



**United Nations
Environment Programme
Mediterranean Action Plan**

Distr.: General
20 February 2023

Original: English

First Project Steering Committee Meeting of the Mediterranean Sea Programme (MedProgramme): Child Project 1.2:
Pollution Hot Spots Investment Project

Meeting held by videoconference, 17 January 2023

Report of the Meeting

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Report of the Meeting

Introduction

1. The MedProgramme Coordinating Unit (MedPCU) held its First Project Steering Committee Meeting (PSCM) of Child Project 1.2 (GEF ID 9717) “Mediterranean Pollution Hot Spots Investment Project” on 17 January 2023. This Child Project falls under the overall umbrella of the GEF UNEP programme (GEF ID 9607), entitled “Mediterranean Sea Programme (MedProgramme): Enhancing Environmental Security”.
2. The primary objective of this First PSCM was to review progress in project delivery and discuss and approve the project’s annual workplan and budget forecast for 2023.
3. The presentations for all agenda items are provided in Annex IV to the present report.

Participation

4. The meeting was attended by representatives from six of the ten participating countries: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Tunisia and Turkey. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) as lead GEF Implementation Agency, the Mediterranean Action Plan/Barcelona Convention Secretariat (UNEP/MAP), as executing entity and the European Investment Bank (EIB), as executing partner, were also represented.
5. The full list of participants is attached as Annex I to the present report.

Agenda Item 1: Opening of the Meeting

6. The meeting was opened at 10:00 AM (EET) on 17 January 2023 by the Coordinator of the United Nations Environment Programme/Mediterranean Action Plan, Barcelona Convention Secretariat, Ms. Tatjana Hema. Ms. Hema recalled that Child Project 1.2 is a very important project of the MedProgramme, she emphasized on the collaboration with the EIB and the countries and partners, it was a long journey to reach this point and we are now ready to execute this Project. The 10 years cooperation with the EIB has been very fruitful. It is very important that we have a concrete objective as this project has multiple values and we are very confident that we will deliver the Project effectively. She encouraged all to give their full cooperation in this very important Project.
7. Ms. Christine Haffner-Sifakis, UNEP GEF International Waters Task Manager, expressed her enthusiasm about CP 1.2. She also looks forward to the modernized and pioneering approach and upgrade the foundational work that GEF has invested in the Barcelona Convention. She thanked the EIB for their cooperation in this important incentive.
8. Ms. Olfat Hamdan, MedProgramme Programme Officer thanked the colleagues for their positive words and explained the objectives of this meeting, which is to approve the 2023 work plan and budget for the implementation of this Project. She introduced the Chair and Vice Chair of the Meeting.

Agenda Item 2: Organizational and Adoption of the Provisional Agenda

9. The meeting elected the following officers: Mr. Benjeddou, Tunisia (President) and Mr. Bassam Sabbagh, Lebanon (Vice President), and the Provisional Agenda was adopted (please find as Annex II to the present report). Participants introduced themselves and their functions regarding this Project.

Agenda item 3: MedProgramme, its objective and main progress

10. Ms. Hamdan spoke regarding the MedProgramme and the objectives of Child Project 1.2. She gave a general overview and made a presentation, noting the objective being to accelerate the implementation of agreed-upon priority actions to reduce the major transboundary environmental stresses affecting the Mediterranean Sea and its coastal areas while strengthening climate resilience and water security and improving the health and livelihoods of coastal populations. She mentioned that the MedProgramme includes more than 100 activities across the four GEF Focal Areas of International Waters, Chemicals & Waste, Climate Change Adaptation, Biodiversity. The presentation is attached as Annex IV to this report.

