the most sensitive ones, is ongoing in Tunisia within the MAVA funded MedKeyHabitats II project. Distribution and sensitivity maps of the main marine habitats in Malta, Morocco, Algeria and Turkey are available at the Mediterranean Biodiversity Platform.

**Strategic Outcome 3.5: Technical assistance and capacity building at regional, sub-regional and national levels to strengthen policy implementation and compliance with biodiversity-related national legislation**

140. A regional training session on the identification of marine key habitats (Common Indicators CI-1, EO1 and CI-2, EO1 of IMAP) and the use of Standard-Data entry Form (SDF) web application and Mediterranean Biodiversity Platform (MBP) is planned by SPA/RAC during the second half of 2021, when the manual of interpretation of marine habitats, the SDF web application and the new Mediterranean Biodiversity Platform will be ready. It will be organized in synergy with the IMAP/MPA project.



141. In the framework of the EU funded QUIET MED 2 Project, SPA/RAC organized, in close collaboration with ACCOABMS, the French-speaking workshop on impulsive noise at sea, with the participation of representatives of the competent and scientific authorities from Algeria, Lebanon, Morocco and Tunisia. The 5<sup>th</sup> Conference on the Conservation of Cetaceans in the South Mediterranean Countries (CSMC5), hosted by the National Centre for Marine Sciences of Lebanon (CNRS-L), was held online from 13 to 15 April 2021. This Conference was organised by ACCOBAMS in close collaboration with SPA/RAC and financially supported by Monaco.

142. SPA/RAC is leading Work-package 10 of the EU-funded project ODYSSEA ([odysseaplatform.eu](http://odysseaplatform.eu)). WP10 aims to develop the capacity of North African partners (Morocco, Tunisia and Egypt) to carry out observing campaigns at sea, analyze collected data, develop numerical models and manage observatories. SPA/RAC intervenes in 2 components: i) the organization of capacity building events and ii) the support to young North African scientists to participate in summer schools organized within the framework of the ODYSSEA project. ODYSSEA Data and services provide support for sensor or modelling systems collecting/producing diverse data parameters for Biodiversity and Ecosystems (EO1), Non-indigenous species (EO2), Harvest of commercially exploited Fish and Shellfish (EO3), Eutrophication (EO5), Hydrography (EO7), Pollution (EO9), and Marine litter (EO10).

143. SPA/RAC enabled young North African applicant scientists to annually participate to all ODYSSEA summer schools on oceanography since starting in 2018, including the 2<sup>nd</sup> school on Oceanography and Fisheries in the Mediterranean, from September 2 to 6, 2019, held on the Greek island of Alonnisos, enabling to i) use the ODYSSEA project platform for retrieving, managing and processing oceanographic, environmental and fisheries data of the Mediterranean, ii) learn about the modern developments on marine instruments and sensors used in field sampling for operational oceanographic monitoring, iii) understand ecological models and their role in marine ecosystem management. The 3<sup>rd</sup> ODYSSEA summer school (held on 23-27 November 2020) on “Satellite Observations & Data Processing in Operational Oceanography”, focused on “the synergy between satellite observations of the sea surface and in situ measurements”. ODYSSEA training workshops with SPA/RAC contribution were held for Observatory Managers on marine monitoring equipment: Glider (Alseamar) and sensor systems (Develogic). (May 2019, Rousset, France, July 2019, Hamburg, Germany). In October 2020, SPA/RAC co-organized the workshop dedicated to Tunisian stakeholders in collaboration with the Tunisian Association for Sustainable Development and Conservation of Wildlife (ANDDCVS), during which the tools of the "MARINOMICA" oceanographic information platform, developed within the framework of the ODYSSEA PROJECT, were presented, along with other results based on satellite observations and modeling. On 22-24 February 2021, SPA/RAC provided Technical and logistical support to RAED (Egyptian Partner) for the organization of a training workshop on “Geospatial analytics and Remote Sensing for Climate Change Impact on Marine and Coastal Ecosystems” held both presentially and partially online. Furthermore, SPA/RAC coordinated the preparation of the workshop dedicated to Moroccan end-users “Platform user validation & Operational Oceanography Workshop”, to be held on 2-3 June 2021.

