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Agenda Item 3: Ecosystem Approach Roadmap 2008-2021 evaluation of implementation and renewal

Evaluation of Implementation of Ecosystem Approach Roadmap 2008-2021

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Note by the Secretariat

The ecosystem approach is described as “a strategy for the integrated management of land, water and living resources that promotes conservation and sustainable use in an equitable way” (Convention on Biological Diversity). UNEP/MAP implements the Ecosystem Approach (EcAp Decision IG.17/6, Almeria (Spain), 15-18 January 2008) in the Mediterranean marine and coastal environment for achieving and maintaining good environmental status (GES).

Activity 5.1.2 of UNEP/MAP’s Programme of Work and Budget 2022-2023 (Decision IG.25/19 adopted by COP 22, Antalya, Turkey December 2021), requires the advancement of the implementation of EcAp in the Mediterranean and IMAP, in coherence with regional and global developments, as follows:

- i. Implementation of the EcAp Roadmap evaluated. Gaps and needs identified for each of the Roadmap’s steps against the vision and objectives, taking into account recent developments at global and regional level.
- ii. New/updated Roadmap for the implementation of the ecosystem approach and the achievement of GES beyond 2023 prepared for review of EcAp/IMAP governance bodies.
- iii. Proposal to further develop and adapt IMAP with new features following the experience with QSR 2023 preparation and findings.
- iv. Coordinated implementation of IMAP ensured through IMAP/EcAp Task Force and CORMON and as appropriate Online Working Group meetings.

The independent evaluation to assess the implementation of UNEP/MAP’s (EcAp) Roadmap 2008-2021 aims to enhance and strengthen the delivery of the UNEP/MAP-Barcelona Convention system’s ecosystem approach in the future. To this end, the review will provide technical and policy recommendations to the EcAp Coordination Group and Bureau on the main elements for a renewed UNEP/MAP Ecosystem Approach policy for consideration by MAP Focal Points and COP 23 in 2023 that COP may decide to give a full mandate for its elaboration in the biennium 2024-2025.

The present document provides the concept note for this integrated process of evaluation and forward-looking recommendations for the period 2024-2030.

The 92nd Meeting of the Bureau agreed with the approach for the evaluation of the EcAp Roadmap/Policy implementation and acknowledged the importance of ensuring coherence with relevant regional and global developments. The Bureau urged Contracting Parties to actively contribute to this process (UNEP/MED BUR.92/6, Istanbul, Turkey, 24-25 March 2022).

Concept note on evaluating implementation and renewing UNEP/MAP's Ecosystem Approach

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1. Purpose and scope

1. The Ecosystem Approach is described as “a strategy for the integrated management of land, water and living resources that promotes conservation and sustainable use in an equitable way” (The Convention on Biological Diversity). UNEP/MAP implements the ecosystem approach (EcAp Decision IG.17/6, Almeria (Spain), 15-18 January 2008) in the Mediterranean marine and coastal environment for achieving and maintaining good environmental status (GES).

2. The purpose of the proposed work is for an independent evaluation to assess the implementation of UNEP/MAP’s (EcAp) Roadmap 2008-2021, with the aim of enhancing and strengthening the delivery of the UNEP/MAP-Barcelona Convention system’s EcAp mandate in the future and, to this end, providing technical and policy options to the EcAp Coordination Group and Bureau and propose the main elements for a renewed UNEP/MAP Ecosystem 2024-2025 to be considered by MAP Focal Points for adoption by COP 23 in 2023.

2. Objectives

3. Evaluating the implementation of Ecosystem Approach (EcAp) Roadmap 2008-2021.

4. Main elements for a renewed UNEP/MAP Ecosystem 2024-2025.

3. Description of process

5. The work will be conducted in the 2022-2023 biennium. Following the discussion and overall agreement by the EcAp Coordination Group the Secretariat will start the work.

6. The evaluation will be based on a review of the implementation of the seven steps of the EcAp Roadmap, building on the previous review conducted in 2017 (6th EcAp CG WG.444/4), to enable MAP to measure progress against the expected accomplishments. The evaluation will examine whether the structure and outputs of the Roadmap are still adequate, taking into account the ongoing processes at regional and global levels.

