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23rd Meeting of the MCSD Steering Committee

Videoconference, 1-2 June 2022

Report of the 23rd Meeting of the MCSD Steering Committee

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REPORT OF THE 23RD MEETING OF THE MCSD STEERING COMMITTEE

Introduction

1. The 23rd Meeting of the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development (MCSD) Steering Committee was held on 1-2 June 2022 through videoconference. The list of participants is provided in Annex I of the present report of meeting.

Agenda item 1: Opening of the Meeting

2. After welcoming remarks by Ms. Tatjana Hema, UNEP/MAP Coordinator, the meeting was opened by Mr. Mitja Bricelj (Slovenia), President of the MCSD Steering Committee, at 10:00 a.m. local time in Athens, Greece (GMT+3).

3. In his opening remarks, the President thanked the Members of the MCSD Steering Committee for their presence and commitment, noting that all members of the Committee were represented and that external speakers were invited to join specific sessions for an interactive meeting. He congratulated the Secretariat for the excellent work done after the 19th Meeting of the MCSD (videoconference, 7-9 June 2021). He mentioned that the 23rd Meeting of the MCSD Steering Committee was the first meeting of the Committee during the current biennium 2022-2023 and held after the 22nd Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols (COP 22) (Antalya, Turkey, 7-10 December 2021).

4. The President reminded that UNEP/MAP will be represented at the forthcoming 2022 UN Ocean Conference (Lisbon, Portugal, 27 June – 1 July 2022), where several Contracting Parties are organizing side events on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14 (Life below water), including through concrete transboundary measures.

5. The President also informed the participants that Prof. Michael Scoullos, Global Water Partnership – Mediterranean (GWP-Med), in his capacity of Vice-President of the MCSD Steering Committee, accepted to replace him for chairing the meeting during his absence in the afternoon sessions on 1 June 2022.

6. The Secretariat congratulated the Members of the MCSD Steering Committee for their nomination and expressed warm welcome to the meeting participants.

7. The Secretariat explained that the meeting was expected to review the progress made after the 19th Meeting of the MCSD and COP 22, as well as to discuss specific issues contained in the Provisional Agenda and its annotated version (documents UNEP/MED WG.523/1 and UNEP/MED WG.523/2).

8. The Secretariat mentioned that the current biennium 2022-2023 was the first biennium of the MAP Medium-Term Strategy 2022-2027, which was adopted by COP 22, and that the year 2022 would see a series of important global and regional events related to the environmental and sustainable development agenda.

Agenda item 2: Adoption of the Provisional Agenda and Organization of Work

9. The President introduced the Provisional Agenda prepared by the Secretariat, as contained in document UNEP/MED WG.523/1 and annotated in document UNEP/MED WG.523/2.

10. Members of the MCSD Steering Committee requested adding the following points under Agenda item 6 “Any Other Matters”:

- an update on the host country of the 20th Meeting of the MCSD, expected to be held in June/July 2023.

- an introduction by Turkey of its proposal to establish and host a new Regional Activity Centre (RAC) for Climate Change Adaptation.
- a discussion on the participation of UNEP/MAP at the Sharm el-Sheikh Climate Change Conference of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), to be held in November 2022.

11. The agenda, including the three points above under Agenda item 6 “Any Other Matters”, was adopted by the participants, as provided in Annex II of the present report of meeting.

Agenda item 3: Work of the MCSD and MSSD Implementation. Review of Progress for the Period July 2021 – April 2022

12. The Secretariat introduced document UNEP/MED WG.523/3 “Progress Report and Specific Issues” and provided an overview of the progress made during the period July 2021 – April 2022.

13. The presentation from the Secretariat covered *inter alia* the following elements: outcomes of COP 22 and of the Fifth United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-5); the integration of the Mediterranean Sustainability Dashboard in the UNEP World Environment Situation Room (WESR) online platform; progress on the implementation of MSSD Flagship Initiatives and of the MED 2050 Foresight Study; relevant activities on Cooperation and Partners, as well on Communication and Outreach.

14. After having thanked the Secretariat for the extensive work done and impressive number of activities, the President invited the Members of the MCSD Steering Committee to provide comments on the progress report and to report on their own activities that contributed to the implementation and follow-up of the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (MSSD).

15. A Member of the MCSD Steering Committee congratulated the Secretariat for outstanding achievements, which are aligned with global challenges, including in terms of cooperation between Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans. She also referred to the important contribution of UNEP/MAP at the One Ocean Summit held in Brest, France, on 11 February 2022.

16. Another Member of the MCSD Steering Committee congratulated the Secretariat for its efforts and recommended to make the achievements even more visible, in particular in the South of the Mediterranean, through networking activities and communication actions. Stating that there is not sustainable development without addressing climate change, he called for links between the work of the MCSD and the forthcoming UNFCCC COP 27, the latter being a suitable place where the MAP – Barcelona Convention system, the MCSD, relevant Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and MAP Partners could highlight challenges, solutions and best practices on climate action at regional level, in a region which is a hotspot of climate change.

17. Another Member of the MCSD Steering Committee congratulated the UNEP/MAP – Barcelona Convention system, noting that the profile and work of the MCSD was upgraded and reached out substantial achievements. He stated that COP 27 of the UNFCCC should be considered as a very relevant forum for the MCSD to represent the entire Mediterranean region, as a model among Regional Seas and beyond, and as a relevant North/South interface. The independent network of Mediterranean experts on climate and environmental change (MedECC) was also thanked for having provided important contributions in recent regional events gathering Mediterranean CSOs. The Member of the MCSD Steering Committee finally reported on the collaborative work realized by GWP-Med with the Priority Action Programme / Regional Activity Centre (PAP/RAC) and UNESCO in preparing the integrated methodological framework for Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM), Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) and the Ecosystem Approach.