144. Within the framework of the MAVA MedBycatch project-phase 2, SPA/RAC with project partners support, implemented an online training (3-5 May 2021) for Tunisian Fisheries and Environmental stakeholders and particularly Bycatch observers and Fishing guards related to the FAO/GFCM Mediterranean Bycatch data collection protocol, identification of vulnerable species (Sharks, rays, Cetaceans, Seabirds and Sea turtles) as well as fishing gears and bycatch mitigations measures. Within the GEF Adriatic Project, SPA/RAC implemented an on-the-job field training (23 October 2020) related to IMAP monitoring in Albania and related to Biodiversity, Hydrography and Pollution. Additionally, SPA/RAC and PAP/RAC with INFO/RAC support, organized a training for Montenegrin Stakeholders (4-5 February 2020, Podgorica) as well as an online training for Albanian stakeholders (8 April 2021) related to the upload of IMAP data into the IMAP Info System platform.

145. SCP/RAC selected three pilot projects for the implementation of SCP solutions to prevent Marine Litter in MPAs, to be implemented in Cabo de Gata (Spain), Delta del Ebre (Spain), Miramare (Italy). The focus will be on the implementation of systems for reusable glasses, collection of beverage packaging and mussels' nets. Pilot actions planned to take place this summer, were postponed until next summer due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **Strategic Outcome 3.6: Enhanced cooperation at regional, sub-regional and national levels to protect and conserve biodiversity and ecosystems**

146. The Secretariat and SPA/RAC, GFCM, ACCOBAMS and IUCN Med are collaborating in relation to spatial-based protection and management measures for marine biodiversity, and to identify activities feasible to be done in synergy based on their programmed activities and commonalities, including spatial management work through GFCM FRAs and Barcelona Convention SPAMIs. A first working teleconference was organized on 25 June 2020. A draft document on common focus of work was shared by SPA/RAC to review and complement it. A revised version was further elaborated through an online meeting on 2 February 2021. The MoU between SPA/RAC and the ACCOBAMS Secretariat for the period 2021-2022 has been signed by the two organisations after its review by the MAP Coordination Unit. In addition, another agreement

including the detailed joined work programme and the related budget has been established. The main joint activities are focusing on the implementation of the national cetacean monitoring programmes in Southern Mediterranean countries through the EU funded EcAp III and the Quiet Sea projects; the evaluation and the update of the action plan for the conservation of cetacean in the Mediterranean; and, a capacity building programme.

147. A new Framework Memorandum of Collaboration (MoC) was signed in October 2020 between SPA/RAC and MedPAN for the period 2020-2025. This MoC is a follow-up to previous ones signed between the organizations since 2010. Under this MoC, a specific MoU was signed concerning the modalities of joint management of the Database on Marine Protected Areas in the Mediterranean (MAPAMED) between SPA/RAC and MedPAN. These draft memoranda were cleared by the UNEP/MAP Coordinating Unit and circulated to the SPA/BD Focal Points, before their signature by both organizations.

#### **II.4 Core Theme III: LAND AND SEA INTERACTIONS AND PROCESSES**

##### **Strategic Outcome 4.1: Strengthening regional implementation of the obligations under the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols, and of programmes of measures in existing Regional Strategies and Action Plans**

148. To support the socio-economic evaluation of measures in Regional Strategies and Action Plans, Plan Bleu/RAC continued its participation to the MEDREGION project, which will terminate by July 2021. A successor project ABIOMMED was awarded to the same consortium led by HCMR (Greece), and Plan Bleu/RAC will thus continue this activity after the end of the MEDREGION project.

