

## Assessment of the Meeting of Thematic Focal Points for Specially Protected Areas and Biological Diversity conducted on a Trial Basis in the Biennium 2018–2019

### Introduction and background

The Protocol concerning Specially Protected Areas and Biological Diversity in the Mediterranean adopted in 1995 by the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention, stipulates in its Article 24 that “*Each Party shall designate a National Focal Point to serve as liaison with the Centre on the technical and scientific aspects of the implementation of this Protocol*”. It stipulates also that the National Focal Points shall meet periodically to carry out the functions deriving from the Protocol.

The ordinary meetings of the SPA/BD Focal Points are convened on biennial basis by SPA/RAC to examine the progress made in the implementation of the SPA/BD Protocol with special focus on the activities carried out in accordance with the programme of work adopted for the biennium by the Contracting Parties. During their meetings, the focal points also (i) evaluate, in accordance with Article 14 of the Protocol, the proposal submitted by Parties for the amendments of the Annexes to the Protocol and, (ii) examine, for each area proposed for inscription on the SPAMI List, its conformity with the common guidelines and criteria adopted (Article 9 of the Protocol).

In addition to the SPA/BD Focal Points, partner organisations as well as Secretariats of relevant Agreements are invited to designate representatives to attend the meetings of the SPA/BD Focal Points as observers. The MAP Coordinating Unit and the other MAP components are usually informed of the dates, agenda and venue of the SPA/BD Focal Point meetings.

Before 2019, 13 ordinary and one extraordinary meeting of the SPA/BD Focal Points were organised. Their recommendations were forwarded, through the Coordinating Unit for consideration by the Contracting Parties.

Within the framework of the implementation of the UNEP/MAP Mid-Term Strategy 2016-2021 (MTS) and the efforts of Contracting Parties to strengthen inter-linkages between its Core and Cross-cutting themes as well as facilitating coordination at national level across the relevant sectors, the Contracting Parties envisaged to examine the impacts of a transition to Thematic Focal Points within UNEP/MAP system. To this end, they requested SPA/RAC “*to prepare on a trial basis, a meeting of the thematic focal points for Specially Protected Areas and Biological Diversity for the biennium 2018-2019, under the guidance of the Coordinating Unit, to achieve the greatest possible integration with the other themes of the Mid-Term Strategy*” (Decision IG.23/3). They also requested the Coordinating Unit to present the results of the assessment of that trial, together with any other relevant analysis, to the Contracting Parties prior to their 21<sup>st</sup> Meeting.

In this context, SPA/RAC convened the Fourteenth Meeting of SPA/BD Thematic Focal Points. It took place in Portorož (Slovenia) from 18 to 21 June 2019. The present note was prepared by the Secretariat to report to the Contracting Parties on this trial exercise.

### Participation

SPA/RAC invited all MAP Focal Points and all SPA/BD Focal Points to attend the meeting or to designate their representative. The invitation was also extended to partner organizations. The meeting was attended by:

#### Representatives of Parties:

- The MAP Focal Points of Albania, Algeria, Cyprus, European Union, France and Slovenia
- The SPA/BD Focal Points of Albania, Algeria, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Croatia, Cyprus, Egypt, European Union, France, Israel, Italy, Lebanon, Libya, Malta, Monaco, Montenegro, Morocco, Turkey, Tunisia, Slovenia and Spain

### Representatives of Partner organisations

The following organizations were represented at the meeting: Secretariat of the Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and Contiguous Atlantic Area (ACCOBAMS), Accord RAMOGE, the International Association of Oil and Gas Producers, the Centre of Mediterranean Cooperation of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN- Med), the Mediterranean Association to Save the Sea Turtles (MEDASSET), the Environmental Fund for Mediterranean Marine Protected Areas (The MedFund), the Network of Marine Protected Areas Managers in the Mediterranean (MedPAN), Shark Advocates International the Shark Trust and the Mediterranean Programme Office of the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF).