7. Relevant COP Decisions and UNEP/MAP reports should be referenced.

8. For the evaluation of implementation of the EcAp Roadmap the review will consist of the following aspects (details provided in Section 4):

- a. The status of implementation of the current EcAp Roadmap considering the updated MSFD,
- b. Evidence of the achievements,
- c. Identification of needs against global and regional commitments of relevance,
- d. Recommendations for the next substantive steps considering relevant global and regional commitments and propose main elements for a renewed EcAp roadmap/policy 2024-2030.

9. The following section elaborates a draft process for evaluating implementation of the EcAp Roadmap and describes the intended contents of each field in Annex 1.

a. *Status:*

10. For each EcAp Step, assess the status of implementation compared with the vision and objectives, e.g., “completed” / “majority completed”, >50% / “partially completed”, <50%. As the starting point, use the EcAp Roadmap progress report presented to the 8th EcAp Coordination Group in September 2021 (UNEP/MED WG.514/3).

11. Resources: Progress reports to MAP bodies since 2008 (Barcelona Convention Reporting System (BCRS) national reports (until 2019)), MTS evaluation report, Mid-term evaluation reports of different policies, NAPs and Programmes of Measures, National IMAPs, national policy instruments and reports, etc., relevant to the ecosystem approach.

b. Evidence base:

12. Provide evidence of achievements including the relevant Decisions, reports, developments at regional (sub-regional, national) or global level, or other evidence to support the assessed % status of implementation of each Step as defined in column 2. Where implementation status is <100%, briefly state the reasons and list any identified gaps for each Step against the vision and objectives.

c. Preliminary reflections on current developments of relevant regional and global processes

13. The ecosystem approach has been adopted across a wide range of national, regional, and global policy frameworks. This section indicates the key current and future processes and actions that should be considered for a renewed EcAp Policy, including providing recommendations on possible future developments of the EcAp and IMAP.

d. Recommendations:

14. Analysing the status and evidence base, make recommendations for the main elements to renew the EcAp Roadmap/policy, considering relevant global and regional commitments and key findings of the 2023 Med QSR.

UNEP/MAP's Medium-Term Strategy (MTS) 2022-2027 and COP Decisions

15. UNEP/MAP's new MTS includes commitments to contribute to global and regional processes, including the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and SDGs, the implementation of the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, the Paris Agreement, and the UN Decades. Importantly, specific Outcomes in the MTS Programmes are already explicitly aligned with IMAP Ecological Objectives. Therefore, the review and the main elements for a renewed EcAp policy must incorporate these pre-planned strategic approaches.

16. Several COP Decisions include innovative elements that contribute to the implementation of the EcAp Roadmap and even go beyond it, and these should also be taken into account in the proposal of the main elements for a renewed EcAp policy. For example, Decision 25/8 on the Regional Plan for Urban Wastewater Treatment and Sewage Sludge Management, which incorporates the Water–Energy–Food–Ecosystem (WEFE) nexus into the design phase of waste-water treatment plans, to promote energy efficiency and reuse of reclaimed wastewater. Decision IG.25/9 on the Regional Plan on marine litter management, which commits to applying prevention measures to achieve a circular economy for plastics by 2025. Decision IG.25/11 on the Post-2020 Strategic Action Programme for the Conservation of Biodiversity and Sustainable Management of Natural Resources in the Mediterranean Region (Post-2020 SAPBIO), which proposes the long-term Vision “By 2050, marine and coastal biodiversity is valued, conserved, restored and wisely used, maintaining ecosystem services, sustaining a healthy Mediterranean Sea and coast, and delivering benefits essential for nature and people”. Decision IG.25/12 including the Post-2020 Regional Strategy for marine and coastal protected areas (MCPAs) and other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs) in the Mediterranean. Decision IG.25/13 including updates of the Action Plan for the conservation of cetaceans in the Mediterranean Sea, and Action Plan for the conservation of habitats and species associated with seamounts, underwater caves and canyons, aphotic hard beds, and chemo-synthetic phenomena in the Mediterranean Sea (Dark Habitats Action Plan).