##### **Strategic Outcome 4.2: Development of new action plans, programmes and measures, common standard and criteria, guidelines**

149. The concept of a toolbox for the analytical phase of MSP has been drafted and a proposal has been made on how to make it as attractive and interactive as possible. The aim is to offer a toolbox that is in line with ICZM, demonstrating the application of scientific and other tools for the preparation of MSP based on the ecosystem management principles and providing a rich source of information and advice – a practical “go-to” sources for Mediterranean practitioners. The finalization of the toolbox is pending the approval of the budget revision, as this interactive presentation would need some additional resources.

150. The GEF Adriatic Project, implemented in Albania and Montenegro with the support of PAP/RAC and SPA/RAC, has been progressing well and is approaching its end (in June 2021) although the activities have been somewhat slowed down due to the impossibility of meeting with partners in person and implementing on-the-ground testing because of the COVID-19 pandemic. To compensate, activities have been organised through numerous online consultations with national experts and institutions, as well as with different stakeholder groups. This has significantly impacted the dynamics of outputs delivery; nevertheless, this innovative project in terms of integration and linking IMA indicators and MSP, has produced some extremely valuable outputs in Montenegro (where PAP/RAC is mostly involved), such as: a Diagnostic Analysis (DA) for the MSP of the marine waters under the jurisdiction of Montenegro, designed around two key elements: marine vulnerability assessment; an activity suitability assessment; a series of studies related to collecting, mapping and assessing environmental, ecological and human activities (with focus on maritime traffic, system of port infrastructure, maritime tourism and aquaculture). This resulted in the identification of marine vulnerable areas, where human activities need to be avoided or carefully planned, as well as areas suitable for development, all leading to the proposal of a marine spatial plan.

##### **Strategic Outcome 4.3: Strengthening national implementation**

151. The Inception Meeting and the Meeting of the CAMP Bosnia and Herzegovina Steering Committee (SC) was organized online on 15 October 2020. The SC has seven members, representatives of different administrative levels and institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina and PAP/RAC. This first meeting was honoured by the participation of the Prime Minister of the Herzegovina-Neretva Canton. The status and planning of activities for the following months were presented, and the SC welcomed the progress achieved since the signing of the Agreement i.e. launching of the activities related to sustainable tourism led by PAP/RAC and contingency plan led by REMPEC. In April 2021, INFO/RAC has prepared a proposal for the CAMP web site.

152. The COVID-19 pandemic has slowed down the preparation of the agreement for a transboundary CAMP between Cyprus and Israel. During a teleconference in September 2020, it was agreed that both countries would provide within a month-time the information about the budget they intended to mobilize for the project. Israel provided the information by March 2021, while no feedback was received from Cyprus. In that situation, the Israel addressed a letter to UNEP/MAP suggesting starting the project as soon as possible, leaving the door opened to Cyprus to join at a later stage. Following the positive feedback received from UNEP/MAP, PAP/RAC has been finalising the CAMP Agreement with Israel.

153. Significant progress was made regarding the transboundary CAMP between Albania and Italy for the Otranto Channel

area. The CAMP Agreement was drafted in December 2020 with the support of two national consultants and shared with the relevant national authorities of both countries. The Agreement was signed in March 2021, allowing to start the implementation of the activities, the first one being the recruitment of the National CAMP Coordinators for Albania and Italy (pending approval by UNEP HQ because the contract exceeds the threshold for individual consultancy), and setting-up of the CAMP Steering Committee.

#### **Strategic Outcome 4.4: Monitoring and assessment**

154. The Land-Sea Interactions (LSI) methodology developed within the SUPREME and SIMWESTMED projects is being tested in Malta, with the support of PAP/RAC. Malta has collected the available data and is in process of analysing the interactions. Several consultation meetings were organised with all relevant national stakeholders as well as with the PAP/RAC team following this activity.