### Representatives of MAP Components

In addition to the MAP Coordinator and the staff of SPA/RAC, the following other MAP Components were represented at the meeting: PAP/RAC, INFO/RAC and REMPEC.

In comparison with previous meetings of SPA/BD Focal Points, the noticeable change in the attendance relates to the participation of some MAP Focal Points or their representatives and the participation of representatives from MAP components. As for the participation of representatives from partner organisations, most of the represented organisations have long-standing collaboration with SPA/RAC and they are therefore used to attend the SPA/BD Focal Points meetings, with the exception of the International Association of Oil and Gas Producers. The participation of this organisation is mainly in relation to the Agenda Items 5.4 (Mediterranean Offshore Guidelines and Standards: Draft Guidelines for the Conduct of Environmental Impact Assessment) and 6.5 (Mediterranean Offshore Guidelines and Standards: Draft Common Standards and Guidelines for Special Restrictions or Conditions for Specially Protected Areas (SPAs) within the framework of the Mediterranean Offshore Action Plan. Both Agenda Items were included in the meeting agenda following a proposal by REMPEC.

### **Topics covered by the Agenda Items of the meeting**

The topics addressed by the Agenda Items were in line with those relating to biodiversity in the MTS. Most of them were similar to items included in the agendas of previous meetings of the SPA/BD Focal Points. There were however new topics whose inclusion in the agenda of the SPA/BD Thematic Focal Points meeting was proposed by other MAP components that provided the relevant working documents and introduced them during the meeting, as follows:

- Topics proposed and introduced during the meeting by the representative of REMPEC:
  - 5.4. Mediterranean Offshore Guidelines and Standards: Draft Guidelines for the Conduct of Environmental Impact Assessment
  - 6.5. Mediterranean Offshore Guidelines and Standards: Draft Common Standards and Guidelines for Special Restrictions or Conditions for Specially Protected Areas (SPAs) within the framework of the Mediterranean Offshore Action Plan
- Topics proposed by MEDPOL and introduced during the meeting by SPA/RAC:
  - 5.5. Updated Guidelines for Regulating the Placement of Artificial Reefs at Sea
- Topics proposed and introduced during the meeting by the representatives of PAP/RAC:
  - 7.3. Methodological Guidance of the Common Regional Framework for ICZM in the Mediterranean
  - 8.2. Analysis of coherence between regional documents adopted under the SPA/BD Protocol and the ICZM policy framework
- Topics proposed and introduced during the meeting by the representatives of INFO/RAC:
  - 7.2. IMAP information system platform related to biodiversity and non-indigenous species cluster

### Financial aspects

The option of organising the SPA/BD Thematic Focal Points meeting instead of an ordinary SPA/BD Focal Points meeting involved additional expenses relating mainly to the increase in the number of participants due to this new option. In total, SPA/RAC covered the travel and accommodation costs for 28 Party representatives; nine of them would not have participated if the meeting was a SPA/BD Focal Point meeting and not a SPA/BD Thematic Focal Points meeting.

Costs of the Fourteenth Meeting of SPA/BD Thematic Focal Points covered by SPA/RAC:

	Expenses related to the SPA/BD Focal Point Meeting	Additional cost*	Total cost of the Meeting
Travel and Terminal expenses	18 846 €	2 316 €	21 162 €
Accommodation	16 761 €	2 159 €	18 920 €
<i>Per diem</i>	10 300 €	1 766 €	12 066 €
Lunches	4 500 €	375 €	4 875 €
Coffee-breaks	3 570 €	298 €	3 868 €
Meeting room	7 750 €	500 €	8 250 €
Interpretation equipment	5 983 €	544 €	6 527 €
<b>Total</b>	<b>67 710 €</b>	<b>7 958 €</b>	<b>75 668 €</b>

\*Additional cost linked to the option of the SPA/BD Thematic Focal Points meeting with the participation of the MAP Focal Points of six Parties

In addition to the meeting expenses covered by SPA/RAC, the SPA/BD Thematic Focal Points meeting option resulted to expenses covered by the other MAP components in relation to the participation of their representatives to the meeting.

