

10th Meeting of the Ecosystem Approach Coordination Group

Istanbul, Türkiye, 11 September 2023

Agenda Item 4: 2023 Mediterranean Quality Status Report

Report of the Integrated Meeting of the Ecosystem Approach Correspondence Groups (CORMONs), Athens, Greece, 27-28 June 2023

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Conclusions and Recommendations

On 27-28 June 2023, the integrated Meeting of the Ecosystem Approach Correspondence Groups (CORMONs) was held in Athens, Greece. The Meeting was organized by UNEP/MAP Secretariat and MAP Components (MED POL, SPA/RAC, PAP/RAC and PlanBleu).

Following the review and discussion of Working Documents UNEP/MED WG.550/3 to UNEP/MED WG.550/15, the Meeting reached the following conclusions:

Agenda Item 1.C.i: Biodiversity and Fisheries CORMON (*Adopted Conclusions*)

1. The Secretariat presented the working documents containing the proposals of the IMAP Biodiversity Cluster assessment Chapters of the 2023 MED QSR. Following the review and discussion of the presented Working Documents the Meeting reached the following conclusions and recommendations:

General conclusions and recommendations:

2. The meeting recognised the improvements of the quality of the documents shared for the meeting and the efforts made by the Secretariat and the regional Experts to complete the chapters considering the inputs of the Contracting Parties received after the CORMON Meeting held in March 2023 despite the tight timeline.

3. Participants emphasised the role of the online working groups of biodiversity and fisheries cluster and recommended to more rely on their work and to convene their meetings more frequently. This process and concrete frequencies for the next steps should be discussed and concluded at next relevant meetings.

4. For a better consideration of these comments, the Secretariat asked the Contracting Parties to submit all inputs and comments in a written form, no later 4 July 2023 to allow their consideration as appropriate for the version to be submitted to the EcAp Coordination Group Meeting (September 2023).

EO1 – Biodiversity

2023 Med QSR Benthic Habitats (EO1) assessment (UNEP/MED WG. 550/03 Rev.1)

5. To ease the reading and the understanding of the assessment results and outcomes, the Meeting recommended to more clearly separate the assessment of EO1 and EO6. It also recommended to consider more benthic habitat types in the next cycle of the IMAP in particular those used for the identification of the Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Areas (EBSAs) and in order to assess the impact of climate change and marine litter.

6. The representative of a Contracting Party indicated that the use of modelling approaches is limited or even wrong where there is a lack of data. He recommended to continue efforts in collecting more data for the next cycle assessment exercise.

7. The meeting endorsed the document considering the discussions and comments and invited SPA/RAC to submit the 2023 Med QSR Benthic Habitats (EO1) assessment to the EcAp coordination group for consideration.

2023 Med QSR Cetaceans (EO1) assessment (UNEP/MED WG.550/04 Rev.1)

8. The meeting acknowledged the importance and the richness of the data provided in the document. It thanked ACCOBAMS Secretariat for the valorous contribution thanks to ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative (ASI).

9. It emphasized the importance and urgency that ACCOBAMS finalise the necessary steps towards launching the next Basin Survey Initiative and encouraged the contracting parties to provide the necessary contributions.

10. The meeting recommended to more involve ACCOBAMS Secretariat and ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee in the elaboration of the assessment chapter on Cetaceans for the next cycle of IMAP.

11. The meeting endorsed the document considering the discussions and comments and invited SPA/RAC to submit the 2023 Med QSR Cetaceans (EO1) assessment to the EcAp coordination group for consideration.

2023 Med QSR Mediterranean Monk Seal (EO1) assessment (UNEP/MED WG.550/05 Rev.1)

12. The Meeting expressed its appreciation to the improvement made on the assessment report including the valuable data provided by the Contracting Parties, Partners and Experts.

13. The Meeting stressed the need to include recent information on monk seal from the Mid-term evaluation of the Mediterranean strategy for the conservation of monk seal presented in the document UNEP WG548/8 Rev.1

14. After discussing the assessment of the Good Environmental status (GES) related to Monk seal, the Meeting agreed to adopt the regional and sub-regional scale for the common indicator 3, 4 and 5.