155. At the initiative of the European Environment Agency (EEA), a joint letter was drafted to elaborate a Feasibility Study for the implementation of the Candidate Common Indicator (CCI) 25 (Land cover change) in Morocco and Tunisia by using Copernicus data.

156. Within the GEF Adriatic project, the integrated monitoring programme for Montenegro and Albania have been finalized and submitted to national authorities for validation. Within the same project, a series of online meetings and consultations on MSP with national experts and institutions of Montenegro were organized and a number of documents prepared, as well as the IMAP-based data base for Montenegro, based on a field study of marine habitats, carried out by the Institute of Marine Biology (IMB) of Montenegro. Under the coordination of PAP/RAC and with the support of the Ministry of Ecology, Spatial Planning and Urbanism, which highlighted the need to protect the habitats of the gold coral communities (*Gerardia savaglia*) significantly affected by human activities, the IMB and the Public Enterprise for Coastal Zone Management of Montenegro installed protecting buoys on two of the research sites and cleaned two underwater fields. Information boards were also set up with information about the coral fields and the ban on fishing and anchoring vessels in the fenced locations. As a part of the MSP process, these locations will be proposed to be declared marine protected areas.

157. PAP/RAC supported the organization of the 1<sup>st</sup> International Conference on Water, Environment Protection and Sustainable Development in Albania. Due to COVID-19 pandemic the conference was postponed from October 2020 to 17-18 May 2021 and was held partly face-to-face (in Tirana for the Albanian participants) and partly online (for foreign participants).

#### **Strategic Outcome 4.5: Enhanced capacity at regional, sub-regional and national levels including technical assistance and capacity building**

158. Several training sessions were organised for the Albanian and Montenegrin experts within the GEF Adriatic Project. A virtual training on GES assessment regarding marine litter in Montenegro was held on 5 March 2021. The first ever attempt to assess GES for marine litter in Montenegro was introduced by an expert from the Institute of Marine Biology of Kotor and shared with the interested country representatives who were provided with detailed information on important policies on marine litter in Montenegro; pressures and impacts related to marine litter; methodology of GES assessment for all marine litter indicators; scales of assessment; the current state regarding marine litter in Montenegro (in comparison to threshold values); and proposed management measures for tackling marine litter and needs for further development. A training session on the same subject was organised online for the Albanian experts on 19 March 2021, while the training on Info System was held online on 8 April 2021, in collaboration with INFO/RAC.

### **II.5 Cross-cutting Theme I: INTEGRATED COASTAL ZONE MANAGEMENT (ICZM)**

#### **Strategic Outcome 5.3: Strengthening national implementation.**

159. Regarding the preparation of National ICZM Strategies in Egypt and Lebanon, and the analysis of the national legal frameworks in Algeria and Tunisia, in support of the ratification of the ICZM Protocol, the ToRs have been prepared and consultations with the FPs in both countries have started; it is expected that the full implementation will start in the second half of 2021.

#### **Strategic Outcome 5.5: Enhanced capacity at regional, sub-regional and national levels including technical assistance and capacity building**

160. A special session of the MedOpen Advanced educational programme was delivered during September-December 2020 for the Masters' degree students of two universities: Faculty of Science and Technique Al Hoceima (FSTH), Morocco, and Faculty of Science, Bizerte (FSB), Tunisia, as a part of their academic curricula. Preparatory activities for the next run of the MedOpen Advanced have started in order to be able to deliver it in the second half of 2021 for the students of two Algerian and one Moroccan faculties. Moreover, as a part of the GEF Adriatic project, material has been assembled for a

module on MSP to be included in MedOpen.

161. An agreement was reached with the Syrian Virtual University (SVU) to support their master's degree on integrated management of natural resources. PAP/RAC will be delivering up to 7 lectures on ICZM and MSP for some 30-40 students. Teaching is supposed to start in September 2021.