18. A Member of the MCSD Steering Committee representing a Contracting Party expressed concerns regarding the maritime boundaries of the Contracting Parties in the UNEP World Environment Situation Room (WESR) online platform and MapX application, stating that the information on maps should not cause any prejudice on maritime jurisdiction of other Parties and states in accordance with the provisions of the Barcelona Convention.
19. The same Member of the MCSD Steering Committee reported concerns about the “Foundation Discussion Document (FDD) for the Mediterranean Accession Agenda to the Aarhus Convention”, which has been prepared by MEPIELAN (MAP Partner) in the context of a partnership with MIO-ECSDE, and which has been distributed as Information Document UNEP/MED WG.523/Inf.6 to the participants of the 23rd Meeting of the MCSD Steering Committee.
20. This Member of the MCSD Steering Committee pointed out that the Progress Report contained the expression of “pan-European Regional Seas”, suggesting that this expression should be corrected as “Regional Seas Surrounding Europe”. In responding to this concern, Ms. Tatjana Hema, UNEP/MAP Coordinator, explained that the reference to the European Regional Seas is a geographical reference, which is related to the fact that their bordering coastal states belong to Europe as a continent, in line with the UN Regional Economic Commissions; only the Mediterranean is a sea bordered by coastal states which belong to three continents (i.e., Africa, Asia, Europe).
21. Finally, commenting on paragraph No 69 of the Progress Report on the management of Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Areas (EBSAs) and establishment of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) within EBSAs, the same Member of the MCSD Steering Committee stated that the cooperation of coastal states should be conditioned by the fact that there are not ongoing maritime jurisdiction disputes.
22. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean (PAM) mentioned that this regional network of parliamentarians has been facing difficult decisions adopted by its member states to address the consequences of the Russian aggression against Ukraine, including in terms of delay in the implementation of relevant green energy transition plans. This member of the MCSD Steering Committee stressed that the Mediterranean basin is a “climate change hotspot”, with a catastrophic greenhouse gas concentration scenario, in addition of global sea warming, with immensurable damages to our ecosystems and biodiversity. In that context, PAM has repeatedly urged national governments to take actions in accordance with SDG 14 targets, taking into account the need for an unprecedented collective endeavor to reach carbon neutrality by 2050 and to guide our region through a well-planned energy transition.
23. PAM reported about the signature of the memorandum of understanding (MoU) with UNEP, as agreed by COP 22, during the 16th Plenary Session of PAM held in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, from 9-10 March 2022. PAM is expected to contribute to the forthcoming UNEP/MAP “Parliamentarian’s Guide to protecting the Mediterranean Sea and coast” towards a possible launch at the next PAM Plenary Session to be held in Rabat, Morocco, in March 2023.
24. PAM updated the meeting participants about the organization of a dedicated international event on the eve of the UNFCCC COP 27, which will support the parliamentary dimension of the Conference. Finally, in April 2022, PAM engaged in high-level discussions with the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), within the Committee of Experts on Public Administration (CEPA), on how to increase engagement and participation in the environmental decision-making process, including in the framework of the implementation of the Aarhus Convention; in that context, PAM is organizing a high-level Economic Forum of the Euro-Mediterranean and Gulf Regions, to be hosted by the Parliament of Morocco in Tangier in December 2022, when sustainable development, the green transition, food and energy security will constitute core topics of the discussions.

Conclusion:

i. The MCSD Steering Committee expressed its satisfaction and support for the consistent efforts and key achievements, and invited the Secretariat, MCSD Members and MAP Partners to maintain their commitment towards the MSSD implementation and to further strengthen their collaboration and communication actions in a synergetic manner.

Agenda item 4: Specific Issues

25. Replacing the President in his absence, the Vice-President Prof. Michael Scoullos introduced this agenda item as the most important of the meeting, mentioning that, in addition of a series of Information Documents, Working Document UNEP/MED WG.523/3 brings to the attention of the participants substantive elements on MSSD related activities, pointing out specific elements for consideration, review and discussion by the MCSD Steering Committee.

A. Mediterranean Sustainability Dashboard and Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) Indicators

26. Under this agenda subitem, the Coordinator reminded the mandate provided by the Contracting Parties to the Secretariat for monitoring the MSSD implementation through the Mediterranean Sustainability Dashboard, including the close connections which have been developed between the regional dashboard and the global SDG dimension through access to up-to-date information.

27. The Secretariat (Plan Bleu and SCP/RAC) introduced a Power Point presentation on the activities related to the Mediterranean Sustainability Dashboard and SCP indicators, as included in document UNEP/MED WG.532/3. That presentation mainly focused on the integration of the dashboard and SCP indicators into the global WESR¹, which is the UNEP data, information and knowledge platform, allowing an efficient monitoring of progress towards sustainable development in the Mediterranean, and responding to the challenge of creating multi-scale datasets and indicators within connected information platforms to facilitate dataflow and data use by the Contracting Parties and partners. Plan Bleu reported on the use of the MapX application for data and maps sharing, with support from UNEP/GRID-Geneva, with more than 220 views available for the Mediterranean.

28. In addition, Plan Bleu reported about a study carried out in 2021, in cooperation with the *Centre International de Droit Comparé de l'Environnement* (CIDCE), which is a Member of the MCSD, for developing legal indicators to monitor the effectivity of application of the Barcelona Convention², as well as about an activity aiming at monitoring the interactions between Health and Environment, which is linked with the “Preventing ZOonotic Disease Emergence (PREZODE) initiative”.³

29. That presentation was followed by a live demonstration of MapX, delivered by Plan Bleu, focusing on main functionalities and added values of the WESR knowledge and data sharing platform. This live demonstration aimed at showing the functioning of MapX through relevant features and some examples on how the tool can support environmental assessment processes.

30. In the ensuing discussion, the Coordinator mentioned that the integration of the Mediterranean Sustainability Dashboard in the WESR corresponds to a huge development through solid online databases, guarantying that UNEP/MAP uses the most accurate and official data for preparing relevant regional assessments. She also reported on existing challenges in harmonizing the various monitoring systems and databases used by the UNEP/MAP Coordinating Unit and Components. She also mentioned that it is important to be as cautious as possible with the use of maps due to possible political sensitiveness in our region.

