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Online, 1-3 June 2021

**Conclusions of the 13th ordinary meeting of SCP/RAC National Focal Points**

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## Conclusions of the 13th Ordinary Meeting of the SCP/RAC National Focal Points 1-3 June 2021, (Online)

### General conclusions

The SCP/RAC National Focal Points (hereinafter “NFPs”) expressed their appreciation for the valuable work and outstanding results achieved by SCP/RAC in the development of its activities in support to the countries under the MAP Programme of Work for the biennium 2021-2022.

In that sense, they acknowledged the key role that the Centre will play in the implementation of the next UNEP/MAP Mid Term Strategy 2022-2027, especially in the implementation of its Fourth Overall Objective *to contribute to the Building Back Better approach of the “UN framework for the immediate socio-economic response to COVID-19” and towards a “green renaissance” of the Mediterranean by supporting new and sustainable business models, enabling a just and green transition to a nature-based solutions and circular economy.*

They welcomed the draft proposal of the SCP/RAC Programme of Work (PoW) for 2022-2023 which gives continuity to the activities developed during 2021-2022 biennium and which is fully in line with the new Programmes structuring the new MAP Mid-Term Strategy, especially Programmes 1, 3, 4, 6 and 7.

On the basis of comments made by the NFPs, SCP/RAC will review the proposed Programme of Work 2022-2023 and transmit the updated version to the MAP Focal Points, sharing it also with the SCP/RAC NFPs.

NFPs decided that the proposed SCP/RAC-led activities under the above-mentioned Programme be recommended for consideration in the MAP PoW.

Finally, the NFPs requested SCP/RAC to increase the communication, if appropriate, during the preparation of project proposals in view of further involving them during this period and not only once the project is implemented.

Some countries expressed their need to receive support from SCP/RAC in the implementation of activities supporting sustainable Blue Economy strategies in their countries.

### On the financial support to SCP/RAC

The NFPs took note of the information provided by SCP/RAC on the funding mobilization achieved by the centre to implement the activities foreseen in the next UNEP/MAP PoW for the biennium 2022-2023. They congratulated the SCP/RAC team for the outstanding efforts in mobilizing funding for activities and human resources by applying and being granted with projects that enable the centre to keep operating and to comply with its the growing mandate and responsibilities that have been assigned to SCP/RAC on the basis of the Decisions adopted by the last Conferences of the Parties to the Barcelona Convention and that require the Centre to upscale its activities in the region.

However, they recognized that the continuous increase in SCP/RAC's responsibilities and in the number of projects in which the Centre is involved as a result of its fund raising efforts, is not been matched by a corresponding increase of the financial support to its core structure.

In that sense they showed concern on the fact that for years SCP/RAC's structure has mainly relied on project-based staff while the centre lacks financial support to count on an appropriate minimum number of permanent staff. NFPs acknowledged that situation puts the centre in serious challenges to be able to continue performing in the next future its mission in supporting the countries according to the mandated assigned by the Contracting Parties of the Barcelona Convention. The NFPs took note on the detailed information provided by SCP/RAC, according to which the centre faces the risk of cutting 70% of its staff by 2023, once the EU projects representing its main funding sources, SwitchMed, GIMED and STAND UP!, will be completed.

Therefore, the NFPs recognise the imperative need of providing SCP/RAC with the financial means for a structure that enables it to continue performing its mandate under the Convention. Accordingly, the NFPs advise UNEP/MAP and the Contracting Parties on the need to find appropriate means to address the precarious situation faced by the centre to increase the financial support to its structure.

### **On the Mid-Term Evaluation of the Regional Action Plan on SCP in the Mediterranean (Hereinafter "SCP Regional Action Plan") and the list of SCP indicators**

NFPs took note of the results of the Mid-Term Evaluation of the SCP Regional Action Plan and supported the recommendations made for the second implementation phase that should be reflected in the report of the next COP22.

NFPs also took note of the need to improve the quality of the official reporting on the SCP Regional Action Plan, as part of the Contracting Parties' reporting obligation under the Barcelona Convention LBS Protocol.

NFPs recommended to not open the scope of the SCP Regional Action Plan by adding new sectors like transport, energy or logistics as the current sectors of the SCP Regional Action Plan are extremely relevant for SCP and circular economy, therefore efforts should be centred on these.

Regarding the list of SCP Indicators, prepared for the follow-up on the progress on SCP at the regional level, NFPs welcomed the updated version of the list and in particular the inclusion of new 3 aggregated macro-indicators like the Green Growth Index, Green Economy Progress Measurement – GEP Index, and the Business Dynamism indicator. They also took note of the proposed indicators regarding the installed renewable electricity-generating capacity (under Energy Efficiency), the proportion of wastewater safely treated (under pollution) and the sustainable fisheries as a proportion of GDP (as alternative to the phase out of the marine trophic index under resource Efficiency), plastic waste generation (under behaviors indicators). Finally, they also took note of the inclusion of 2 new parameters under the waste generation indicator, namely Electronic waste generated and electronic waste recycling.

NFPs expressed their satisfaction for the joint work with Plan Bleu / Regional Activity Centre that culminated with the integration of the SCP indicators' list and related factsheets within the Mediterranean Observatory for Environment and Sustainable Development. They

encouraged both Regional centres to give continuity to the work initiated, in line with the effort of Plan Bleu to coordinate Observation and Information Systems on Environment and Sustainable Development, including SCP, at the regional level.