## **II.6 Cross-cutting Theme II: SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION (SCP)**

### **Strategic Outcome 6.1: Development of new action plans, programmes of measures, common standards and criteria, guidelines and implementation of current ones**

162. In collaboration with the Turkish Ministry of Environment and Urbanisation and in partnership with the Regional Environment Centre in Turkey four flagship and six pilot projects were developed for sustainable consumption and production within the Electrical and Electronic Equipment value chains that was selected as the focus of the background study. Turkey requested similar support to develop a study focusing on the construction and demolition value chain; activities are planned to kick off by June 2021.

163. Following the relevant Decision adopted at COP 21, SCP/RAC prepared a baseline study for the development of regional measures for green and circular businesses. A methodology for the preparation of the study was developed and a team of experts was recruited. As a result, SCP/RAC prepared 22 country profiles, 4 sub-regional baseline assessment, 1 summary of Policy Recommendations to Support the development of Green and Circular Businesses in the Mediterranean and 10 international best practices factsheets on Policy Instruments that promote enabling environments for green and circular businesses were prepared. A stakeholders' consultation process was organised and a first proposal of regional measures was discussed on the 23-24 of February with designated national experts. SCP/RAC Focal Points reviewed the consolidated proposal of the set of regional measures during the SCP/RAC Focal Points Meeting on 1-3 June 2021.

### **Strategic Outcome 6.2: Monitoring and assessment**

164. SCP/RAC reviewed the SCP indicators' list in light of the latest development at the international level (in particular SDGs) and in coordination with the Mediterranean Sustainability Dashboard managed by Plan Bleu. The updated list was used for the indicator-based mid-term evaluation of the SCP Regional Action Plan. Factsheets for each indicator were prepared following PB/RAC's template for the MSSD indicators and were uploaded within the Website of the Mediterranean Observatory for Environment and Sustainable Development.

165. A MEAL System has been drafted, underpinning the Theory of Change of SCP/RAC's sustainable business support programme. By the end of 2021, the MEAL and the Impact Monitoring tool will be fully operational and embedded to the SCP/RAC and partners' business service offer.

### **Strategic Outcome 6.3: Enhanced capacity at regional, sub-regional and national levels including technical assistance and capacity building**

166. [TheSwitchers.org](https://www.switchers.org), the online platform for sustainable business development, has been launched. The platform offers a single-entry point to [The Switchers Toolbox](#), gathering a unique set of methodologies and tools for sustainable business development designed and digitalized by SCP/RAC; the [SwitchersFund](#), promoting matchmaking between green entrepreneurs and financial actors; the [Switchers Community](#), the community of Mediterranean sustainable businesses; and the Policy Hub, which will soon provide information on enabling policies for sustainable businesses in the Mediterranean. [The Switchers Toolbox](#) provides a set of innovative tools for sustainable business development to green entrepreneurs: Green Business Model development tool; Green Business Plan development tool; Eco-design tool; Access to Market; Access to Finance; Impact Measurement tool. [The Switchers Toolbox](#) also allows interaction among various target users: entrepreneurs, trainers/mentors, business support organizations and financial actors.

167. Switchers National Partnerships, gathering Business Support Organizations (BSOs) targeting Green Entrepreneurs, are being set up in 7 Mediterranean countries. The goals of the National Partnerships are to reinforce the ecosystems providing sustainable business development services, improving capacities and promoting coordination and networking among the BSOs. Almost one hundred BSOs have joined the National Partnerships so far (18 in Morocco, 12 in Algeria, 20 in Tunisia, 7 in Jordan, 8 in Palestine, 13 in Israel and 14 in Lebanon). The Partnerships gather a great variety of BSOs, such as public institutions, private companies and non-profit organizations.