¹ <https://wesr.unep.org>

² <https://planbleu.org/en/publications/developing-legal-indicators-to-monitor-the-effectivity-of-application-of-the-barcelona-convention/>

³ <https://prezode.org/>

31. Responding to a question from the Coordinator, Plan Bleu explained that the Med WESR was ready to be used by Contracting Parties representatives, indicating that temporal and scale combination of data is feasible, and clarifying that countries keep control of the data they wish to share.

32. Turkey requested clarifications to the Secretariat about information of the Contracting Parties concerning the use of WESR and MapX. The Coordinator replied that the Parties have been duly informed, those activities being reflected both in the MTS 2022-2027 and MAP Programme of Work and Budget for 2022-2023.

Conclusions:

ii. The MCSD Steering Committee welcomed the work done by the Secretariat (Plan Bleu and SCP/RAC) during the period under reporting (July 2021 – April 2022), including regular updates of the Mediterranean Sustainability Dashboard, which has been strengthened by the integration of SCP Indicators, and which has been included in the global UNEP-administered World Environment Situation Room (WESR), enabling the access to geospatial datasets in an online platform relevant for the UNEP/MAP – Barcelona Convention system and for monitoring the MSSD implementation, with a broader access to quality-ensured data for the Contracting Parties and partners.

iii. Recognizing the added value of having the Mediterranean Sustainability Dashboard within the WESR, the MCSD Steering Committee recommended to the Secretariat (Plan Bleu) to build on this first achievement for further strengthening the Mediterranean observatory on the environment and development through the functionalities and tools offered by the global WESR. To this aim, the MCSD Steering Committee pointed out the need for capacity building in assisting the Contracting Parties for data submission and use of the platform, also considering the importance of data quality.

iv. The MCSD Steering Committee encouraged the Secretariat to pursue its efforts in streamlining its work on reporting, monitoring and assessment with relevant regional and global processes, including the global process on SDGs Indicators.

B. MSSD Flagship Initiatives

33. The Vice-President introduced this agenda subitem, reminding to the participants that a section of document UNEP/MED WG.523/3 provides an update on recent developments about the MSSD Flagship Initiatives in which the Secretariat is directly involved in terms of implementation.

Istanbul Environment Friendly City Award

34. After having reminded the outcomes of the third edition of the award (2020-2021), including the high-level award giving ceremony held during the Ministerial Session of COP 22, as described in document UNEP/MED WG.523/3, the Secretariat introduced the draft roadmap related to the fourth edition of the award (2022-2023), as included in Annex III of the same document, explaining that work is on-going in cooperation with the ENI CBC MED Mediterranean Sustainable Cities Project and relevant partners in view of simplifying the nomination and selection process (approach and methodology) and of having an online application form with a tool to facilitate the calculation of the key performance indicators, with the ultimate objective to limit the burden and to reach more interest from potential candidate Mediterranean cities.

35. A Member of the MCSD Steering Committee raised the issue of unequal resources and capacities of Mediterranean cities to apply for the award, suggesting a more empowering approach, further encouraging the cities from the South to apply, and inviting to consider the possibility to include small scale activities in the evaluation process, such as a project which is developed by any municipality in collaboration with the civil society. It was stated that the award should be considered as an

encouragement and an incentive for the cities to undertake more actions towards sustainable development at local level.

36. The Coordinator replied that, although the third edition of the award and its ceremony were successful, including in terms of communication and in terms of cooperation with relevant partners (e.g., peer learning workshop co-organized with Med Cities in October 2021), the Secretariat realized that the procedures may be too complicated for applicant cities. Therefore, she invited the MCSD Steering Committee to brainstorm with the Secretariat in the coming period in view of simplifying the methodology to reach more interest from Mediterranean coastal cities.

37. The Coordinator explained that beyond this award which allows to involve coastal cities in the work of UNEP/MAP, other actions aims at targeting women and the youth, in line with MSSD principles. She referred to the high-level women leadership dialogue organized by Turkey in the margins of the COP 22 Ministerial Session, indicating that UNEP/MAP committed to renew that experience in the future. On that subject, a Member of the MCSD Steering Committee reported on a major event organized on women leadership in water diplomacy, expressing interest to join hands with the Secretariat on those matters.

Mediterranean Green Business Award

38. SCP/RAC delivered a Power Point presentation on this sustainability award for environmental innovation and green entrepreneurship, which is supported by the EU SwitchMed programme, and which aims at recognizing business achievements, as well as efforts of public authorities in creating an enabling environment for green entrepreneurship, promoting a green business ecosystem conducive to the implementation of SDG 12 “Responsible production and consumption”.

39. After having presented the results of the first edition of the award (2020-2021), as reflected in document UNEP/MED WG.523/3, SCP/RAC explained the procedures for the second and third editions, to be held respectively in 2022 and 2023. Organized in cooperation with the ENI CBC MED STAND Up! Project, the second edition is expected to give visibility to business models that promote sustainable production and consumption patterns in the textile and clothing sector, led by women (without age limit) and/or youth (up to 35 years old), with two categories of the award, namely one for the North and the other one for the South. The third edition of the We Med Award will be organized in 2023 in cooperation with the ENI CBC MED RESET Project. Finally, organized in the context of the Switch Med programme, the fourth edition of the award will aim at recognizing accomplishments of both businesses and public authorities that contribute to the Sustainable Blue Economy.

Mediterranean Experts on Climate and environmental Change (MedECC)

40. As invited speaker, Dr. Joel Guiot, MedECC Coordinator, delivered a Power Point presentation on the work done by this independent network of scientists. After having reminded how the network is structured and functioning, the first part of his presentation focused on the main insights of the First Mediterranean Assessment Report (MAR1) and of its Summary for Policy-Makers (SPM), which has been endorsed by COP 22. Then, the presentation focused on the on-going work for preparing three thematic reports, including background information, rationale and scope, and draft overviews of the reports: Coastal risks (Report 1), Climate-water-energy-food-ecosystems nexus (Report 2) and Environmental change, conflict and human migration (Report 3). The three special reports are planned to be published before end of 2023, while MAR2 will be prepared from 2024. It is expected to mobilize the Members of the MCSD in the review of the draft overviews and draft thematic reports.