Decision IG.25/16 on a Mediterranean Strategy for the Prevention of, Preparedness, and Response to Marine Pollution from Ships, which streamlines the EcAp into the management of human activities in the Mediterranean marine and coastal environment. Decision IG.25/18 on a set of Regional Measures to support the development of the green and circular economy businesses and to strengthen demand for more sustainable products, which includes measures to tackle identified challenges and to preserve healthy marine and coastal ecosystems in the Mediterranean, while enabling the development of green and circular business opportunities in key socioeconomic activities of the Blue Economy.

17. COP 20 and COP 21 have also adopted updated versions of the regional actions plans and strategies for the conservation of species and habitats. COP 20 Decision IG.23/8 that included an updated version of the Action Plan for the Conservation of Marine and Coastal Bird Species listed in Annex II to the Protocol concerning Specially Protected Areas and Biological Diversity in the Mediterranean, and an Updated Reference List of Marine and Coastal Habitat Types in the Mediterranean. COP 21 Decision IG.24/7 including updated versions of (i) the Strategy for the Conservation of Monk Seal in the Mediterranean, (ii) the Action Plan for the Conservation of Mediterranean Marine Turtles, (iii) the Action Plan for the Conservation of Cartilaginous Fishes (Chondrichthyans) in the Mediterranean Sea, and (iv) the Action Plan for the Conservation of Marine Vegetation in the Mediterranean Sea.

18. The Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) Protocol (COP 15 Decision IG.17/1) provides instruments and mechanisms to achieve synergies and integration of various approaches in order to deliver ecosystem-based solutions for GES and sustainable development of marine and coastal environment. IMAP and EOs as such are just one of the inputs to provide measures to achieve GES. ICZM Protocol and its Common Regional Framework with the Methodological guidance for reaching GES through ICZM (COP Decision IG 24/5 in December 2019) are of utmost importance. Moreover, the Conceptual Framework for MSP (adopted at a COP) provides a planning approach to integrate IMAP/EcAp indicators/EOs for achieving GES and sustainable development of marine/coastal regions, enabling blue economy. They should be taken into account in this analysis, with recommendations made on how they should be integrated in the revised Roadmap.

UNEP Regional Seas Strategic Directions (2022-2025)

19. UNEP's Regional Seas Strategic Directions highlight the need for and encourage the integration of the ecosystem approach into marine and coastal management and national strategies and action plans. Its five strategic directions (climate change, SCP/circular economy/pollution, marine biodiversity, monitoring and assessments, and knowledge management) are of direct relevance to MAP's EcAp, as recognised in the MTS, and should be referenced in the proposal of the main elements for a renewed EcAp Roadmap/policy.

20. The recent UNEP report on "The Ecosystem Approach: Towards a practical application across Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans", sets out nine activities to implement the ecosystem approach and this could influence the structure of a renewed EcAp Policy. There may be some alignment of the EcAp Roadmap seven steps with the nine activities:

UNEP ecosystem approach nine activities	Corresponding EcAp Roadmap Step
1. Ecosystem mapping	III Identification of important ecosystem properties and assessment of ecological status and pressures
2. Problem scoping activities	
3. Stakeholder mapping, analysis, and engagement	(not an explicit)
4. Assessment of ecosystem health and quality	III
5. Ecosystem service assessment	III

UNEP ecosystem approach nine activities	Corresponding EcAp Roadmap Step
6. Regional-scale ecosystem monitoring	VI Revision of monitoring programmes for assessment and regular updating of targets
7. Establishing ecological (quality) objectives, indicators, and thresholds	IV Ecological objectives V Derivation of operational objectives with indicators and target levels (I Ecological vision) (II Mediterranean strategic goals)
8. Action plan or management plan with roles and responsibilities	VII Development and review of action plans and programme
9. Agreed management responses in response to ecological objectives	VII

21. UNEP’s ecosystem approach activities 4 and 5 have a clear socio-economic dimension that the current Roadmap does not taking adequately into account. The Barcelona Convention’s legal system provides instruments for taking this dimension into account, e.g., ICZM and MSP.