168. A Training of Trainers Programme (ToT) is being implemented to transfer sustainable business development capacities, methodologies and tools to Mediterranean BSOs (the members of the National Partnerships and other organizations). The contents of the ToT are linked with the online tools available in The Switchers Toolbox and offer four main modules: Green Business Model development (4 days); Green Business Plan development and Impact Assessment (3 Days); Eco-design (2 Days); and Access to Market and Access to Finance (2 Days). So far, a total of 211 trainers selected by

96 BSOs have been trained in 10 countries (Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, Jordan, Palestine, Israel, Lebanon, Italy and Spain). 50% of the trainees are women. SCP/RAC organized a total of 74 days Online-Workshops. 90% of the trainers rate the ToT as good or very good and 99% intend to include the methodology and the online tools into the support programmes provided by their BSOs. Once the BSOs and their experts have been trained, the Support Programme targeting Green Entrepreneurs at ideation stage and early-stage has been launched. Calls for applicants are open in several countries to support entrepreneurs in developing their sustainable business models and plans. So far, 195 Green Entrepreneurs have been supported in Lebanon, Palestine, Egypt and Italy.

#### **Strategic Outcome 6.4: Enhanced cooperation at regional, sub-regional and national levels to prevent and control marine pollution**

169. To overcome barriers posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, digital tools have been further explored, leading to the development of: (a) An investment opportunity tracking system, to scout and disseminate potential opportunities to green entrepreneurs in the Mediterranean; (b) The development of an Access-to-Finance Toolkit, hosted on the Sustainable Business Development Online Platform, targeting green entrepreneurs at different stages of their business life cycle; (c) The development of a dedicated dashboard for Financial Institutions (FIs) on the “TheSwitcher.org” Platform, including the creation of a digital training, supporting FIs to better identify and analyze financial green opportunities; (d) A virtual match-making mechanism, allowing FIs to interact with Green Entrepreneurs. During the current reporting period, SCP/RAC procured external services to facilitate the establishment of a Sustainable Finance National Task Force in Morocco, Tunisia, Lebanon, Jordan and Palestine. The recruited consultants are working to update the current database of potential local investors and to engage them to the Green Impact Investment Network. National Task Forces will closely work with BSOs to better identify green entrepreneurs’ financial needs and scout investment opportunities.

170. A legal and governance assessment is currently being undertaken by an external consulting firm to evaluate the opportunities to establish a public-private funding mechanism managed by SCP/RAC in partnership with financial institutions and other regional organizations. An initial report will be submitted at the beginning of June 2021.

171. The Business-to-business (B2B) web-platform “The Switchers Products” is currently under development and will be delivered by the end of June 2021. The Switchers Products will offer green entrepreneurs a methodology and tools to showcase and present their products and services and will be coupled with a specific marketing strategy to facilitate B2B and retailing opportunities.

172. An assessment to position and grow “The Switchers Community” has been finalized. The assessment results highlighted the need to modernize and increase the sense of ownership of the Community, better devising its value proposition and communication channels, recommending key actions to be undertaken in the short and medium term. As a first step, a 2-days event “The Switchers Talks” have been planned to offer members the opportunity to reflect on the role and objectives of the Community and to access to updated information on access to finance, digital marketing and business support tools. The event will be held on 28 and 29 June 2021.

### **II.7 Cross-cutting Theme III: CLIMATE CHANGE**

#### **Strategic Outcome 7.2: Development of new action plans, programmes and measures, common standards and criteria, guidelines**

173. To promote the integration of Nature Based Solutions in Climate Change Adaptation Strategies, Plan Bleu/RAC is preparing a Multipartner workshop during the IUCN World Conservation Congress.

Two guiding documents have been prepared within the EU-funded ADRIADAPT project: “Guidelines for Mainstreaming Adaptation into Coastal Management” and “Coastal Resilience Handbook” - both for the Adriatic coastal zones. The documents have been prepared in English, Croatian and Italian.

#### **Strategic Outcome 7.3: Strengthen national implementation**

174. Within the ADRIADAPT project, a catalogue of adaptation options has been developed: around 50 adaptation options have been identified and uploaded on the ADRIADAPT platform, as well as 6 examples of good practice. All materials are available in English, Croatian and Italian. These adaptation options and good practices, although intended for the Adriatic Region, can easily be adapted to wider Mediterranean conditions.