41. In the ensuing discussion, a Member of the MCSD Steering Committee raised three important points to boost climate action in the Mediterranean, including with the perspective of the UNFCCC COP 27: 1. Climate and the youth; 2. Climate and conflicts; 3. Climate and migrations. This Member of the MCSD Steering Committee recommended more interactions between MedECC and CSOs for consultation and communication purpose.

42. After having congratulated MedECC, a Member of the MCSDD Steering Committee stated that the most challenging component of this initiative is the science-policy interface in view of supporting policymakers to understand the climate change challenges. In addition of the voluminous reports, there is a need to deliver short documents (e.g., a few pages) which are more adapted to policymakers; it was suggested to prepare a two-page document to highlight a series of recommendations from MAR1 and its SPM.
43. Requesting clarification about the timeline for the three thematic reports, the Coordinator suggested to organize a stakeholder consultation and a debate between scientists and stakeholders at the 20th Meeting of the MCSDD to be held in June/July 2023.
44. GWP-Med offered its support and possible contribution to the thematic report on the climate-water-energy-food-ecosystems nexus.
45. Following an intervention from a Member of the MCSDD Steering Committee representing a Contracting Party, the discussion focused on how to take advantage of the UNFCCC COP 27 to organize a meaningful dialogue among scientists, policymakers and civil society representatives, in view of pushing strong messages and of promoting success stories, with common advocacy messages. The Coordinator explained that the Secretariat is exploring the opportunity to co-organize, with the UfM Secretariat and other partners, a Mediterranean pavilion, in which MedECC should have an important role.

Regional Assessments and Knowledge Exchanges of High- and Low-Tech Solutions Successfully Implemented to Achieve Waste Reduction

46. As invited speaker, Ms. Anastasia Roniotes, MIO-ECSDE, delivered a Power Point presentation on the online repository of Mediterranean best practices in achieving waste reduction⁴, which was launched in January 2022, with 20 case studies, available in English and French, that cover various aspects of circular economy prevention, re-use, and recycling; individual factsheets have been developed for each of the good practices. This activity was financially supported by the EU-funded Water and Environment Support (WES) regional project in the ENI Southern Neighbourhood region.
47. Ms. Roniotes explained that the online repository aims at transferring knowledge and techniques to stakeholders of the region and enable them to replicate or adapt these viable approaches. The repository describes in a user-friendly way key challenges and results of selected Mediterranean case studies. Finally, the repository offers the opportunity for new practices to be added for future enrichment and expansion of the online platform.

Environmental Governance: Encourage the Accession to and Implementation of the Aarhus Convention on Public Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-Making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention)

48. Ms. Roniotes delivered a Power Point presentation on the work done for implementing this MSSD Flagship Initiative. She reminded the MSSD target of two-thirds of Mediterranean countries having acceded to the Aarhus Convention by 2025, while currently 12 out of the 22 Contracting Parties are already Parties to the Aarhus Convention (54,5%). She explained the three phases of the project: the desk study for the development of a Foundation Discussion Document (FDD) for the “Mediterranean Accession Agenda” to the Aarhus Convention has been undertaken by MEPIELAN (MAP Partner) (see document UNEP/MED WG.523/Inf.6), while the experts meeting to validate the FDD is expected to be held in 2022, and regional capacity building activities are planned for 2022-2024.
49. In the ensuing discussion, the Coordinator congratulated MIO-ECSDE for the huge progress made under the period of reporting for that MSSD Flagship Initiative. A Member of the MCSDD

⁴ <https://bestpractices-waste-med.net>

Steering Committee pointed out the importance of that initiative towards the participation of all citizens in decision-making processes. A Member of the MCSD Steering Committee stated that the follow-up after the validation of the FDD would be crucial, in particular with regional parliamentary bodies to use the document in view of promoting the accession to the Aarhus Convention in national parliaments of Mediterranean countries.

Conclusions:

- v. The MCSD Steering Committee expressed its appreciation on the successful delivery and high-level media coverage of the third edition of the Istanbul Environment Friendly City Award (2020-2021), which was presented to the Municipality of Malaga, Spain, during the COP 22 Ministerial Session.**
- vi. The MCSD Steering Committee took note of and welcomed the Draft Roadmap for the fourth edition of the Istanbul Environment Friendly City Award (2022-2023) and encouraged the Secretariat to implement the proposed activities accordingly, in cooperation with relevant partners, reviewing the process and its methodology in view of simplifying them, launching the call for applicants in due time, and further strengthening communication along the way to reach more interest from Mediterranean coastal cities. It was recommended to undertake brainstorming with MCSD Members and relevant partners on how to further facilitate the whole selection and nomination process, while maintaining high sustainability standards in the methodology, assessment framework, and key performance indicators.**
- vii. Appreciating the work undertaken for the successful delivery of the first edition of the WeMed Green Business Award, the MCSD Steering Committee agreed with the recommendation that the second edition of the award (2022-2023) has a thematic scope.**
- viii. Acknowledging with appreciation the work currently undertaken by the MedECC independent network of scientists, as well as the relevance of the three thematic reports for the UNEP/MAP – Barcelona Convention system, the MCSD Steering Committee encouraged MedECC to strengthen the science-policy-society interface’s component of its mandate and to pursue dialogue with the MCSD and its Steering Committee, with adequate support from the Secretariat. To this aim, the MCSD Steering Committee invited MedECC and the Secretariat to organize a discussion on the outcome of MedECC’s work in 2022-2023, including the three thematic reports, during the 20th Meeting of the MCSD to be held in June/July 2023.**
- ix. The MCSD Steering Committee recommended to engage a reflection on how to promote the contribution of scientists from the civil society to contribute to the work of MedECC. The MCSD Steering Committee also recommended the preparation of fit-for-purpose and concise products targeting high-level policymakers, for instance an attractive document focusing on the MedECC MAR1 conclusions. It was finally recommended to seize the opportunity of the 27th Session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 27) to the UNFCCC, that will take place in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt, from 6-18 November 2022, to interact not only with decision-makers but also other stakeholders, in particular civil society organizations.**
- x. The MCSD Steering Committee welcomed the presentation provided by MIO-ECSDE and acknowledged the collective efforts mobilized by this partner, the Secretariat, the Secretariat of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) and the Circle of Mediterranean Parliamentarians for Sustainable Development (COMPSUD), in collaboration with other partners and experts, to successfully launch the MSSD Flagship Initiative on regional assessments and knowledge exchanges to achieve waste reduction, through the EU-funded Water and Environment Support (WES) regional project in the ENI Southern Neighbourhood region, encouraging relevant partners to further promote the online repository of Mediterranean best practices in achieving waste reduction, in particular by inviting interested stakeholders to propose additional best practices to be considered within this living platform.**