15. The meeting endorsed the document considering the discussions and comments and invited SPA/RAC to submit the 2023 Med QSR Mediterranean Monk Seal (EO1) assessment to the EcAp coordination group for consideration.

2023 Med QSR Marine Turtles (EO1) assessment (UNEP/MED WG.550/06 Rev.1)

16. The meeting endorsed the document considering the discussions and comments and invited SPA/RAC to submit the 2023 Med QSR Marine Turtles (EO1) assessment to the EcAp coordination group for consideration.

2023 Med QSR Marine Birds (EO1) assessment (UNEP/MED WG.550/07 Rev.1)

17. The meeting endorsed the document considering the discussions and comments and invited SPA/RAC to submit the 2023 Med QSR Marine Birds (EO1) assessment to the EcAp coordination group for consideration.

EO2 – Non-indigenous species

2023 Med QSR Non-indigenous Species (EO2) assessment (UNEP/MED WG.550/08 Rev.1)

18. The representative of a Contracting Party highlighted the quality of the report and the improvement made on the version presented to this meeting. He expressed his satisfaction about the good coordination and collaboration with national experts and institutions.

19. The representative of another contracting Party stressed the importance of including (i) in the key message that the trend of NIS introduction is upwards, (ii) in the conclusions and recommendation of the section more emphasis on action to mitigate and to control NIS introduction. He informed the meeting that he provided written comments to the Secretariat. The meeting invited the secretariat to take into consideration, as appropriate, the provided comments and inputs.

20. The meeting endorsed the document considering the discussions and comments and invited SPA/RAC to submit the 2023 Med QSR Non-indigenous Species (EO2) assessment to the EcAp coordination group for consideration.

OE3 – Fisheries

2023 Med QSR Fisheries assessment (UNEP/MED WG.550/09)

21. The Meeting expressed its appreciation for the good collaboration between UNEP/MAP-SPA/RAC and GFCM Secretariat for the elaboration of the 2023 Med QSR section on ecological objective 3 (OE3, Fisheries).

22. The meeting endorsed the document considering the discussions and comments and invited SPA/RAC to submit the 2023 Med QSR Fisheries assessment to the EcAp coordination group for consideration.

Agenda Item 1.C.ii: Pollution CORMON (*Adopted Conclusions*)

23. Following the review and discussion of the Working Document UNEP/MED WG.550/10 “2023 Med QSR: The Proposal of the IMAP Pollution Cluster Chapters,” the Meeting reached the following conclusions with regards to the assessment of IMAP Common Indicators 13 and 14, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 26 and 27:

IMAP Common Indicators 13 and 14:

24. The Meeting approved the assessment findings related to eutrophication of the Aegean Sea Sub-division of the Aegean-Levantine Sea Sub-region, the Central Mediterranean Sea Sub-region, and the Western-Mediterranean Sea Sub-region by using satellite-derived Chla data for the application of the Simplified G/M comparison, along with the complementary assessment findings for the Tyrrhenian Sea Sub-division provided by application of the Ecological Quality Ratio (EQR) methodology. Further to incorporating the additional supplementary information provided by several participants, the Meeting recommended the integration of these assessment findings in the 2023 MED QSR within its submission for approval of the Meeting of the Ecosystem Coordination Group and the Meeting of MAP Focal Points which will be held in September 2023.

25. The Meeting approved the supplementary information included in the assessment findings related to the NEAT GES Assessment of the Adriatic Sea Sub-region, and the Simplified G/M comparison assessment of the Levantine Sea Sub-division, as provided in UNEP/MED WG.550/10, following up on their approval by the Meeting of CorMon Pollution (1-2 March) (UNEP/MED WG.556/3). The Meeting recommended the integration of these assessment findings in the 2023 MED QSR within its submission for approval of the Meeting of the Ecosystem Coordination Group and the Meeting of MAP Focal Points which will be held in September 2023.