Agenda Item 3: MedProgramme, its objectives and main progress

11. Bosnia and Herzegovina thanked the MedProgramme. They made a comment regarding the progress made under Child Project 1.1 “Reducing Pollution from Harmful Chemicals and Wastes in Mediterranean Hotspots and Measuring Progress to Impacts”. They mentioned the importance of co-financing as contribution to the MedProgramme and asked for clarification from MedPCU regarding these high amounts. He confirmed that the issue of Gender would be looked at more in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

12. Turkey spoke regarding the Project and asked how they could be included in issues concerning climate change. He mentioned the budget was low in the presentation, to be able to strengthen climate resilience and to assure the protection for the Mediterranean. Ms. Hamdan commented that the budget and the co-financing of the countries was agreed with them during the preparation phase of the MedProgramme and its Child Projects. No feedback was received at this stage, and project activities and budget need to be executed in line with the GEF-approved project document, however, it can be discussed case-by-case. Ms. Haffner-Sifakis confirmed the important point of the co-financing. It is important to keep sight of the funding for the MedProgramme to demonstrate the contribution by the countries.

13. Turkey indicated the intention to avail themselves of the availability regarding the relevant component. They will demonstrate their contributions and how they could make their investment to this important Project. Ms. Hema mentioned the in-kind contribution and the reporting by countries, the EIB and partners. The request from Turkey will be taken into consideration regarding aquaculture and confirmed that legally binding measures will be enforced in MAP and the MedProgramme to deliver them in this biennium. She confirmed that the 42 million USD would need to be reported on within the project period which is important to consider.

Agenda item 4: Overview of Child Project 1.2

14. A presentation was made by the EIB. The EIB activities falls under component 1 of the CP 1.2. Child Project 1.2, Component 1 consists in three projects that will support the identification, selection and design of future Investment projects in the water and wastewater treatment sectors in Mediterranean coastal areas at risk of groundwater over-exploitation, loss of coastal habitats and eutrophication. The Investment projects will provide additional sources of water thus improving the economic situation for fisheries, agriculture/forestry and tourism in the target areas while at the same time improving the health and the environmental situation for the people living in these areas. The TA projects aim to prepare Investment Projects to a level where they can be appraised for financing by EIB or other International Finance Institutions.

15. Mr. Erol Cavus, MED POL Programme Officer made a presentation on component 2 of CP 1.2. He mentioned the planned work programme within CP1.2 – Component 2 which foresees the implementation of activities to address the lack of comprehensive region-wide environmental guidelines and standards on wastewater and sludge management. Aquaculture and desalination specifically in relation to the sufficiency of the guidelines and standards to achieve Good

Environmental Status (GES) of the Mediterranean Sea and Coast as the ultimate objective of the BC's implementation of the Ecosystem Approach (EcAp). Bosnia and Herzegovina commented on the issue of development of regional standards and requested clarification. Mr. Cavus confirmed that the standards are the discharge limit values and it is a good time to look at this in the Mediterranean region which lacks those standards.

Agenda Item 5: CP 1.2 Workplan 2023

16. The EIB made a presentation on their organization chart and the team for Child Project 1.2. For activities in Tunisia, they cooperate with the Office National de l'Assainissement (ONAS). They are the main operator for water sanitation. The project will fund a feasibility study in Tunisia. In addition, they discussed activities in Egypt and Lebanon, please see the presentation as Annex IV to this report.
17. Lebanon made a comment regarding upgrading wastewater and solid waste facilities, they stressed that even during the normal situation in Lebanon, it was difficult to maintain these facilities, mentioning the state-of-the-art plants which are worth a considerable amount. Now, and during the economic crisis in Lebanon, it is even more impossible to maintain financially, so to upgrade would be a very difficult task. The Ministry of Environment (MoE) of Lebanon is working on a cost recovery system for solid waste management. They would appreciate similar consideration in the waste water sector. The EIB responded to the comment saying indeed the long term and sustainability should be considered in Lebanon given the economic situation and they are aware of the difficulties which lay ahead. They agree with the comments of Lebanon and on the investment side this is a lesson learned. Ms. Hamdan responded to the comment of Lebanon regarding the innovative approach of the MedProgramme, suggesting that we adopt similar approach for the CP 1.2 and try to find a solution to assist in this problem.
18. MED POL made a presentation showing the regional standards for reducing pollution from aquaculture, regional and national measures to implement standards developed and submitted for deliberation of the Contracting Parties of the Barcelona Convention. They discussed the progress and next steps on this matter.
19. Bosnia and Herzegovina made a comment related to the regional standards, it would be useful to use the approach by the International Standards Organization (ISO) to promote and propose the regional standards. They can define criteria which is important for the desalinization as an example. The term regional criteria would be a suggestion. Ms. Hamdan responded to the comment of Bosnia and Herzegovina and mentioned the possibility to develop regional standards, taking into consideration the specificities of the region, and taking into consideration other regions too. The comments of Bosnia and Herzegovina will be further discussed during the technical meetings related to the development of the regional standards. MED POL agreed with the concerns.
20. Tunisia made a comment regarding the confusion of standards. In Tunisia they have specific values for water and atmospheric emissions. They need to align the understanding so that people can have the same understanding. How we can introduce a good product is the main issue. Some are old and outdated; we need to know what the acceptable limits and values are especially for water. We may need to agree on the innovative aspects to help the countries. We can all exchange together our views. Ms. Hamdan encouraged the meeting to share their views on this subject. Ms. Haffner-Sifakis highlighted the GEF financing and the investment issue. How nature-based solutions would be important for the initiatives. Synergies between the project elements are also very important.