xi. The MCSD Steering Committee took note with appreciation of the progress done on the MSSD Flagship Initiatives on Environmental Governance. Regarding the flagship initiative aiming at facilitating the accession of Mediterranean countries to the Aarhus Convention, which is supported by the EU LIFE Programme and EU-funded WES regional project, MIO-ECSDE, MEPIELAN and the Secretariat were encouraged to further collaborate in view of organizing a regional capacity building workshop in support to this MSSD Flagship Initiative, in close cooperation with the UNECE-Aarhus Convention Secretariat, COMPSUD and other parliamentary networks members of the MCSD.

C. MED 2050 Foresight Study

50. The MAP Coordinator introduced this agenda sub-item by remaining the long process and important achievement that represents the MED 2050 Foresight Study implemented by Plan Bleu.

51. Francois Guerquin, Plan Bleu Director, delivered a Power Point presentation to report on the progress done since the 19th Meeting of the MCSD. He reminded that the programme considers both a long term and an intermediary horizon (2050 and 2030) and pursues three objectives: 1. marine ecosystem long-term protection; 2. transition towards the region's sustainable development; and, 3. avoiding major risks and crisis which could have an impact on the environment by 2050.

MED 2050 pays attention to climate change impacts and marine ecosystem evolution, taking into account sub-regional specificities in the Mediterranean basin. The scenarios and transition pathways are built by the experts of the foresight group, which includes scientists, representatives of the civil society, the youth, and regional and international organizations, as well as other relevant stakeholders. The foresight base comprises an analysis and qualification of major trends, disruptions, and weak signals for a range of variable, for which factsheets have been drafted and classified under the following categories: Demography; Environment; Governance; Economy; Society; and, Technology. The MED 2050's Module 2 has been launched and is based on stakeholder consultations for co-building the differentiated future's visions of the Mediterranean in an inclusive manner. Module 2 aims at collecting qualitative visions of the environment and development in the Mediterranean by 2050 and exploring contrasted normative visions by sub-region.

52. In the ensuing discussion, noting that MED 2050 is well structured despite its complexity, three members of the MCSD Steering Committee invited Plan Bleu to formally associate the MCSD and its Steering Committee in the participatory foresight study, in particular for Module 2. Plan Bleu replied that the MCSD will be consulted on the scenarios and transition pathways, and that the 20th Meeting of the MCSD to be organized in June/July 2023 represents a good opportunity for such interactions.

53. A Member of the MCSD Steering Committee expressed compliments to Plan Bleu for the progress made in implementing MED 2050, which is both a major but also a difficult undertaking, and for having synthesized the extensive substance from the factsheets. Plan Bleu was invited to pay more attention to geopolitics, political instability, and frequent crisis in the Mediterranean region.

Conclusions:

xii. The MCSD Steering Committee took note of the work done and planned activities to complete the MED 2050 foresight study during the current biennium 2022-2023, renewing encouragements and support to the Secretariat (Plan Bleu) to complete the process in due time so that the MSSD Review process and the preparation of the post-2025 MSSD should be informed by the results of MED 2050.

xiii. Reaffirming its willingness and interest to take part in an inclusive manner in the participatory dimension of MED 2050, the MCSD Steering Committee requested the Secretariat (Plan Bleu) to further involve the Members of the MCSD and of its Steering Committee in the forthcoming stakeholder consultations to be undertaken in the context of MED 2050 in the last quarter of 2022 and aiming at reviewing the intermediary products, including the draft

scenarios, as well as to strengthen the outreach component to further engage with relevant stakeholders and partners.

D. MSSD Review Process

54. The MAP Coordinator introduced this strategic and forward-looking process by noting that the MSSD is the unique regional sustainability strategy in the Mediterranean. She added that, being supported by the Secretariat through the guidance of the MCSD, the implementation of the MSSD is a collective process: the efforts of all stakeholders play a decisive role in its delivery, such as for the MSSD Flagship Initiatives. She mentioned the need for brainstorming on the MSSD Review process, in line with specific provisions of the Strategy but also in view of further aligning MAP processes with the global ones, including in terms of timeframes. She indicated that the MSSD evaluation and review should be informed by key assessment studies, i.e., State of the Environment and Development in the Mediterranean (SoED), MedECC MAR1 and three thematic reports, MED 2050, 2023 Med QSR, as well as the findings of the MSSD mid-term evaluation carried out in 2020-2021. She finally referred to the options for the MSSD Review process, as suggested by the Secretariat in document UNEP/MED WG.523/3.

55. In the ensuing discussion, a Member of the MCSD Steering Committee mentioned that, although the Mediterranean was the first region to develop a regional strategy on sustainable development, the national strategies are considering in priority their links with the 2030 Agenda and SDGs, with 2030 or 2035 as deadline. Therefore, it was not recommended defining a new MSSD prior the 2030 global deadline, considering also that the MSSD evaluation could be more efficient if sufficient time and resources are allocated to it.

56. On the contrary, considering that the Mediterranean region and its commission on sustainable development should remain a proactive driving and pioneering force, and that the MSSD should provide overall directions for long term planning, a Member of the MCSD Steering Committee recommended launching the MSSD evaluation and review as soon as possible for not losing the momentum.