### Views and opinions of the participants

The Secretariat contacted all the delegations during the meeting to collect the views and opinions of the participants regarding the added value they see in the option of organising SPA/BD Thematic Focal Points meetings instead of SPA/BD Focal Points meetings. In this context, a questionnaire was elaborated and made available to participants (Annex 1 to this note).

A summary of the replies to the questionnaire (19 replies received) appears in Annex 2 to this note. It shows that the opinion of the Contracting Party representatives regarding the added value of the option of organising for SPA/BD Thematic Focal Points meetings is mixed: 64% of them indicated that they see an evident added value, while 36% indicated that they see no evident added value. It should be noted that those who indicated they see no evident added value are only SPA/BD Focal Points or representatives of SPA/BD Focal Points.

The analysis of the replies to the questionnaires showed also that, before coming to the meeting, most of the SPA/BD Focal Points did not consult with other Focal Points of their countries about the issues addressed in the meeting agenda.

The replies to the questionnaire received from representatives of partner organisations (four replies received) indicated that they see an evident added value.

### Conclusions and recommendations

It is obvious that the meetings of thematic focal points held for Core and Cross-cutting themes of the MTS are likely to promote the integration of efforts to implement the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols. The Fourteenth Meeting of SPA/BD Thematic Focal Points, held on trial basis, has shown that such meetings can promote exchanges between Focal Points of the MAP components,

which would be beneficial for the functioning of the MAP system and its structures. However, the exchange was relatively limited during this meeting since a low number of MAP Focal Points attended the meeting or sent their representatives. Furthermore, many delegates indicated that before coming to the meeting, they did not consult with other MAP component Focal Points of their countries about the issues addressed in the meeting agenda.

The views of the meeting participants on the usefulness of this approach are rather mixed. This is apparent from the discussions made with the participants at the meeting and from the analysis of the replies to the questionnaires which was distributed for this purpose. An important remark is that only SPA/BD Focal points or their representatives indicated they see no evident added value of the approach.

The analysis of the additional costs showed that compared to a “classical” Meeting of SPA/BD Focal points, the organisation of the Fourteenth SPA/BD Thematic Focal Points Meeting involved an increase of 11,75% in the expenditures needed to cover the travel and accommodation fees of the Contracting Party delegations and the other expenditures required for logistics. The increase was due to the participation of six MAP Focal Points or their representatives. The Meeting also involved additional costs related to the participation of the representatives of MAP components, which were incurred by the components themselves.

At this stage, definitive conclusions cannot be drawn as for the actual relevance, usefulness and cost- effectiveness of the approach tested with the organization, on trial basis, of the Fourteenth Meeting of SPA/BD Thematic Focal Points. It appears from this trial that the preparation of such a meeting should start from the elaboration of the programme of work for the biennium in order to orient the activities of the concerned MAP components towards more integration, collaboration and joint actions.

Effort needs to be made at Contracting Party level so that there is more exchange between the focal points of the different MAP components of the same Contracting Party as well as with the MAP Focal Point. To promote integration and ensure more positive impact to thematic focal points meetings, it is proposed that Contracting Party delegations have preparatory meetings in their countries involving the Focal Points of all MAP components and MAP Focal Points. During these preparatory meetings, they should jointly review the working and information documents of the meeting of thematic focal points documents they will attend.

Furthermore, it is proposed that each meeting of MAP component Focal Points acquires a thematic nature through having a dedicated session to ensure that integration with the other themes of the Mid-Term Strategy is adequately addressed. This will be the case in particular for issues (and the respective documents) which require the attention of the thematic Focal Points of other MAP components, as well as of the other MAP components themselves. For such issues, the Secretariat should raise as early as possible in the invitation and annotated agendas the attention and awareness of the specific thematic/component Focal Points, so that they timely consult internally with the relevant component/thematic Focal Points of the same Contracting Party.