Agenda item 6: CP 1.2 Budget Forecast for Workplan 2023

21. Mr. Candeloro presented the revision of the budget, also the budget forecast for 2023. Some modifications were made to the original budget to modify some minor financial discrepancies within the project approved budget. The total budget forecast for 2023 is 342,208 USD. No questions were

posed regarding the budget. Ms. Hamdan commented on the roles of the Steering Committee saying that they would need to approve the budget at this meeting if there were no objections.

22. The Steering Committee approved the revision of the budget and the budget forecast for 2023 with no objections or adjustments.

Agenda Item 7: Any other Business

23. No other items were proposed by the Project Steering Committee.

Agenda Item 8: Conclusions and Recommendations

24. The Meeting participants reviewed, amended, and adopted the draft conclusions and recommendations from the Meeting discussions, which appear in Annex III of this Meeting report.

Agenda Item 9: Closure of the Meeting

25. Ms. Hema, Ms. Haffner Sifakis and Ms. Hamdan provided closing remarks at the end of the First Steering Meeting Committee.
26. The Chair closed the Meeting at 17:00 on Tuesday 17 January 2023.

Annex I
List of participants

Steering Committee Meeting of Child Project 1.2 of the MedProgramme
17 January 2023

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Annex II**Provisional Agenda**

- Agenda item 1:** Opening of the Meeting
- Agenda item 2:** Adoption of the Provisional Agenda and Organization of Work
- Agenda item 3:** MedProgramme, its objective and main progress
- Agenda item 4:** Overview of Child Project 1.2
- a) Objective
 - b) Components
 - c) Activities
- Agenda item 5:** CP 1.2 Workplan 2023
- a) Component 1: National actions: Nutrient reduction investments in coastal hotspots
 - b) Component 2: Regional actions: Harmonization of relevant standards
- Agenda item 6:** CP 1.2 Budget Forecast for Workplan 2023
- a) Component 1: National actions: Nutrient reduction investments in coastal hotspots
 - b) Component 2: Regional actions: Harmonization of relevant standards
- Agenda item 7:** Any Other Business
- Agenda item 8:** Conclusions and Recommendations
- Agenda item 9:** Closure of the Meeting

TIMETABLE¹

Tuesday, 17 January 2023		
10:00 – 10:15	Agenda item 1: Opening of the Meeting	
10:15 – 10:30	Agenda item 2: Adoption of the Provisional Agenda and Organization of Work	UNEP/MED WG.544/1
10:30 – 11:00	Agenda item 3: MedProgramme, its objective, and main progress	presentation
11:00- 11:30	Agenda item 4: Overview of Child Project 1.2: a) Objective b) Components c) Activities	presentation
<i>11:30 – 12:30</i>	Break 1	
12:30 - 14:30	Agenda item 5: CP 1.2 Workplan 2023 a) Component 1: National actions: Nutrient reduction investments in coastal hotspots b) Component 2: Regional actions: Harmonization of relevant standards	UNEP/MED WG.544/2
<i>14:30 – 15:00</i>	Break 2	
15:00 - 16:00	Agenda item 6: CP 1.2 Budget Forecast for Workplan 2023 a) Component 1: National actions: Nutrient reduction investments in coastal hotspots b) Component 2: Regional actions: Harmonization of relevant standards	UNEP/MED WG.544/3
16:00 - 16:30	Agenda item 7: Any Other Business	
16:30 – 17:00	Agenda item 8: Conclusions and Recommendations	
17:00	Agenda item 9: Closure of the Meeting	