175. Within the same project, in the case study in Croatia, a methodology of assessing the vulnerability of the narrow coastal zone to sea-level rise with specific reference to marine environment has been developed and tested. The results will serve to update the Action Plan for the implementation of the Sibenik-Knin County Coastal Plan prepared within the GEF MedPartnership.

176. The activities related to the preparation of the coastal plans for Boka Kotorska in Montenegro and Tangiers-Tetouan-Al

Hoceima region in Morocco, with the focus on climate change issues, are ready to start following the signature of the contract with GEF for the GEF SCCF project that provides funding for these two plans and complements the Child Project 2.1 of the GEF MedProgramme.

177. Initial SPA/RAC exchanges took place with MedECC, through PB/RAC, to prepare in 2021 guidelines to enhance the marine biodiversity component of countries in their future updated NDCs, aiming to increase alignment and integration of marine biodiversity concerns and SDG14 pursuit. They will aim to harmonize and coordinate with related tools and initiatives by the UNFCCC and the CBD to maximize synergies. Guidelines will consider the needs identified through the Post- 2020 SAPBIO document currently under preparation.

#### **Strategic Outcome 7.4: Monitoring and assessment**

178. The report on socio-economic indicators associated with climate change vulnerabilities in MPAs, prepared by Plan Bleu/RAC in collaboration with SPA/RAC, has been published in October 2020

#### **Strategic Outcome 7.5: Enhanced capacity at regional, sub- regional and national levels including technical assistance and capacity building.**

179. UNEP/MAP and the Union for the Mediterranean, together with other partners, support MedECC's First Mediterranean Assessment Report (MAR1) and Summary for Policymakers, an important regional initiative which contributes to well establish sound processes on environmental assessment in the Mediterranean. Since its establishment, the scientific secretariat of MedECC has been hosted on a temporary basis by Plan Bleu/RAC in Marseille, France. Plan Bleu statutes have been updated to allow for long-term hosting.

180. MedECC contributes to the Sixth Assessment Report (AR6) of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), with a chapter dedicated for the first time to the Mediterranean. This chapter is prepared under the co-leadership of Prof. Wolfgang Cramer, one of the two MedECC coordinators.

181. Following the online consultation (April-June 2020) of policymakers and stakeholders on the draft Summary for Policy-Makers (SPM) of MAR1, and as per Annex IV of Decision IG.24/4, Members of the MCSD Steering Committee, Plan Bleu/RAC Focal Points, Members of the UfM Climate Change Expert Group (CCEG) and of the UfM Environment Task Force, the MedECC Secretariat, Steering Committee and Coordinating Lead Authors, as well as UNEP/MAP, PB/RAC and UfM Secretariat representatives participated remotely, on 22 September 2020, in the MedECC Plenary consultation. The aim of this consultation was to ascertain that MAR1 findings, as presented in the revised draft SPM, are fully comprehensible and unambiguous, and that the comments from the previous online consultation were well addressed. The findings of the revised draft SPM were reviewed and discussed in session to ensure that the results are formulated in a clear and understandable way and that the assessment of literature is transparent, objective, complete, and can be easily communicated to decision-makers. This event was an important step in reinforcing the science-policy dialogue. Approximately 100 participants contributed to a meaningful discussion that resulted in a set of conclusions and recommendations and a final version of the SPM. In particular the Plenary consultation "did not identify any factual inaccuracy or error in the SPM".

182. To continue its mission aiming to consolidate and provide scientific knowledge on climate and environmental change in the Mediterranean, the MedECC secretariat and steering committee works on three complementary actions: Communication on MAR1 and its SPM; Identification of knowledge gaps, reinforcing the network and capacity-building in the South and the East of the Mediterranean; and preparation of thematic reports related to the challenges identified in MAR1.