At the same time, for such issues pertaining to other themes of the Mid-Term Strategy, there is a need for the participation in the meeting of other MAP components, at expert level, on issues where the expertise of a specific component is needed. This will also enhance integration within the Coordinating Unit and all MAP components, with the MAP-Barcelona Convention system acting as one. This approach could have a relatively small budgetary implication, which would be worthwhile since it will efficiently increase integration.

In summary, this proposal will include the following two actions: (a) all MAP component/thematic Focal Points meetings will add in their agenda an item addressing cross-cutting issues and integration. Under this agenda item, the issues/documents that request review and inputs other than from the specific MAP component/thematic Focal Point of each Contracting Party, will be

highlighted by the Secretariat; (b) all relevant MAP Components will be represented at the meeting – possibly only during the integration session - by, at least, one expert. The budgetary implications will include the travel costs of maximum 6-7 experts representing MAP components, while electronic means (e.g. skype) could be also used if it is appropriate, to reduce costs. This approach will support each MAP component/thematic Focal Point meeting to increase integration with other themes of the Mid-Term Strategy, and eventually to achieve a holistic consideration of the MAP-Barcelona Convention system.

For the next biennium, in line with the proposed Programme of Work and Budget, there are several policy documents and guidelines that would require such an integrative approach (e.g. the SAP BIO, the preparation of the Data Management Policy, the preparation of the Regional Strategy for the Prevention of and Response to Marine Pollution from Ships, the six Regional Plans to Reduce/Prevent Marine Pollution from Land-Based Sources, etc.). To this end, the Secretariat, will mobilize internal expertise from all MAP components, not only during the MAP component/thematic Focal Points meetings, but also at the preparatory process, before and during the relevant expert meetings that will be organized in the next biennium. Furthermore, the Secretariat aims to further facilitate integration at Contracting Party level, by preparing the relevant agenda items in an integrative manner, by involving from an early stage all relevant MAP components and their expertise, and by ensuring that integrative issues are highlighted and documents are available to all MAP component Focal Points so that each Contracting Party can better coordinate internally.

## Annex 1: Questionnaire for the evaluation of the Thematic Focal Points meeting option within the framework of the Barcelona Convention

### Background

Decision IG.23/3 of the Contracting Parties “requested SPA/RAC to prepare on a trial basis, a meeting of the thematic focal points for Specially Protected Areas/Biological Diversity for the biennium 2018- 2019, under the guidance of the Coordinating Unit, to achieve the greatest possible integration with the other themes of the Mid-Term Strategy”.

It also requested the Coordinating Unit to assess the trial and present the results of the assessment to the Contracting Parties prior to their twenty-first meeting.

This questionnaire aims at collecting views and opinions of the representatives of the Contracting Parties and of partner organisations attending the Thematic Focal Points meeting, held from 18 to 21 June 2019, in Portoroz (Slovenia).

#### 1. Are you:

- The SPA/RAC Focal Point
- A Representative of the SPA/RAC Focal Point
- The MAP Focal Point
- A Representative of the MAP Focal Point
- Representative of a partner organisation
- Other (Please specify)

#### 2. Did you know before the meeting that this is a SPA/BD thematic focal points meeting?

Yes  No

#### 3. If yes, how you were informed?

From the MAP Focal Point of your country (if applicable)

From the meeting invitation and documents

Other (please specify)

#### 4. Did you have preparatory meeting(s)/consultation at national level with your MAP Focal Point and the Focal points of the other MAP Components?