22. Activities 8 and 9 clearly call for the use of instruments available in order to integrate concepts across approaches to deliver measures to achieve GES. So, some deliverables from recently implemented projects should be analysed and taken into account as a source of reference/experience.

23. In regard to monitoring programmes there are global and regional processes from which the IMAP could benefit. For example, databases available from the World Environment Situation Room, the European Marine Observation and Data Network (EMODnet), and Copernicus Marine Service.

UN Decades

24. UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021 to 2030) aims to develop a comprehensive evidence base and capacities for ecosystem-based management, including via the sharing of data to support understanding of ecosystem functions and services, and lessons learned to guide the use of the ecosystem approach in different situations. The monitoring component of IMAP could be adjusted to contribute data to the evidence base. This is similarly the case for data required for reporting on SDGs indicators, particularly those for which UNEP is the custodian agency, e.g., SDG 14.2.1 Number of countries using ecosystem-based approaches to managing marine areas.

25. UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration has a practical guide to ecosystem restoration, “the Ecosystem Restoration Playbook” with actions to stop degradation of ecosystems and foster their recovery. Some Ecological Objectives could be made more ambitious by including ecosystem/habitat restoration (EO 1 and EO 6). (See also UNEA Resolutions on NBS, below).

Convention on Biodiversity (CBD) twelve principles for an ecosystem approach

26. The Convention on Biological Diversity’s (CBD) has established the ecosystem approach as the core framework for implementation of its objectives, including those being elaborated under the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework. It sets out twelve, inter-linked principles for an ecosystem approach that could be incorporated in MAP’s EcAp Policy as indicators of success against which EcAp Roadmap steps could be judged.

United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) Resolutions

27. UNEA 5 “Strengthening Actions for Nature to Achieve the SDGs” includes draft resolutions on: nature-based solutions (NBS) and biodiversity; marine / plastic pollution; chemicals and minerals; and green recovery and circular economy. NBS are actions to protect, sustainably manage, and restore natural or modified ecosystems, which address societal challenges effectively and adaptively, simultaneously providing human well-being, ecosystem resilience and biodiversity benefits. NBS are designed to address major societal challenges, among which are biodiversity loss and climate change.
28. Links with existing approaches within UNEP/MAP system should be analysed that correspond with the concept of NBS. New terminology should not neglect what is already in place with the same objectives.
29. The IMAP monitoring programmes already recognise that marine and coastal ecosystems are not in a steady state, that natural variability in production and species composition is inherent, and that ecosystems are dynamic spatially and temporally. However, the need to adapt monitoring programmes should be considered to account for climate change impacts, ecosystem resilience and NBS. Consideration should also be given as to whether and how the MedECC work on climate change and that of SPA/RAC on indicators for climate change impact on biodiversity can be incorporated into the EcAp.
30. Regional and global processes have promoted actions on the circular economy and prevention of pollution, for example UNEA 5’s draft resolution on the circular economy and the EU’s Circular Economy Action Plan. Currently the EcAp has more emphasis on reduction of pollution rather than prevention, whereas prevention could be its renewed focus.

Relevant developments at EU level

31. The EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) commits EU member states to achieve GES by 2020. The MSFD was a strong influence on MAP’s original EcAp, as evidenced in the alignment of many IMAP Ecological Objectives with MSFD Descriptors, and of Common Indicators with MSFD criteria. This alignment has the practical application of enabling MAP Contracting Parties that are EU member to use their obligations under MSFD to comply with MAP monitoring programmes, assessment, and measures. The MSFD is currently under review in accordance with the Commission’s better regulation agenda and is due for completion in mid-2023.
32. The Water Framework Directive (WFD) underwent a Fitness Check in December 2019 which concluded that water legislation is broadly fit for purpose, but also led to a review of the lists of pollutants occurring in surface and ground waters and corresponding regulatory standards.
33. Forthcoming changes particularly to the MSFD, will need to be closely monitored and carefully considered to ensure good level of harmonisation as appropriate.