IMAP Common Indicator 17:

26. The Meeting approved the supplementary information included in the NEAT assessment findings related to Common Indicator 17 in the Adriatic Sea Sub-region and the Western Mediterranean Sea as provided in UNEP/MED WG.550/10, along with a few supplementary additions included during the discussion, following up on their approval by the Meeting of CorMon Pollution (1-2 March) (UNEP/MED WG.556/3). The Meeting recommended the integration of these assessment findings in the 2023 MED QSR within its submission for approval of the Meeting of the Ecosystem Coordination Group and the Meeting of MAP Focal Points which will be held in September 2023.

IMAP Common Indicator 18:

27. The Meeting approved the supplementary information included in the assessment findings related to Common Indicator 18 as provided in UNEP/MED WG.550/10, following up on their approval by the Meeting of CorMon Pollution (1-2 March) (UNEP/MED WG.556/3). The Meeting recommended the integration of these assessment findings in the 2023 MED QSR within its submission for approval of the Meeting of the Ecosystem Coordination Group and the Meeting of MAP Focal Points which will be held in September 2023.

IMAP Common Indicator 19:

28. The Meeting approved the amended assessment findings for CI-19 as provided in UNEP/MED WG.550/10 and its Addendum 1 further to addressing requests provided by several participants of the Meeting of CorMon Pollution (1-2 March). The Meeting recommended the integration of these assessment findings in the 2023 MED QSR within its submission for approval of the Meeting of the Ecosystem Coordination Group and the Meeting of MAP Focal Points which will be held in September 2023.

IMAP Common Indicator 20:

29. The Meeting approved the supplementary information included in the assessment findings related to Common Indicator 20 as provided in UNEP/MED WG.550/10, along with a few supplementary additions included during the discussion, following up on their approval by the Meeting of CorMon Pollution (1-2 March) (UNEP/MED WG.556/3). The Meeting recommended the integration of these assessment findings in the 2023 MED QSR within its submission for approval of the Meeting of the Ecosystem Coordination Group and the Meeting of MAP Focal Points which will be held in September 2023.

IMAP Common Indicator 21:

30. The Meeting approved the amended assessment findings related to Common Indicator 21 as provided in UNEP/MED WG.550/10 further to consideration of the compatibility of one national assessment with the regional assessment findings, and by following up on their approval by the Meeting of CorMon Pollution (1-2 March) (UNEP/MED WG.556/3). The Meeting recommended the integration of these assessment findings in the 2023 MED QSR within its submission for approval of the Meeting of the Ecosystem Coordination Group and the Meeting of MAP Focal Points which will be held in September 2023.

IMAP Candidate Common Indicators 26 & 27:

31. The Meeting approved the supplementary information included in the assessment findings for cCI 26 and 27, as provided in UNEP/MED WG.550/10, following up on their approval by the Meeting of CorMon Pollution (1-2 March). The Meeting recommended the integration of these assessment findings in the 2023 MED QSR within its submission for approval of the Meeting of the Ecosystem Coordination Group and the Meeting of MAP Focal Points which will be held in September 2023

32. The Meeting:

- a. Expressed its appreciation for the support provided by the Partners and the Contracting Parties of UNEP/MAP regarding the preparation of the 2023 MED QSR IMAP Pollution Cluster.
- b. Took note of the measures as approved for IMAP CIs 13, 14, 17, 18, 20 and 21 by the Meeting of MED POL Focal Points (24-25 May 2023), along with the measures for IMAP CI 19 with a view to their integration in the 2023 MED QSR.

Agenda Item 1.C.iii: Coast and Hydrography CORMON (*Adopted Conclusions*)

33. The Meeting welcomed the work done and endorsed the proposed contents of the 2023 MED Quality Status Report (QSR) related to the Coast and Hydrography chapter, i.e. the working document UNEP/MED WG.550/11 “2023 on Med QSR Coast and Hydrography (EOs 7 and 8) assessments”.