Yes  No  Only with some of them (partially)

**5. How do you assess the usefulness of organizing a Thematic Focal Points meeting instead of the RAC's Focal points meetings, with regards to increased integration at the national level and within the MAP system?**

Useful with evident added value

No evident added value

Added value could be obtained through the following improvements: (please specify)

**6. Please indicate here any further remarks or suggestions**

## Annex 2: Compilation of the answers received from participants in response to the questionnaire

Type of Participant	How you were informed that it was a Thematic Focal point Meeting <sup>1</sup>	Preparatory meeting with Focal points at national level <sup>2</sup>	Usefulness of Thematic Focal Points meeting <sup>3</sup>	Added value could be obtained through the following improvements <sup>3</sup>	Further remarks/suggestions <sup>4</sup>
1-MAP FOCAL POINT	From the meeting invitation and documents	YES	Useful with evident added value	Strengthen national coordination with the relevant RAC's Focal Points in order to have an integrated and holistic approach on the themes concerned. Substantially contributing to EcAp achievement, since its implementation requires an integration approach in interconnected fields.	I found the thematic focal points meeting for Specially Protected Areas/Biological Diversity extremely useful, since it gave the opportunity to have an integrated view on interconnected fields from different activities/ developments going on through the different RACs components. Marine biodiversity and MPAs cannot be protected if the other components are not taken into account. In this respect, the development of the different guidelines and relevant documents for the various components i.e. Offshore activities, artificial reefs, ICZM etc should be in coherence with the marine biodiversity conservation.
1-MAP FOCAL POINT	From the meeting invitation and documents	YES	No evident added value		Dans mon pays, nous parvenons à nous organiser en interne entre les points focaux du PAM et les points focaux des CAR afin d'obtenir une vision transversale et intégrée des sujets traités au sein du PAM. Le fait que le point focal du PAM soit également point focal de deux CAR facilite cette intégration. Cette organisation pourrait être recommandée aux Parties considérant que le système doit évoluer. - Bien que cette réunion ait été fort intéressante, l'absence de la grande majorité des points focaux du PAM illustre que ceux-ci ont jugé que leur présence n'était pas indispensable.

<sup>1</sup> Questions 2 and 3 of the questionnaire

<sup>2</sup> Question 4 of the questionnaire

<sup>3</sup> Question 5 of the questionnaire

<sup>4</sup> Question 6 of the questionnaire



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2-REPRESENTATIVE OF MAP FOCAL POINT	From the meeting invitation and documents	PARTIALLY (ONLY WITH SOME NATIONAL FOCAL POINTS)	Useful with evident added value		Even some representative countries did not draft or implement an action plan regarding species, they took some initiatives in the frame of different agreements with other foundations or donors (such case M2PA), that helped on improvement of situation regarding these species' conservation. I think this kind of contributions should be mentioned also in future meetings (just like in this one by Side events), as an added value for successful implementation of regional action plan and strategies.
2-REPRESENTATIVE OF MAP FOCAL POINT	From the meeting invitation and documents	YES	Useful with evident added value	Réunion thématique très intéressante et fructueuse de bonnes présentations beaucoup d'information ont été données Qualité et niveau de participation élevés Présentation des opportunités nouvelles Très convivial, bons échanges ; différents partenaires s'informent mutuellement sur leurs activités	On souhaiterait dans l'avenir de nous faire parvenir les documents de travail dans les deux versions pour être plus efficient Poursuite de l'appui du CAR/ASP Le développement des capacités financières, techniques et institutionnelles est très important pour la mise en œuvre de toutes les activités. La coordination intersectorielle doit parvenir au point focal du PAM
3-SPA FOCAL POINT	From the meeting invitation and documents	YES	Useful with evident added value	We welcome this integrated approach as biodiversity is horizontal theme and should be harmonized and coordinated with other RACs programme of work within the MAP system.	
3-SPA FOCAL POINT	From the meeting invitation and documents	PARTIALLY (ONLY WITH SOME NATIONAL FOCAL POINTS)	Useful with evident added value		
3-SPA FOCAL POINT	From the meeting invitation and documents	PARTIALLY (ONLY WITH SOME NATIONAL	No evident added value		I don't see purpose of this approach. It was like regular Meeting of National Focal points.