### **On the guidelines on tackling single-use plastic products in the Mediterranean**

The NFPs congratulated SCP/RAC for the quality of the document and the extensive background analysis on the effect of different policy measures in a Mediterranean context.

NFPs highlighted the relevance of the proposed guidelines to support the implementation of the Regional Plan on Marine Litter Management, in particular Article 9 on prevention measures and associated national efforts to combatting plastic pollution.

On the basis of comments made by the NFPs, SCP/RAC will prepare and circulate a final draft of the Guidelines by mid-June. Thereafter, SCP/RAC is expected to share the final version with UNEP/MAP Secretariat in view of informing MAP Focal Points.

NFPs unanimously supported the inclusion of those guidelines as part of the COP Decision on the Updated Marine Litter Regional Plan, given the quality and robustness of the document as well as its contribution to facilitate the implementation of the circular economy measures of the revised Plan.

Additionally, the NFPs highlighted the need to consider the progressive implementation of policy measures, adapted to the different national contexts as well as the importance of developing measures to accompany both the change of consumer behaviour and the adaptation of the business sector.

NFPs encouraged SCP/RAC to intensify efforts to further disseminate and communicate on its activities and main technical publications, including the guidelines to tackle SUP products.

### **On the Switchers Platform**

NFPs welcomed the launching of the Switchers platform and highlighted its key importance as tool supporting entrepreneurs contributing to green and circular economies in the Mediterranean. Likewise, many NFPs appreciated the fact that the platform was available in three languages (English, French and Arabic) and others showed their interest that entrepreneurs from countries that are not beneficiary countries of the current funding sources feeding the platform could also benefit from it.

According to all that, they stressed the need that funding continues to be ensured for the development of the Platform and the growth of the community of entrepreneurs hosted by it. Therefore, they expressed that the platform should continue receiving MTF funding which accounts for the main funding source of the platform.

## **On the Development of a Set of Regional Measures to Support the Development of Green and Circular Businesses and to Strengthen the Demand for more Sustainable Products**

NFPs congratulated SCP/RAC for the quality of the preparation process of the Set of Regional Measures, based on a solid analysis of the context in the different countries and supported actively by the network of designated National Experts regularly informed of the progress of the process.

NFPs supported the definition for Sustainable Businesses (including green and circular businesses) as proposed by the national experts during the Online Consultation Meeting with National Experts nominated by the Contracting Parties of the Barcelona Convention for the Development of a Set of Regional Measures to Support Green and Circular Businesses in the Mediterranean that took place on the 23-24 February 2021.

NFPs unanimously supported the proposed set of 12 regional measures, structured around the main target groups (businesses, policy-makers, Business Support Organizations and financial actors), as well as the transversal measures focused on Single-Use Plastic products, Blue Economy and the strengthening of the demand for sustainable products and services. They are targeting economic activities which are fully relevant for the Protocols to the Barcelona Convention and have a particular impact on the marine and coastal environment, and related cross-cutting issues.

Likewise, the NFPs indicated the need that a reporting mechanism on the implementation of the Regional Framework of Measures is put in place to ensure the follow-up of the progress. Accordingly, they proposed that the Decision on the Measures that is submitted to the COP includes the specific request to UNEP/MAP, through SCP/RAC that the activities that are developed in the framework of the implementation of the Regional Measures are integrated in the reporting obligations under the new UNEP/MAP Mid Term strategy 2022-2027 and the corresponding biennial Programmes of Work.

In order to highlight efforts of the countries at the national level that support the implementation of the regional measures, it was suggested to review the reporting of the countries on SCP Regional Action Plan (SCP RAP) within the UNEP/MAP reporting system to reflect national contributions to the regional measures. This upgrade would also contribute to improve the SCP RAP reporting mechanisms as recommended in the mid-term evaluation of the SCP RAP.

NFPs also recommended to consider the inclusion of regional policy actions planned under Activity 4.2.4 (Boost targeted actions for a sustainable and inclusive Blue economy transition at regional and national levels) of the 2022-2023 PoW within the COP 22 Decision on the regional measures, as it will support implementation of the regional measure related to Blue Economy.

Finally, NFPs suggested to highlight the contribution of the relevant 2022-2023 PoW activities to the proposed Regional measures.

## SCP/RAC identity and communication strategy

The NFPs welcomed the new SCP/RAC identity and Communication Strategy. It was acknowledged that it is designed with the objective of increasing the centre's capability in funding mobilization for its activities in support to the countries as its implementation will enable the centre to extend the scope of alliances with relevant entities and potential donors and in exploring new ways of funding.

In that sense, it was recognized that the proposed strategy sets key milestones to increase the competitiveness of SCP/RAC and will help it find new funding alternatives to address the critical situation that the centre may face in terms of financial stability when the EU SwitchMed project, the main funding source for activities and human resources of the centre for the last seven years, ends by 2023.

The NFPs agreed that the identity and communication strategy includes a branding strategy to update the Centre's visual identity is important. Therefore, they agreed that a new name and logotype built on SCP/RAC's value proposition and brand values could be considered in order to provide general audience and selected targets with clearer and more tailored messages and information. In that sense, they afforded an opportunity to the centre to propose an alternative name to that purpose for consideration.