57. In the same vein, another Member of the MCSD Steering Committee stressed the need for the Mediterranean region to pursue its own strategy, while aligning it with relevant global processes. It was recommended to undertake a 'light evaluation', focusing on a few priorities instead of being comprehensive, mobilizing the MED 2050's knowledge, and to consider emerging issues such as risks for food security with the consequences of the conflict in Ukraine.

58. In addition, the same Member of the MCSD Steering Committee suggested to relaunch the Simplified Peer Review Mechanism (SIMPEER) approach by focusing on SDG 14, as a means to facilitate ownership of the MSSD by the Mediterranean countries. It was suggested to test this approach at the 20th Meeting of the MCSD. This was welcomed by other Members of the MCSD Steering Committee, and the Secretariat was invited working in that direction with interested Contracting Parties about their respective national roadmap or strategy for implementing SDG 14.

59. Other participants considered that extending the timeline of the MSSD would give to the MCSD and the Secretariat an opportunity to achieve the targets which have not yet been met and to undertake a more robust evaluation. Whatever the timeline and deadline of the next MSSD would be, the latter should also consider the global post-2030 agenda for sustainable development.

60. After a brainstorming session among the Members of the MCSD Steering Committee and with the Secretariat, the MAP Coordinator recommended drafting a more elaborated proposal for the MSSD Review process in view of the 24th Meeting of the MCSD Steering Committee to be held in December 2023.

Conclusions:

xiv. The MCSD Steering Committee agreed on the uniqueness of the current MSSD 2016-2025, which has been developed in parallel of the preparation of the 2030 Agenda and SDGs, noting

that important MAP assessment products can be mobilized in the context of the forthcoming MSSD Review process.

xv. The Members of the MCSD Steering Committee brainstormed and discussed the possible options prepared by the Secretariat, as included in Document UNEP/MED WG.523/3, considering the relevance of the 10 versus 15 years' timeline for the post-2025 MSSD, as well as the sequence of the envisioned activities related to the MSSD Review process.

xvi. The MCSD Steering Committee requested the Secretariat to consolidate the possible options for undertaking the MSSD evaluation and review process, reflecting the comments provided by the 23rd Meeting of the MCSD Steering Committee, in view of submitting a robust proposal for discussion at its next meeting.

Agenda Item 5: The Global and Regional Agenda on Sustainable Development in 2022-2023: Opportunities and Perspectives for the MCSD

61. Reminding that SDG 14 is at the heart of global events in 2022, the MAP Coordinator enumerated a series of those key events:

- The *Forum des mondes méditerranéens* (Marseille, France, from 7-8 February 2022) served as a preamble of the One Ocean Summit, which was organized during the French presidency of the Council of the European Union (Brest, France, 9-11 February). At the One Ocean Summit, the MAP Coordinator moderated the workshop dedicated to the Mediterranean Sea.
- The Fourth Session of the Intergovernmental Conference on an international legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction, for which UNEP/MAP is accredited, was held in New York, United States, and online from 7-18 March 2022.
- In the context of the UNECE Regional Forum on Sustainable Development (Geneva, Switzerland, 6-7 April 2022), the Secretariat collaborated with the UNEP Europe Office and UNESCO Regional Bureau for Science and Culture in Europe to organize the SDG 14 peer learning round table on “Enhancing ocean literacy and the sustainable development of regional seas”. The summary of the round table, as contained in the report of the regional forum to the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF), gave the necessary emphasis to the role of Regional Seas and to its contribution to SDG 14 implementation.
- The UN Ocean Conference (Lisbon, Portugal, 27 June – 1 July) represents a key milestone to take stock of efforts and to renew commitments for achieving the 2030 Agenda and specifically the SDG 14 and its targets. Contracting Parties, MAP Partners and MCSD Members were invited to contribute to the momentum created by that second edition of the UN Ocean Conference, urging them to register voluntary commitments through the dedicated website, showcasing efforts towards the achievement of SDG 14, including those related to the implementation of the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols.
- The annual HLPF will be held in New York, United States, from 5-7 and 11-15 July, with SDG 14 under review.
- The UNECE Ninth Ministerial Conference “Environment for Europe” (EfE) will be held in Nicosia, Cyprus, from 5-7 October 2022. Fourteen UNECE Member States are also Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention, and it is the first time that the EfE Ministerial Conference is organized in a Mediterranean country. The two themes of the 9th EfE Ministerial Conference are the following: 1. Sustainable infrastructure; and, 2. Circularity in tourism. In addition, the Third High-level Meeting of Education and Environment Ministries will be organized back-to-back with the 9th EfE Ministerial Conference, with a focus on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). The work of UNEP/MAP on Tourism and Sustainability in the Mediterranean, in particular relevant projects in which MAP Components are involved, will be duly mobilized, valued and recognized during the Conference.

62. As one of the invited speakers, Mr. Ole Vestergaard, Programme Management Officer – Sustainable Blue Economy Initiative, Marine and Freshwater Branch, UNEP Ecosystems Division, delivered a Power point presentation about UNEP’s work on SDG 14, including *inter alia* key outcomes of UNEA-5.2 and contribution to the forthcoming UN Ocean Conference. He insisted on the vibrant agenda going forward, explained that UNEP is engaged and active in the context of the preparation of the Conference, including on the draft political declaration, technical discussion on SDG 14 targets, and the youth forum. The speaker briefed the participants about the eight interactive dialogues built around SDG 14 targets, with background papers which are available online.⁵ Ole Vestergaard finally presented the UNEP Sustainable Blue Economy Initiative. He explained that, because the Ocean agenda is complex and a cross-cutting theme to deliver the other SDGs, UNEP is providing support to interested countries to develop their national strategy or roadmap on the sustainable blue economy.

63. As another invited speaker, Ms. Nancy Soy, Coordinator of the Regional Seas, Ecosystems Integration Branch, UNEP Ecosystems Division, delivered a Power Point presentation on 1. the publication “Contributions of Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans to a Healthy Ocean”⁶; and, 2. Regional Guidelines for Regional Seas (2022-2025)⁷.

64. The President thanked the speakers for the valuable and comprehensive presentations, stating that the key for the success of the 2022 UN Ocean Conference is to transform the commitments from the Ministerial Declaration to concrete solutions and actions.

65. In the ensuing discussion, a Member of the MCSD Steering Committee explained that MIO-ECSDE (MAP Partner) is responsible for managing more than 40 side events of the 9th EfE Ministerial Conference. It was agreed with the organizers to expand the scope of the side events to the Southern Mediterranean and Middle East countries, bringing all the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention.

66. A Member of the MCSD Steering Committee congratulated the speakers for the excellent presentations, and he raised two points of information towards possible synergies: 1. GWP-Med and partners are implementing the source-to-sea approach, with the production of guidelines towards an integrated monitoring framework from water management at the river basin scale to marine spatial planning and ecosystem approach; 2. Work on marine litter and plastic pollution in the context of the EU-funded Water and Environment Support (WES) regional project in the ENI Southern Neighbourhood region.

67. A Member of the MCSD Steering Committee representing a Contracting Party said that financial resources are needed to implement those relevant management instruments and tools, considering that the COP 27 of the UNFCCC, to be held in November 2022, would be a timely occasion to engage a discussion on finance for environmental protection and sustainable development.

68. A Member of the MCSD Steering Committee representing a Contracting Party updated the participants about outcomes of the One Ocean Summit, as key inputs to the 2022 UN Ocean Conference, such as the creation of the Global Blue Carbon Coalition.⁸

69. Prior to close the session on this Agenda item 5, SCP/RAC delivered an informative presentation of the “Set of regional measures to support the development of green and circular businesses and strengthen the demand for more sustainable products in the Mediterranean” (see publications in Document UNEP/MED WG.523/Inf.1). These regional measures are expected to foster the formulation of national policies to support the development of green businesses in the Mediterranean countries. They aim at supporting the creation and development of green businesses through capacity

⁵ <https://sdgs.un.org/basic-page/2022-un-ocean-conference-global-online-stakeholder-consultation-inputs-concept-papers>; <https://www.un.org/en/conferences/ocean2022/programme>

⁶ <https://www.unep.org/resources/report/contributions-regional-seas-conventions-and-action-plans-healthy-ocean>;

⁷ <https://www.unep.org/resources/policy-and-strategy/regional-seas-strategic-directions-2022-2025>

⁸ <https://www.oneplanetsummit.fr/en/coalitions-82/blue-carbon-coalition-224>

building and technology transfer, strengthening the demand for more sustainable products, and supporting the shift from linear economy to innovative green and circular business models.

Conclusions:

xvii. The MCSD Steering Committee appreciated the presentations delivered by the Secretariat and invited speakers from UNEP Headquarters, as well as the meaningful discussion that followed those interventions and that opened relevant opportunities for interregional and regional/global synergies and cooperation.

xviii. The MCSD Steering Committee encouraged the establishment of concrete synergies among relevant global and regional processes and initiatives, inviting the Members of the MCSD and the Secretariat to seize the opportunities opened by the series of events of the agenda on the environment and sustainable development addressing SDG 14 “Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development” and other relevant SDGs to further promote the UNEP/MAP – Barcelona Convention system, including the work of the MCSD, and amplify its impact and visibility.

Agenda Item 6: Any Other Matters

70. France generously offered to host the 20th Meeting of the MCSD in June/July 2023, with the understanding that this offer does not create prejudice to any other hosting proposals.

71. Reminding that the Mediterranean is a hotspot of climate change, as documented by the MedECC report, and stressing the need for further regional cooperation to address this priority issue and related urgent needs as also reflected in the Antalya Ministerial Declaration, Turkey expressed its intention to submit a proposal to create and host a regional activity centre on climate change adaptation.

72. Egypt referred to priorities in the context of the preparation of the UNFCCC COP 27 and kindly asked the support of the Secretariat in this respect.

Conclusions:

xix. The MCSD Steering Committee acknowledged with gratitude the expression of interest from France to host the 20th Meeting of the MCSD to be held in June/July 2023.

xx. The MCSD Steering Committee took note of the information provided by Turkey on its proposal to establish a Regional Activity Centre in the framework of UNEP/MAP – Barcelona Convention, as an effort to support the Mediterranean region and countries to cope with climate challenges.

xxi. The MCSD Steering Committee acknowledged with satisfaction the intention of MCSD Members from the civil society to influence important decisions that will shape climate policy at the forthcoming UNFCCC COP 27. To this aim, the Steering Committee recommended to the Secretariat and MAP Components to offer opportunities and space for the organization of joint side events at COP 27.

xxii. The MCSD Steering Committee took note of the request by Egypt for concrete support from the Secretariat and MAP Components to raise and address at COP 27 important environmental issues for the Mediterranean region and countries, such as conservation of biodiversity, integrated management of water resources, and food security.

Closure of the Meeting

73. After approval by consensus of the conclusions and recommendations of the meeting, the President thanked the participants, including invited speakers, for their contribution to the 23rd Meeting of the MCSD Steering Committee. He congratulated the Secretariat for the documentation prepared for the meeting and indicated that the report of meeting will be circulated in due time for review and possible comments through electronic means.

74. The President added that it was highly recommended to organize the 24th Meeting of the MCSD Steering Committee face-to-face, as a physical (versus remote) meeting.

75. The Coordinator joined the President in thanking the Members of the MCSD Steering Committee and invited speakers. She stressed that the discussion brought valuable inputs and constructive comments.

76. The meeting was closed by the President of the MCSD Steering Committee at approximately 17:45 on Thursday 2 June 2022.

Annex I: List of Participants

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Members of the MCSD Steering Committee	
<p>EGYPT Vice-President</p>	<p>Ms. Samah Saleh Head of Sustainable Development Unit Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency Ministry of Environment Cairo, Egypt</p>
<p>ESDF: THE EGYPTIAN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FORUM Vice-President</p>	<p>Dr Emad Adly Chairperson of the Board Cairo, Egypt www.esdf.net</p>
<p>FRANCE Rapporteur</p>	<p>Ms. Anne-France Didier Conseillère politiques territoriales Pilote ODD14, DGAMPA:SEML/SPM Ministère de la Mer Paris, France</p>
<p>GWP-MED: THE GLOBAL WATER PARTNERSHIP – MEDITERRANEAN Vice-President</p>	<p>Prof. Michael J. Scullios Chairman www.gwp.org</p>
<p>PAM : PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY OF THE MEDITERRANEAN Vice-President</p>	<p>H.E. Sergio Piazzì (Ambassador) Secretary General of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean (PAM) Mr Marco Mura Program Officer – Economic, Social and Environmental Cooperation www.pam.int</p>
<p>SLOVENIA President</p>	<p>Dr Mitja Bricelj Secretary Ministry for Environment and Spatial Planning Environment Directorate Water Department Ljubljana, Slovenia</p>

TURKEY	<p>Mr Tamer Çobanoğlu Expert</p> <p>Ms. Aslı Topalak Expert</p> <p>Ministry of Environment and Urbanization Ankara, Turkey</p>
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Invited Speakers	
MedECC: MEDITERRANEAN EXPERTS ON CLIMATE AND ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGE	<p>Dr Joel Guiot MedECC Coordinator www.medecc.org</p>
MIO-ECSDE: MEDITERRANEAN INFORMATION OFFICE FOR EDUCATION, CULTURE, SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND ENVIRONMENT	<p>Ms. Anastasia Roniotes Head Officer www.mio-ecsde.org</p>
UNEP	<p>Mr Ole Vestergaard Sustainable Blue Economy Initiative Marine and Freshwater Branch, Ecosystems Division</p> <p>Ms. Nancy Soy Coordinator of the Regional Seas Programme Ecosystems Integration Branch, Ecosystems Division</p> <p>UNEP, Nairobi, Kenya www.unep.org</p>

SECRETARIAT OF THE BARCELONA CONVENTION AND COMPONENTS OF THE MEDITERRANEAN ACTION PLAN	
UNEP/MAP	<p>Ms. Tatjana Hema Coordinator</p> <p>Mr Julien Le Tellier Programme Management Officer (Socio-Economic Affairs)</p> <p>Mr Ilias Mavroeidis Programme Management Officer (Governance) www.unep.org/unepmap/</p>

PLAN BLEU REGIONAL ACTIVITY CENTRE (PLAN BLEU/RAC)	Mr François Guerquin Director Ms. Lina Tode Deputy Director Mr Antoine Lafitte Environment and Sustainable Development Observatory www.planbleu.org
REGIONAL ACTIVITY CENTRE FOR SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION (SCP/RAC)	Ms. Magali Outters Team Leader Ms. Ananda Alonso Programme Manager www.cprac.org/

Annex II: Agenda of the 23rd Meeting of the MCSD Steering Committee (Timetable)

Annex II: Agenda of the 23rd Meeting of the MCSD Steering Committee (Timetable)

The timetable should be read in local time in Athens, Greece: GMT+3

Wednesday, 1 June 2022			
Time	Agenda item		Document
10:00 – 10:30	1. Opening of the Meeting 2. Adoption of the Provisional Agenda and Organization of Work	President of the MCSD Steering Committee, Secretariat	UNEP/MED WG.523/1 UNEP/MED WG.523/2 UNEP/MED WG.523/Inf.1 UNEP/MED WG.523/Inf.2
10:30 – 12:00	3. Work of the MCSD and MSSD Implementation: Review of Progress for the Period July 2021 – April 2022	Secretariat	UNEP/MED WG.523/3 UNEP/MED WG.523/Inf.1 UNEP/MED WG.523/Inf.3 UNEP/MED WG.523/Inf.4 UNEP/MED WG.523/Inf.5 UNEP/MED WG.523/Inf.6
12:00 – 12:30	<i>Break</i>		
12:30 – 13:45	4. Specific Issues A. Mediterranean Sustainability Dashboard and SCP Indicators	Secretariat (Plan Bleu and SCP/RAC)	UNEP/MED WG.523/3 UNEP/MED WG.523/Inf.1
13:45 – 14:30	4. Specific Issues (cont'd) B. MSSD Flagship Initiatives	Secretariat and invited speakers (tbc)	UNEP/MED WG.523/3 UNEP/MED WG.523/Inf.6
14:30 – 15:45	<i>Lunch break</i>		
15:45 – 16:45	4. Specific Issues (cont'd) B. MSSD Flagship Initiatives	Secretariat and invited speakers (tbc)	UNEP/MED WG.523/3 UNEP/MED WG.523/Inf.6
16:45 – 17:45	4. Specific Issues (cont'd) C. MED 2050 Foresight Study	Secretariat (Plan Bleu)	UNEP/MED WG.523/3 UNEP/MED WG.483/Inf.3
Thursday, 2 June 2022			
Time	Agenda item		Document
10:00 – 10:30	<i>Recap on Day 1</i>		
10:30 – 12:00	4. Specific Issues (cont'd) D. MSSD Review Process	Secretariat	UNEP/MED WG.523/3 UNEP/MED WG.523/Inf.3
12:00 – 12:30	<i>Break</i>		
12:30 – 14:30	5. The Global and Regional Agenda on Sustainable Development in 2022-2023: Opportunities and Perspectives for the MCSD	Secretariat	UNEP/MED WG.523/3 UNEP/MED WG.523/Inf.1 UNEP/MED WG.523/Inf.3 UNEP/MED WG.523/Inf.4 UNEP/MED WG.523/Inf.5 UNEP/MED WG.523/Inf.6 UNEP/MED WG.523/Inf.7
14:30 – 15:45	<i>Lunch break</i>		
15:45 – 17:45	6. Any Other Matters Conclusions and recommendations Closure of the Meeting	Secretariat	UNEP/MED WG.523/1 UNEP/MED WG.523/2 UNEP/MED WG.523/3 UNEP/MED WG.523/Inf.7