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		FOCAL POINTS)			
3-SPA FOCAL POINT	From the meeting invitation and documents + SPA/RAC	NO	No evident added value	Regular coordination at national level addressing the issues that are dealt with within the other protocols and/or MAP components; possibility to influence the activities/decisions/actions of other RACs;	
3-SPA FOCAL POINT	From the meeting invitation and documents	YES	No evident added value	In small countries, the same people who represent the Thematic and the regular meeting.	
3-SPA FOCAL POINT	From the meeting invitation and documents	PARTIALLY (ONLY WITH SOME NATIONAL FOCAL POINTS)	Useful with evident added value		
3-SPA FOCAL POINT	MAP FOCAL POINT	PARTIALLY (ONLY WITH SOME NATIONAL FOCAL POINTS)	Useful with evident added value		

Type of Participant	How you were informed that it was a Thematic Focal point Meeting <sup>1</sup>	Preparatory meeting with Focal points at national level <sup>2</sup>	Usefulness of Thematic Focal Points meeting <sup>3</sup>	Added value could be obtained through the following improvements <sup>3</sup>	Further remarks/suggestions <sup>4</sup>
4-REPRESENTATIVE OF SPA FOCAL POINT	From the meeting invitation and documents	YES	Useful with evident added value	Added value could be obtained through the following improvements: (please specify) Although the meeting included several components beyond the SPA/BD Focal Point Meeting, those components are interlinked with marine biodiversity and it was extremely useful to get involved with such documents and actions (i.e. offshore protocol, eia, artificial reefs etc).	
4-REPRESENTATIVE OF SPA FOCAL POINT	From the meeting invitation and documents	PARTIALLY (ONLY WITH SOME NATIONAL FOCAL POINTS)	No evident added value		
4-REPRESENTATIVE OF SPA FOCAL POINT	From the meeting invitation and documents+ National network system	PARTIALLY (ONLY WITH SOME NATIONAL FOCAL POINTS)	No evident added value		<p>I am of the opinion that the MAP Secretariat should emphasise that coordination and communication between FPs of the RACs and MAP should primarily happen nationally, as a matter of fact that is one of their primary roles, thus ensuring coordinated implementation of the Convention and requirements of the RACs.</p> <p>If there is the need to have a meeting to discuss matters, ad-hoc, which are cross-sectoral and over-arching, this could be seen as an opportunity to hold such a thematic meeting, where added value would surely be an output. However, I fail to see the added value of a thematic meeting like the one held in Slovenia, whilst noting that the organization and logistics were impeccable as always.</p>

Type of Participant	How you were informed that it was a Thematic Focal point Meeting <sup>1</sup>	Preparatory meeting with Focal points at national level <sup>2</sup>	Usefulness of Thematic Focal Points meeting <sup>3</sup>	Added value could be obtained through the following improvements <sup>3</sup>	Further remarks/suggestions <sup>4</sup>
5-REPRESENTATIVE OF PARTNER ORGANISATION	From the meeting invitation and documents	NO	Useful with evident added value		
5-REPRESENTATIVE OF PARTNER ORGANISATION	From the meeting invitation and documents	NO	Useful with evident added value		
5-REPRESENTATIVE OF PARTNER ORGANISATION	From the meeting invitation and documents	NO	Useful with evident added value	To link may be with other RAC focal points depending on the main subjects discussed (for example PAP/RAC focal points if discussion is about ICZM/biodiversity)	Maybe it would be useful to plan short power-point presentations to introduce subjects and present the main elements of the documents; so that Parties that may not have fully prepared all documents of the meeting can also bring some direct contribution, based on main elements of the documents presented through presentation.
5-REPRESENTATIVE OF PARTNER ORGANISATION	From the meeting invitation and documents	NO		As it was our first participation in a SPA RAC meeting, we cannot comment on the interest of having Thematic Focal Points Meetings.	We would like to thank the SPA/RAC Secretariat for the invitation. We very much appreciated the opportunity to participate in the meeting. We hope that we can be a valuable partner and we are looking forward to working together.
6- OTHER (Consultant) SPA/RAC)	From the meeting invitation and documents	NO	Useful with evident added value		