34. The meeting concludes that the endorsed document UNEP/MED WG.550/11 is appropriate for the inclusion to the integrated 2023 QSR.

35. The meeting asked that the document as improved by this meeting UNEP/MED WG.550/11 to be available online in its entirety at the webpage dedicated to the 2023 QSR.

Agenda Item 1.C.iv: Marine Litter CORMON (*Adopted Conclusions*)

36. The Meeting approved the Secretariat’s proposal for updated Baseline Value as well as for establishing Threshold Value for floating microplastics (IMAP CI23), as provided in the Working Document UNEP/MED WG.550/13 and requested the Secretariat to revise the ones for seafloor macrolitter (IMAP CI23) by using the 15th percentile of the median value (i.e., 38 items/km²) provided that this value is only used for the 2023 MED QSR and that for the next MED QSR/assessment cycle this value will be subject to revision based on updated/new data.

37. The Meeting approved the use of these values for the preparation of the marine litter chapter for the 2023 MED QSR.

38. The Meeting approved the use of the updated Baseline Values (BV) and Threshold Values (TV), and after incorporating the respective revision for seafloor macro-litter, for the preparation of the marine litter chapter of the 2023 MED QSR.

39. The Meeting approved the final version of the marine litter assessments for beach macro-litter and floating microplastics of the 2023 MED QSR as provided in the Working Document UNEP/MED WG.550/12 and recommended their inclusion into the integrated 2023 MED QSR document.

40. The meeting requested the Secretariat to update the section on seafloor macro-litter and its assessment reflecting the updated Threshold Value (Q15 = 38 items/km²) for seafloor macro-litter into the marine litter assessment for 2023 MED QSR.

41. The meeting agreed to extract elements from Chapters 1, 4, 6 and 7 of UNEP/MED WG.550/12 to be incorporated into the integrated 2023 MED QSR document.

42. The Meeting approved the “Guidelines for Monitoring Riverine Inputs of Marine Litter” as provided in the Working Document UNEP/MED WG.550/14 and supported the development of common guidelines by the four Regional Seas (BSC, HELCOM, OSPAR, and UNEP/MAP).

Agenda Item 3: Review the Draft Content of the Common 2023 MED QSR Chapters

43. The Meeting approved the structure of the integrated 2023 MED QSR document as reflected in Working Document UNEP/MED WG.550/15 and requested the Secretariat to further advance with its finalization for submission to the upcoming EcAp Coordination Group Meeting.

44. The Meeting agreed with the approach of building the assessment thematic chapters of the 2023 MED QSR from selected sections from the final/updated version of Working Documents UNEP/MED WG.550/03 to UNEP/MED WG.550/12 as amended by the respective thematic CORMON sessions held on 27 June 2023.

45. The Meeting agreed with the proposal of the Secretariat to further look at the horizontal chapters of the 2023 MED QSR with a view of its enhancement and completion for submission to the EcAp Coordination Group Meeting together with the Executive Summary to be elaborated by the Secretariat.

46. The Meeting took note of the progress for the preparation of the Executive Summary of the 2023 MED QSR. The Meeting opted for the Executive Summary to include key messages and findings per each Ecological Objective for the consideration of the EcAp Coordination Group Meeting, highlighting to the extent possible areas of improvement and areas still requiring concrete actions.

47. The Meeting requested the Secretariat to send the draft executive Summary to the EcAp Coordination Group Meeting as early as possible, preferably by end of July 2023 encouraging the Contracting Parties to provide written feedback by 25 August 2023 that would allow the Secretariat to prepare a consolidated version of all comments received and disseminate it to the EcAp Coordination Group Meeting at least one week before the meeting.

48. The Meeting took note of the work undertaken by the Secretariat on the evaluation of the EcAp Roadmap, EcAp Governance and flow of work of CORMONs and other MAP Bodies and encouraged the discussion of the recommendation and outcome during the EcAp Coordination Group Meeting with regards to prospects for IMAP further enhancement and effective implementation.