¹ UTC+3 (i.e. Athens time)

Annex III

Conclusions and Recommendations

Steering Committee Meeting (SCM) for Child Project 1.2 “Pollution Hot Spots Investment Project” (GEF ID 9717) of the Mediterranean Sea Programme (MedProgramme): Enhancing Environmental Security (GEF ID 9607)

Videoconference, January 17, 2023

1. The First Project Steering Committee Meeting (SCM) of Child Project 1.2 “Pollution Hot Spots Investment Project” (GEF ID 9717) was held by videoconference on 17 January 2023. The Meeting was organized by the UNEP/MAP Secretariat and MedPCU.
2. The SCM was opened by the UNEP/MAP Coordinator by highlighting the importance and the innovative approach of the MedProgramme and its Child Project 1.2 combining policy with financial instruments towards achieving the international and regional environmental agreements, the GEF goals and targets, as well as countries’ commitments under the Barcelona Convention.
3. The GEF/UNEP Task Manager for International Waters highlighted the innovation of the MedProgramme covering four GEF focal areas (Chemicals & Waste, International Waters, Climate Change, Biodiversity) as a model for the region and other regions. The involvement and investment contributions of international financing institutions (IFIs) such as EIB and EBRD, as well as the interlinkages between the eight Child Projects were marked as highly pioneering.
4. The MedPCU introduced the MedProgramme, its objective and main progress to inform the participants about the overall aim of the programme and its Child Projects in the Mediterranean Region.
5. The Steering Committee highlighted the high amount of co-financing pledged by the participating countries to the MedProgramme, as well as the necessity to look for additional resources to meet the international environmental agreements, and countries’ needs and priorities. It also highlighted the importance to keep the door open for the countries to contribute and benefit from the MedProgramme through the implementation of its national activities.
6. The Steering Committee requested the MedPCU to support the countries in meeting their co-financing requirements. Bilateral meetings and dedicated sessions will be organized for this purpose.
7. The Executing Partners of Child Project 1.2, the European Investment Bank (EIB) and MED POL outlined the overall objective, components and activities related to the project and its two components (Component 1: National actions: Nutrient reduction investments in coastal hotspots, and Component 2: Regional actions: Harmonization of relevant standards). Both presentations covered planned activities for the whole duration of the Project.
8. The Steering Committee took note of the progress achieved by the Executing Partners since the start date of CP 1.2, and agreed on the importance of continuous collaboration among the different partners for the efficient implementation of the national activities under CP 1.2.

9. The EIB presented the detailed 2023 workplan related to Component 1 (National actions: Nutrient reduction investments in coastal hotspots) and MED POL presented the detailed 2023 workplan related to Component 2 (Regional actions: Harmonization of relevant standards).
10. The Steering Committee encouraged the partners to implement innovative solutions (e.g. cost recovery systems, new treatment technologies, new trends, nature-based solutions,...) for the sustainable management of the wastewater sector, including investment projects, taking into consideration the long-term running of the wastewater treatment plants.
11. The Steering Committee stressed the importance of collaboration and synergies among the key partners at the project level, as well as between the different Child Projects and UNEP/MAP Barcelona Convention network, for better implementation and leveraging of resources among the MedProgramme.
12. The Steering Committee noted the importance of investments being defined as priorities in the strategic documents prepared by UNEP/MAP Barcelona Convention network of partners (SAPs, NAPs).
13. The Steering Committee stressed the importance of continuing the discussion on the development of the regional standards or criteria related to Component 2 of CP 1.2.
14. The Steering Committee reviewed and approved the 2023 work plan for CP 1.2.
15. The MedPCU presented the total budget of the project and the proposed 2023 budget forecast.
16. The Steering Committee noted the overall budget corrections to harmonize the total budget by year to the total budget by component and approved the budget revision and the proposed forecast budget for 2023.