Other relevant developments

34. Additional relevant developments that should be considered include other Regional Seas; General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM); the Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and Contiguous Atlantic Area (ACCOBAMS); the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), etc., to maximise synergies and strengthen capacities for the effective implementation of UNEP/MAP’s the Ecosystem Approach.

4. Workplan and timeline

Workplan and timeline for evaluation of the 2008-2021 EcAp Roadmap

No.	Outputs/tasks by month	Jun-Jul 2022	Aug-Sep 2022	Oct-Nov 2022	Dec-Jan 2023	Feb-Mar 2023	Apr-May 2023	Jun-Jul 2023
1.	Perform a desk review of key recent documents and processes relevant to EcAp implementation							
2.	Evaluation of the implementation of the EcAp Roadmap; status of implementation; achievements; needs and gaps identified for each step							
3.	Analysis of current developments at global and regional level Identify the key current and future processes and actions that should be considered for a renewed EcAp Roadmap/Policy, including providing recommendations on possible future developments							
4.	Prepare and make recommendations for the main elements for a renewed EcAp Roadmap/ policy for the achievement of GES 2024-2030, for consideration in spring 2023							
5.	Refine the recommendations for the main elements for a EcAp Roadmap/Policy based on feedback							
6.	Present final proposals for a renewed EcAp Roadmap Policy for the implementation of the ecosystem approach and the achievement of GES 2024-2030							

Annex 1: A possible template for evaluation

EcAp Steps	Status as of autumn 2022	Evidence base	Recommendations
I. Definition of an ecological vision for the Mediterranean	Completed	<p><u>Achievements</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decision IG.17/6 (COP 15), “A healthy Mediterranean with marine and coastal ecosystems that are productive and biologically diverse for the benefit of present and future generations” <p><u>Gaps</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 	<p>Is the vision still fully relevant? Proposed recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • •
I. Setting of common Mediterranean strategic goals		<p><u>Achievements</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decision IG.17/6 (COP 15): <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. To protect, allow recovery and, where practicable, restore the structure and function of marine and coastal ecosystems thus also protecting biodiversity, in order to achieve and maintain good ecological status and allow for their sustainable use. b. To reduce pollution in the marine and coastal environment so as to minimise impacts on and risks to human and/or ecosystem health and/or uses of the sea and the coasts. c. To prevent, reduce and manage the vulnerability of the sea and the coasts to risks induced by human activities and natural events. • Other Decisions related to Strategic Goals • ... <p><u>Gaps</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 	<p>Are the strategic goals still fully relevant? Proposed recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • •
III. Identification of important ecosystem properties and assessment of ecological status and pressures		<p><u>Achievements</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial Integrated Assessment of the Mediterranean Sea and Coastal Areas (Decision IG. 20/4) • SoER MED 2012 • 2017 Med QSR (Decision 22/6) • SoED 2020 (Decision IG.24/4) • 2023 MED QSR Roadmap and Needs Assessment 	<p>Have the important ecosystem properties been identified and have ecological status and pressures been sufficiently assessed? Proposed recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • •

EcAp Steps	Status as of autumn 2022	Evidence base	Recommendations
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ... <u>Gaps</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 	
IV. Development of a set of ecological objectives corresponding to the vision and strategic goals		<u>Achievements</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Gaps</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 	<p>To what extent do the ecological objectives adequately correspond to the vision and strategic goals? If the vision were to be updated, how should the EOs be correspondingly aligned? Proposed recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • •
V. Derivation of operational objectives with indicators and target levels		<u>Achievements</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Gaps</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 	<p>To what extent the operational objectives, indicators, and target levels still appropriate? Proposed recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • •
VI. Revision of existing monitoring programmes for ongoing assessment and regular updating of targets		<u>Achievements</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme of the Mediterranean Sea and Coast and Related Assessment Criteria (Decision IG22/7) <u>Gaps</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 	<p>To what extent are the design and implementation of monitoring programmes in line with IMAP requirements and sufficient to underpin assessment and regular updating of targets? Proposed recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • •
VII. Development and review of relevant action plans and programmes		<u>Achievements</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Gaps</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 	<p>Do action plans and programmes need further development? Proposed recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •