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Agenda Item 3: Progress Report on Activities Carried Out during the 2022-2023 Biennium

Progress Report on Activities Carried Out during the 2022-2023 Biennium

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ABNJ	Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction
ACCOBAMS	Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and contiguous Atlantic area
ActionMed	Action Plans for Integrated Regional Monitoring Programmes, Coordinated Programmes of Measures and Addressing Data and Knowledge Gaps in Mediterranean Sea
BACs	Background Assessment Concentrations
BAT	Best Available Techniques
BBNJ	Biological diversity of areas Beyond National Jurisdiction
BC	Background Concentrations
BCRS	Barcelona Convention Reporting System
BD	Biodiversity focal area strategy (GEF)
BP	Blue Plan
BWM	Ballast Water Management
BWM Convention	International Convention for the Control and Management of Ships' Ballast Water and Sediments
CAMP(s)	Coastal Area Management Programme(s)
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CEDRE	Centre of Documentation, Research and Experimentation on Accidental Water Pollution
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CGI SCP	Cyprus, Greece, and Israel joint Sub-regional Marine Pollution Contingency Plan
CIESM	Mediterranean Science Commission (Commission Internationale pour l'Exploration Scientifique de la Méditerranée)
ClimVar & ICZM	Integration of climate variability and change into national strategies for the implementation of the ICZM Protocol in the Mediterranean
CME	Compliance, Monitoring and Enforcement
CMR	Carcinogenic, mutagenic or toxic to reproduction
CNRS-L	National Council for Scientific Research - Lebanon
COP	Conference of Parties
CORMON	Correspondence Group on Monitoring
CPs	Contracting Parties
CS	Civil Society
CU	Coordinating Unit
CVC	Climate Variability and Change
CW	Chemicals and Waste (GEF)
DeFishGear	Derelict fishing Gear Management System in the Adriatic Region
DG MARE	Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries (EC)
DOALOS	Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea
EACs	Environmental Assessment Concentrations
EASIN	European Alien Species Information Network
EBRD	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
EC	European Commission
ECA	Emission Control Area
EcAp	Ecosystem Approach

EcAp MED II	Mediterranean Implementation of the Ecosystem Approach, in coherence with the European Union (EU) Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD)
EcAp-MED I	Implementation of the Ecosystem Approach (EcAp) in the Mediterranean by the Contracting parties in the context of the Barcelona Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal region of the Mediterranean and its Protocols
ECP	Executive Coordination Panel
EDC	Ethylene dichloride
EEA	European Environment Agency
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
EIA Directive	Environmental Impact Assessment Directive
EIB	European Investment Bank
EMODnet	European Marine Observation and Data Network
EMSA	European Maritime Safety Agency
ENI	European Neighborhood Instrument
ENI SEIS II East	implementing the Shared Environmental Information System principles and practices in the Eastern Partnership countries
ENPI	European Neighborhood and Partnership Instrument
ENP-South	European Neighborhood Policy-South
EO	Ecological Objectives
ESM	Environmentally Sound Management
ETC/BD	European Topic Centre on Biological Diversity
EU	European Union
EUSAIR	EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations
FEBEA	European Federation of Ethical and Alternative Banks
FEDERCHIMICA	Federazione Nazionale dell'Industria Chimica
FEMISE	Forum Euroméditerranéen des Instituts de Sciences Économiques (the Euro-Mediterranean Forum of Institutes of Economic Sciences)
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GES	Good Environmental Status
GFCM	General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean
GIIN	Green Impact Investing Network Initiative
GIS	Geographic Information Systems
GIZ	Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
GloBallast	Global Ballast Water Management Project
H2020	Horizon 2020 Programme (EU)
HCMR	Hellenic Centre for Marine Research
HELCOM	Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission - Helsinki Commission
HELMEPA	Hellenic Marine Environment Protection Association
HNS	Hazardous and Noxious Substances
HW	Hazardous Wastes
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
ICZM	Integrated Coastal Zone Management
IMAP	Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme of the Mediterranean Sea and Coast and Related Assessment Criteria
IMO	International Maritime Organisation
INFO/RAC	Regional Activity Centre for Information and Communication
InfoMAP	UNEP/MAP Mediterranean knowledge platform
InforMEA	United Nations Information Portal on Multilateral Environmental Agreements
Interreg MED	Transnational European Cooperation Programme for the Mediterranean Area

IOGP	International Association of Oil and Gas Producers
IPA	Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (2014-2020)
ISPRA	Institute for Environmental Protection and Research (Italy)
ITCP	Integrated Technical Cooperation Programme
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
IUCN-Med	International Union for Conservation of Nature Centre for Mediterranean Cooperation
IUCN-ROWA	International Union for Conservation of Nature Regional Office for West Asia
IW	International Waters (GEF)
IWRS	Institute of Water of the Republic of Slovenia
JRC	Joint Research Centre
LBS	Land Based Sources
MAMIAS	Marine Mediterranean Invasive Alien Species
MAP	Mediterranean Action Plan
MAP II	Action Plan for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Sustainable Development of the Coastal Areas of the Mediterranean (MAP Phase II)
MaPAMed	Marine Protected Areas in the Mediterranean
MARPOL	International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships
MAU	Mediterranean Assistance Unit
MAVA	MAVA Fondation pour la nature
MBP	Mediterranean Biodiversity Platform
MCSD	Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development
MEA(s)	Multilateral Environmental Agreement(s)
MEA-IKM	Multilateral Environmental Agreement Information and Knowledge Management Initiative
MED POL	Programme for the Assessment and Control of Marine Pollution in the Mediterranean
MEDACES	Mediterranean database on cetaceans stranding
MEDASSET	Mediterranean Association to Save the Sea Turtles
MEDCIS	Support Mediterranean Member States towards coherent and Coordinated Implementation of the second phase of the MSFD
MedEcc	Network of Mediterranean Experts on Climate and Environmental Change
MedECC	Mediterranean Experts on Climate and Environmental Change
MEDITS	Mediterranean International Trawl Survey
Medkeyhabitats	Mapping of key marine habitats in the Mediterranean and promoting their conservation through the establishment of Specially Protected Areas of Mediterranean Importance (SPAMI)
MedPAN	Network of Marine Protected Areas managers in the Mediterranean
MedPartnership	Strategic Partnership for the Mediterranean Sea Large Marine Ecosystem
MedProgramme	GEF Mediterranean Sea Programme: Enhancing Environmental Security
MedSOS	MEDITERRANEAN SOS Network
MENELAS	Mediterranean Network of Law Enforcement Officials relating to MARPOL within the framework of the Barcelona Convention
MEPC	IMO's Marine Environment Protection Committee
MIO-ECSDE	Mediterranean Information Office for Environment, Culture and Sustainable Development
MOIG	Mediterranean Oil Industry Group
MONGOOS	Mediterranean Operational Network for the Global Ocean Observing System
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MPA(s)	Marine Protected Area(s)
MSFD	Marine Strategy Framework Directive
MSFD TG ML	MSFD Technical Group on Marine Litter

MSP	Marine Spatial Planning / Maritime Spatial Planning
MSSD	Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development
MTF	Mediterranean Trust Fund (MAP)
MTS	UNEP/MAP Mid-Term Strategy 2016-2021
NAP(s)	National Action Plan(s)
NCPs	National Contingency Plans
NGO(s)	Non-Governmental Organisation(s)
NIS	Non-Indigenous Species
NO _x	Nitrogen Oxides
NSN	North Sea Network of Investigators and Prosecutors
OFOG	Barcelona Convention Offshore Oil and Gas Group
OSPAR Convention	Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic
PAM	Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean
PAP/RAC	Priority Actions Programme Regional Activity Centre
PBT	Persistent Bioaccumulative Toxic
PCB	Polychlorinated biphenyl
PCU	Project Coordination Unit
PEGASO	People for Ecosystem-based Governance in Assessing Sustainable development of Ocean and coast (Project)
PIF	Project Implementation Form
PoM	Programmes of Measures
POSOW	Preparedness for Oil-polluted Shoreline clean-up and Oiled Wildlife interventions
PoW	Programme of Work
PRPI	Pollution Reduction and Prevention Investment
PRTR	Pollutant Release and Transfer Register
QSR	Quality Status Report
RAC(s)	Regional Activity Centre(s)
RCCAF	Regional Climate Change Adaptation Framework
RCO	Regional Coordinating Organization
RCREEE	Regional Center for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency
REMPEC	Regional Marine Pollution Emergency Response Centre for the Mediterranean Sea
RMS	Resource Mobilization Strategy
SAP-MED	Strategic Action Programme to Address Pollution from Land-Based Activities in the Mediterranean
SCCF	Special Climate Change Fund (GEF)
SCP	Sustainable Consumption and Production
SDG 14	Sustainable Development Goal 14 (Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development)
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SDI	Spatial Data Infrastructure
SDSN-MED	Mediterranean Sustainable Development Solutions Network
SEIS	Shared Environmental Information System
SIMWESTMED	Supporting Implementation of MSP in the Western Mediterranean region
SOI	Sustainable Ocean Initiative
SO _x	Sulphur Oxides
SPA(s)	Specially Protected Areas
SPAMI(s)	Specially Protected Area(s) of Mediterranean Importance
SPI	Science Policy Interface
SSSUP	Sant'Anna School of Advanced Studies of Pisa

SUPrEME	Supporting MSP in the Eastern Mediterranean
SWEEP-Net	Regional Solid Waste Exchange of Information and Expertise Network
SWIM	Sustainable Water Integrated Management
SWITCH-Med	Switching to more sustainable consumption and production in the Mediterranean
TUBITAK	Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey
TUDAV	Turkish Marine Research Foundation
UfM	Union for the Mediterranean
UfMS	Secretariat of the Union for the Mediterranean
UN	United Nations
UNCLOS	United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNEP/GPA	UNEP Global Programme of Action
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
VPvB	Very Persistent and very Bioaccumulative
WebGIS	Web Geographic Information Systems
WFD	Water Framework Directive (EU)
WWF-MedPO	WWF – Mediterranean Programme Office

I. Introduction

1. This report is a summary of activities and outputs carried out for the implementation of the 2022-2023 Programme of Work (PoW) of the United Nations Environment Programme /Mediterranean Action Plan (UNEP/MAP) adopted by the 22nd Meeting of the Contracting Parties (COP 22). The progress report highlights activities delivered in the period between January 2022 and June 2023 by the Coordinating Unit and the MAP Components. Information is aggregated at strategic outcome level per each of the Programmes of the UNEP/MAP Medium-Term Strategy 2022-2023 and of the POW 2022-2023, as well as information on Financial, Personnel, and Administrative matters. Detailed progress was reported to the MAP Components' Focal Points and the Bureau Meetings, which can be found in the reports of the Bureau and MAP Components' Focal Points Meetings (UNEP/MED WG.568/Inf.3 and UNEP/MED WG.568/Inf.9 respectively).

II. Main Activities/Outputs per Programme of Work (PoW) theme linked to specific outcome

Programme 1. Towards a pollution and litter free Mediterranean Sea and Coast embracing circular economy

Outcome 1.1. Strategies and Action Plans addressing marine litter and plastics developed and implemented through comprehensive, coherent and collaborative approaches

2. Under this outcome, several activities related to the implementation of the Regional Plan on Marine Litter Management were concluded in Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Israel, Lebanon, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Montenegro. With the support of the EU-funded Marine Litter MED II Project executed by MED POL, 14 Adopt-a-beach pilots are under implementation in 14 sites in Lebanon, Tunisia, Morocco and Algeria. Fishing-for-Litter practices are being implemented in Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia with the participation of more than 25 fishing vessels targeting sea-based sources of marine litter in 6 new ports and marinas. With the support of the Cooperation Agreement between UNEP/MAP and the Italian Ministry of Environment and Energy Security, Adopt-a-Beach (2 beaches per country) and Fishing-for-Litter (up to 5 fishermen per country) pilot actions are ongoing in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro. In Albania, work on these pilots is in the planning phase.

3. The capitalisation process for BeMed (Beyond Plastic Med) supported actions in islands was conducted by SCP/RAC (MedWaves). This process was captured in the report Hope for the Future: successful solutions for plastic pollution in the Mediterranean islands by the BeMed-Islands Community. This work contributes to the implementation of several provisions of the Regional Plan on Marine Litter at the local level.

4. Progress in the reduction and prevention of use of single use plastic (SUPs) items has been achieved in Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Israel and Lebanon. This was made possible through technical assistance provided through the EU-funded projects Marine Litter Med II and WES (Water and Environment Support project). In particular, a roadmap to implement extended producer responsibility (EPR) to beverage PET bottles in Morocco has been elaborated, as well as a roadmap tackling SUPs in Lebanon and started the implementation through fostering a voluntary agreement between the Ministry of Environment and the private sector.

5. Implementation of green public procurement in relation to single-use plastics, as well as engagement with hotels and restaurants to reduce SUPs consumption was undertaken by SCP/RAC (MedWaves) in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro. A partnership agreement has been concluded with GIZ for that purpose.

6. Pilots related to the enhanced management of marine litter from sea-based sources in ports and marinas were also implemented in Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia through the EU-funded "Marine Litter MED II" Project. This work entails pilot implementation, executed jointly between MED POL and REMPEC, in one marina regarding the handling of waste and application of tailored waste handling management plans as well as implementation of the region-wide guidelines approved in 2019 on the application of the no-special fee system.

Outcome 1.2. A holistic and efficient response to land and sea-based pollution, as a part of overall Ecosystem Approach policy for the Mediterranean, (chemicals, contaminants, eutrophication, noise, oil and emerging pollution) for a sustainable Mediterranean coastal and marine ecosystem is implemented

7. Under this outcome, several activities were undertaken to facilitate development of three new Regional Plans on Agriculture, Aquaculture and Urban Stormwater Management, as well as support implementation of the Regional Plans on Urban Wastewater Treatment and Sewage Sludge Management adopted by COP 22 in the framework of Article 15 of the LBS Protocol.

8. Three new Regional Plans on Agriculture, Aquaculture and Urban Stormwater Management were developed in line with COP 21 Decision IG.24/10 which requested the establishment of Working Groups of Experts designated by the Contracting Parties. Two meetings of the Working Groups were held in October 2022

and May 2023 (Reports of Meetings WG.539/6 and WG.562/7, respectively). During these meetings organized by the Secretariat (MED POL), the Contracting Parties discussed the proposed measures as well as their legally binding target dates. The final outcomes of the Working Groups Meetings were reviewed and approved by the Meeting of the MED POL Focal Points held on 24-26 May 2023 (Report of Meeting WG.563/15). All three Regional Plans are elaborated based on a set of guiding principles which constitute their building blocks. The measures address the regulatory frameworks and measures for implementation. The Regional Plans include technical annexes that provide guiding elements to support implementation of the measures. In parallel, a study to assess the costs of implementation of the main regional and national measures proposed in the three Regional Plans and their socioeconomic benefits was undertaken by the Secretariat (MED POL). The study aimed to enable informed decision making by the Contracting Parties for adoption of the Regional Plans was discussed during the 2nd Working Groups Meeting and presented as information document to the MED POL Focal Points Meeting for their consideration.

9. Technical guidelines for supporting implementation of the adopted Regional Plans for Urban Wastewater Treatment and Sewage Sludge Management were elaborated by the Secretariat (MED POL) and reviewed in a Regional Meeting of experts, hosted by the Government of Türkiye, in Ankara (22 and 23 November 2022). The Meeting discussed and approved the use by the Contracting Parties of three guidelines, on (a) available treatment technologies for urban wastewater and sewage sludge and decision support systems for their selection, (b) on pre-treatment standards of industrial effluents for industries discharging into urban wastewater collection systems, and (c) on regional standards on desalination technologies and available environmental standards for discharging brine to the marine environment. The Guidelines were presented to the Meeting of the MED POL Focal Points, which endorsed them and recommended their use by the Contracting Parties. This activity is co-organized by the GEF funded MedProgramme.

10. The Guidelines for Dumping of Inert Uncontaminated Geological Materials, which were adopted by the Contracting Parties in COP14 (Portoroz, Slovenia, 8-11 November 2005), were updated by the Secretariat (MED POL) in line with the requirements of Articles 4.2 and 6.2 of the Dumping Protocol. Proposed updates based on recent global and regional developments found in the London Convention/London Protocol (LC/LP) were approved with minor modifications in the “Meeting to Review the Updated Guidelines for the Dumping of Inert Uncontaminated Geological Materials and Sharing Best Practices to Support Implementation of the Dumping Protocol” held online on 13-14 February 2023. The updated Guidelines were reviewed by the Meeting of the MED POL Focal Points (24-26 May 2023) which endorsed their transmission to the MAP Focal Points Meeting.

11. Under Child Project (CP 1.1) “Reducing Pollution from Harmful Chemicals and Wastes in Mediterranean Hotspots and Measuring Progress to Impacts” of the GEF-funded MedProgramme, work is ongoing to conclude the disposal of 1350 tons of Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs), 650 tons of new POPs, as well as prevention and disposal of 50 tons of mercury (Hg) waste. Work is undertaken by the MedProgramme Coordinating Unit (MedPCU) with MED POL and SCP/RAC (MedWaves) as executing partners. Under Phase 1 of CP 1.1, disposal of 451 tons of PCB oil and PCB-containing equipment in Algeria and 271 tons of PCB-containing equipment in Lebanon is ongoing. A second POPs disposal phase is under planning upon completion or verification of PCB inventories in Algeria, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Morocco and Tunisia. For the preparation of mercury disposal activities, environmentally sound management plans (ESMs) are under preparation in Algeria, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Tunisia prior to the initiation of procurement tenders. Regarding assessments of POPs and/or Hg-contaminated sites, a mercury assessment in Tuzla in Bosnia and Herzegovina has been completed, while a POPs assessment in Montenegro and an Hg assessment in Tunisia are about to start. An inventory and sampling of new persistent organic pollutants (PFAs, PVCs) and Hg-containing thermometers is being undertaken by SCP/RAC (MedWaves) in Lebanon, and planned for either Morocco and/or Tunisia, as preparatory work for prevention pilots. Policy roadmaps to update the national legislation to the current commitments under the Stockholm Convention are being drafted. Capacity building and gender activities are being executed both at the regional and national level, including workshops and technical capacity support. Inventory on the import and use of new persistent organic pollutants (POPs) (namely PFAs in firefighting foams, HBCD in polystyrene foams and SCCPs in PVC material) were carried out with stakeholders from private and public sector engaged in three project countries: Lebanon, Morocco and Tunisia. Sampling protocols, schedule and sample collection kickstarted in April 2023 in Lebanon. Market research on safe alternatives available to replace current hazardous substances is currently underway as well as the development of policy roadmaps to update the national legislation to the current commitments under the Stockholm Convention. Both will be presented at the training events taking place in each country during the second and third quarters of 2023.

12. Technical brief for the development of a master-module on plastics and their additives in a circular economy was finalized and a training of trainers exercise was carried out to qualify members of teaching staff to deliver the course in the Universities of Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia (Master on Environmental Change Management in the Mediterranean). SCP/RAC (MedWaves) also delivered two webinars on “understanding the

circular economy for chemicals in plastics” earlier in 2022. The activity was funded through an agreement with the Basel- Rotterdam-Stockholm Conventions Secretariat (INPLASTICS project).

13. The Fifth Meeting of the Mediterranean Network of Law Enforcement Officials relating to MARPOL within the framework of the Barcelona Convention (MENELAS) was organized by REMPEC (Floriana, Malta, 22-23 February 2023). The Meeting discussed, amongst others, the draft common marine oil pollution detection/investigation report within the framework of the Barcelona Convention and MENELAS prepared by REMPEC, which was endorsed by the Fifteenth Meeting of the Focal Points of REMPEC (Kappara, Malta, 13-15 June 2023).

14. Contribution to the 2023 annual meeting of the North Sea Network of Investigators and Prosecutors (NSN) (Billund, Denmark / online, 25-26 April 2023) was provided by REMPEC. The Meeting promoted the work of MENELAS. Liaison with the Secretariat of the RAMOGE Agreement has been also undertaken by REMPEC to explore the possible participation of Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention to a coordinated aerial surveillance operation for illicit ship pollution discharges in the Mediterranean (OSCAR-MED) in 2023.

15. Two national workshops on “assessment of management capabilities and national systems to respond to marine oil pollution” and on “implementation of improvement plans” were organized by REMPEC on 22-23 November 2022 in Egypt and 18-19 April 2023 in Israel. With this work, a total of 11 national workshops were concluded on the level of the Mediterranean.

16. The the kick-off meeting to launch the operationalisation of synergy activities between the Sub-regional Contingency Plans (SCPs) and the Ad Hoc Meeting on the preparation of the 2024 real case exercise within the Sub-regional marine oil pollution contingency plan was organized by REMPEC. This Meeting was attended by Cyprus, Greece and Israel (SCP CGI) in the margins of the 5th Adriatic Conference on spill prevention, preparedness and response (ADRIASPILLCON 2023) (Opatija, Croatia, 16-18 May 2023). A second Ad hoc Meeting was organised on the margins of the Fifteenth Meeting of the Focal Points of REMPEC (Kappara, Malta, 13-15 June 2023), which agreed *inter alia* on the date of the exercise delivery (30-31 or 6-7 November 2024 in Cyprus).

17. In accordance with the programme for the development of the Adriatic Sub-regional Oil Spill Contingency Plan (SCP), the National Authorities of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Italy, Montenegro and Slovenia participated in the two meetings (Durrës, Albania, 8-9 November 2022 and Opatija, Croatia, 17-18 May 2023) for the development of the SCP. Both meetings were organized by REMPEC in collaboration with the Host Countries. Preparations for the Third and final Meeting to be held in Italy during the second week of November 2023 are underway with the aim to approve the final draft SCP as well as the Multilateral Agreement on the SCP and related Implementation Programme. Contact with the EU co-funded NAMIRS project was also undertaken by REMPEC in order to coordinate efforts and establish synergies in the Adriatic region.

18. The final version of the “Condensates - Chemical Intervention Guide for the Mediterranean” which was endorsed by the Fifteenth Meeting of the Focal Points of REMPEC (Kappara, Malta, 13-15 June 2023) was concluded by REMPEC with the support of Cedre (Centre of Documentation, Research and Experimentation on Accidental Water Pollution).

19. Support for the participation of Morocco and Tunisia to the RAMOGEPOL 2023 Exercise (Toulon, France, 9-11 May 2023) was provided by REMPEC and organised by the RAMOGE Agreement.

20. Establishment of a State of Play of Desalination under the WESR Med observatory is ongoing with the support of Plan Bleu which is finalizing related activities including acquisition of the updated DesalData database from Global Water Intelligence. Collaboration continues with the Agence Française de Développement (AFD) on a decision support tool for sustainable desalination investments.

Outcome 1.3. Systemic approaches for Circular Economy, eco-innovation as well as Sustainable Consumption and Production incorporated into key sectors of activity which are main sources of pollution

21. Implementation of the Switchers Support Programme is underway by SCP/RAC (MedWaves) with the aim of developing and supporting sustainable business development in the Mediterranean countries. The Switchers Support National Partnerships (SSNPs) are established in 8 Southern Mediterranean countries bringing together 100+ private and public Business Support Organizations (BSOs) supporting the creation of sustainable businesses. Regional exchange and networking have been enhanced between BSOs. The Switchers Toolbox continues to make available for entrepreneurs, businesses, experts and BSOs sustainable business development tools and methodologies and counts with 6,400+ green entrepreneurs, 350+ experts and almost 200 BSOs as registered users. In collaboration with local BSOs, SCP/RAC (MedWaves) has reached 1,300 Green Entrepreneurs trained for Sustainable Business Development (52% women) and 117 Green Start-ups being incubated (56% women) in 10 countries.

22. The Switchers Support Programme offer has been increased with two new services with the aim of fostering market deals along specific value chains. The Open Innovation Platform and methodology has enabled BSO and innovation enablers to launch business development challenges in the sector of Textiles & Fashion. More than thirty challenges have been launched and seven of them successfully matched with solutions offered by entrepreneurs and start-ups. Solutions have been supported with technical support and received an innovation vouchers of 20.000 €. Next phase will enable innovation challenges in the sectors of sustainable tourism and food processing.

23. Access to market services has been also enhanced via the Switchers Products Platform; a web-based tool displaying green products and services, coupled with a direct and digital marketing strategy. The Switchers Community's member will be supported to upload their products and services and to establish contacts with retailers and corporate buyers.

24. An intensive dissemination and awareness-raising activity on Access to Sustainable Finance has been carried out in the period covered by this report. National task forces have been set up in Morocco, Tunisia, Jordan and Palestine, providing information and knowledge on the opportunities offered by the green transition in the Mediterranean. Four National Outlooks on Sustainable Finance have been published covering the experience of the task forces. At regional level, a policy brief to support the establishment of a Sustainable Finance Observatory has been released and Guidelines on Sustainable Access to Finance have been completed to be published by July 2023.

25. A public-private fund facility will be soon launched in cooperation with SEFEA Impact, an Italian fund manager which will increase funding operation and investments of the SwitchersFund, created within the framework of the Switchers Support Programme. The fund's governance setting, and business plan have been finalized, and external financial institutions are engaged to support the first investment round of the fund.

Outcome 1.4. One Health approach developed and implemented, linking human and ecosystems health with pollution reduction and prevention, taking into account lessons learnt from the COVID-19 pandemic

26. Letters were sent to all Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention by the UNEP/MAP Coordinator in relation to the implementation of Decision IG.25/14 on the designation of the Mediterranean Sea as an Emission Control Area for Sulphur Oxides. The Letter especially encourages the Contracting Parties to actively participate, in line with a pre-agreed common approach, in the deliberations on the draft amendments to MARPOL Annex VI concerning the Med SOX ECA at MEPC 79 in accordance with the road map. This initiative was undertaken further to the submission of the joint and coordinated proposal on the designation of the Med SOX ECA, set out in the Annex to Decision IG.25/14, on 4 February 2022, by France, on behalf of the Contracting Parties, as well as Member States of the European Union and the European Commission to the 78th session of the IMO's Marine Environment Protection Committee (MEPC 78) (London, UK, 6-10 June 2022), which endorsed the proposal and approved the related draft amendments to Annex VI to the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL).

27. The President of the Bureau and representatives from the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention, as well as the UNEP/MAP Coordinator and a representative from REMPEC, attended the MEPC 79 which adopted the amendments to MARPOL Annex VI concerning the Med SOX ECA, with an expected date of entry into effective application on 1 May 2025. The President of the Bureau and the UNEP/MAP Coordinator held a bilateral meeting with the IMO Secretary General, Mr Kitack Lim, on the margins of MEPC 79 to discuss issues of common interest.

28. The work on the designation of the Mediterranean Sea Emission Control Area for Sulphur Oxides, and Particular Matter (Med SOX ECA), has been further promoted in various fora by the Secretariat and REMPEC, notably at:

- a. the REMPEC side event entitled "Mediterranean efforts to reduce ship air pollution" held in the margins of the UNFCCC COP 27 (Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt, 15 November 2022);
- b. the 1st Steering Committee Meeting of the SAFEMED V Project (Lisbon, Portugal, 23 November 2022);
- c. the UNEP/MAP-REMPEC side event entitled "Emission Control Area for Sulphur Oxides and Particulate Matter: The Mediterranean experience (Med SOX ECA)";
- d. the informal meeting on the possible designation of the Northeast Atlantic as an Emission Control Area held in the margins of the 79th Session of the International Maritime Organization (IMO)'s Marine Environment Protection Committee (MEPC 79) (London, UK, 12-16 December 2022);
- e. the ECA Workshop organised by Portuguese NGOs/authorities (Lisbon, Portugal, 11 May 2023);
- f. the Med SOX ECA compliance workshop organised by Danish NGOs/authorities (Copenhagen, Denmark, 22 May 2023); and

- g. the Six quarters webinar “Cleaner shipping in the Mediterranean” organised by the LIFE4MEDECA Project in the margins of the EU Green Week (online, 6 June 2023).

29. Follow-up on the draft national reports on the assessment of the needs was undertaken by REMPEC further to submission to the Contracting Parties that had not yet ratified MARPOL Annex VI. This work was based on the subsequent consultations undertaken by REMPEC with Algeria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Egypt, Israel, Lebanon and Libya, with a view to finalising these reports, including the respective work plans and timetables related to their ratification and effective implementation of MARPOL Annex VI and Med SOX ECA.

30. The regional fundraising strategy to support Mediterranean Coastal States concerning the ratification and effective implementation of MARPOL Annex VI, as well as the implementation of the Med SOX ECA and linked compliance measures, was presented by REMPEC to the First Coordination Meeting on the Mediterranean Strategy for the Prevention of, Preparedness, and Response to Marine Pollution from Ships (2022-2031) (Floriana, Malta, 29 November-1 December 2022). The Meeting established a joint intersessional working group for Common Strategic Objective (CSO) designated as CSO 2 for Climate Change and CSO 3 for Air Emissions from Ships. Dialogue with relevant stakeholders was also pursued by REMPEC to provide support through technical cooperation and capacity building activities, as well as financial support and resource mobilisation to address Contracting Parties’ needs.

31. Regarding other aspects of the implementation of Decision IG.25/14, the Contracting Parties were invited by REMPEC to nominate their representatives serving on the Nitrogen Oxides (NOX) ECA(s) Technical Committee of Experts. This committee is mandated to develop and validate the Terms of Reference for a specific Technical and Feasibility Study to assess the relevant existing and on-going studies as well as gather further knowledge on the possible designation of the Mediterranean Sea Emission Control Area for Nitrogen Oxides (Med NOX ECA).

Programme 2. Towards Healthy Mediterranean Ecosystems and Enhanced Biodiversity

Outcome 2.1. Ecosystem resilience improved through restoration of those with best regeneration potential

32. A Draft Restoration Programme of *Pinna nobilis* was reviewed and approved by the 16th Meeting of SPA/BD Focal Points (Malta, 22-24 May 2023) and invited SPA/RAC to submit it, as amended, to the MAP Focal Points meeting and to COP 23 for adoption.

33. Developed in the context of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021-2030); led by UNEP and FAO, and coordinated by UNEP Regional Office of Europe in cooperation with GRID-Arendal, the “5 Seas Cooperation for Ecosystem Restoration” project is a new initiative aimed at catalysing the effective restoration and regeneration of the marine environment in five sea basins: Baltic Sea, Black Sea, Caspian Sea, Mediterranean Sea, and North-East Atlantic basin. The project partners include the Black Sea Commission, the HELCOM Commission, the OSPAR Commission, the Tehran Convention Secretariat, and the UNEP/MAP – Barcelona Convention Secretariat, including SPA/RAC, Plan Bleu/RAC, and PAP/RAC. The partnership is complemented by the CBD Secretariat, providing a global multilateral perspective. The project aims to contribute to the long-term goal of protecting, restoring and regenerating the ecological integrity and biological diversity of the five sea basins, safeguarding their ecological value and ecosystem services for future generations. The project will combine work at the local scale through a series of specific “case studies”, with trans-basin scale work on knowledge exchange and capacity building across all project partners. The project partners will work together to create a handbook on marine ecosystem restoration and regeneration that will draw from the project’s case studies and trans-regional knowledge exchange and capacity building programme. This handbook will be aimed at the global ocean community as well as actors working within the five sea basins of the project.

34. The UNEP Ecosystems division funded a preliminary study to define the terms of reference for a regional project on restoration and sustainable management of the Mediterranean forests. Plan Bleu/RAC prepared the concept note, which is currently under presentation to UNEP leadership, before defining a strategy of submission to potential donors.

35. On 18 November 2022, in the framework of cooperation with the Permanent Secretariat of Pelagos, the Interreg Mediterranean Biodiversity Protection Community (MBPC), to which Plan Bleu/RAC is one of the main partners, organized a technical workshop on the theme: “The Community for the Protection of Biodiversity in the Mediterranean in action: supporting the conservation of cetaceans in the Pelagos Sanctuary”. This event presented interesting results and tools from the MBPC projects, which could be useful to the Pelagos Agreement and be offered to competent authorities to help them achieve their management objectives in the years to come. The final event of the MBPC took place in Brussels on 2-4 November 2022, entitled: “The Mediterranean leading the way: A cooperative framework to strengthen area-based nature conservation actions” to share the

results of several years of work, including community tools, experiences, lessons learned and best practices that will contribute to regional biodiversity conservation goals and climate agendas

36. Plan Bleu is partner of the consortium which was awarded an EuroMed follow-up project entitled Dialogue4Nature. This will allow to continue developing activities to promote ecosystem restoration and nature-based solutions (see project fiche)

37. On 26 October 2022, the Horizon 2020 WaterLANDS project and the Interreg NWE Care-Peat project organized a joint event in Brussels to discuss the recommendations developed under a policy guidance document with stakeholders and to advocate for stronger targets for peatlands in new proposed EU nature restoration law. This event highlighted the crucial role of peatlands for biodiversity, carbon storage, water cycles and climate resilience across Europe. In partnership with ERINN Innovation and the Tour du Valat, Plan Bleu participated in the production of a video on Mediterranean wetlands and their importance in the new European bill on nature restoration. On 8 November 2022, Plan Bleu/RAC represented the WaterLANDS project to share its activities during a side event at the COP14 of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands in Geneva, Switzerland. From 26 to 29 April 2023, Plan Bleu/RAC attended the annual general meeting of the WaterLANDS project in Sofia, Bulgaria, to present the results of the report on governance systems for successful ecological restoration of wetlands. Plan Bleu/RAC released end May 2023 a publication entitled “Characterising supportive governance and policy”.

Outcome 2.2. Comprehensive, coherent Mediterranean network of well-managed MPAs and OECMs in place, expanded, effective and sustainable

38. The post-2020 roadmap for Mediterranean MPAs, part of the Mediterranean MPA forum collaborative process, which aims to support achieving the goals committed at global and regional levels such as through the Post-2020 Regional Strategy for MCPAs and OECMs in the Mediterranean, is finalised in English, and translated into French and Arabic. The three versions, with the MPA Forum layout, will be launched soon.

39. A study aiming at assessing the objectives and complementarities among different area-based conservation measures and developing recommendations for new designations to enhance their connectivity and effectiveness is being launched in June 2023 by SPA/RAC. The study is aimed to be presented at a workshop on OECMs planned for the second semester 2023.

40. Under the EU-funded IMAP-MPA Project, SPA/RAC is carrying out a regional capacity building programme for improving Mediterranean Marine Protected Areas (MPA) management and ensuring their sustainability, focusing on two main topics (management effectiveness of MPAs and the socio-economic value of MPAs). As the second part of this regional capacity-building programme, a second training course on “Socio-economic Sustainability of Mediterranean Marine Protected Areas” was held in Gokova, Dalaman, Türkiye as follows: (i) 13 November 2022: training for Mentors (one of the participants who have a senior profile with excellent knowledge of the MPA situation in their country); and (ii) 14–18 November 2022: training for all the proposed participants, including Mentors, for 5 days, including a one-day field trip. 22 participants from 7 countries (Algeria, Egypt, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Tunisia and Türkiye) joined the training developed and delivered by 4 women trainers.

41. Following the adoption of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and its related Monitoring framework, the Ad hoc Group of Experts for Marine Protected Areas in the Mediterranean (AGEM) supported SPA/RAC in developing a draft Evaluation and Monitoring Framework for the Post-2020 Regional Strategy for MCPAs and OECMs in the Mediterranean, through a dedicated working group formed by AGEM voluntary members that met online on 31 March and 5 April 2023. The draft Evaluation and Monitoring framework was reviewed and endorsed by the 16th Meeting of SPA/BD Focal Points which agreed on its submission to the MAP focal points meeting and COP 23 for adoption.

42. Within the framework of the EU-funded IMAP-MPA project, SPA/RAC has been jointly collaborating with the Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency in the development of a National MCPAs/OECMs Strategy for the Mediterranean Egyptian Coast. The draft national strategy is being produced considering both conservation objectives and the requirement for MPAs to be integrated within their economic and social environment, based on a consultation process involving related stakeholders at national and local levels. It has been discussed during a consultation workshop with relevant stakeholders held on 6 June 2023.

43. Under the same EU-funded IMAP-MPA project, SPA/RAC continued supporting the relevant national authorities of Algeria, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia in developing and/or updating and implementing the management plans of Rachgoun Island future MPA (Algeria), Tyre Coast Nature Reserve (Lebanon), Shash MPA (Libya), Jbel Moussa future MPA (Morocco) and Kerkennah Islands future MCPA (Tunisia). This support included several types of activities covering local stakeholders’ engagement, improving effective management, surveillance, monitoring, ensuring sustainable financing, communication, awareness-raising, capacity-building, networking and exchange of experience and best practices.

44. Under the GEF Child Project 3.1 in Libya, the draft law on protected areas elaborated in collaboration between SPA/RAC and the Ministry of Environment has been endorsed by the national stakeholders and adapted and tailored by the legislative department of the Ministry of Environment to the appropriate format in December 2022. In March 2023, the draft law has been channelled through the official procedures of the government and submitted to the parliament for adoption by 2023. On the other hand, under the same GEF Child Project 3.1, SPA/RAC and the Ministry of Environment of Libya have revised the terms of reference in view of launching in June 2023 a call for consultants to update the National Strategy on MCPAs in line with the global and Mediterranean agendas and targets including the identification and reporting of OECMs.

45. Following a decision by COP 21, SPA/RAC has developed the adopted “Updated Format for the periodic review of Specially Protected Areas of Mediterranean Importance (SPAMIs)” into an online bilingual “SPAMI Evaluation System”. The SPAMI Evaluation System was tested during the 2022-2023 SPAMI ordinary review and feedback was provided by the evaluation teams to SPA/RAC.

46. The SPA/BD or MAP Focal Points of Albania, Algeria, France and Italy were contacted early 2023 in order to launch the SPAMI ordinary reviews of the five concerned SPAMIs: Karaburun Sazan National Marine Park (Albania), Banc des Kabyles Marine Reserve (Algeria), Habibas Islands (Algeria), Calanques National Park (France), and Portofino Marine Protected Area (Italy). Mixed national-independent Technical Advisory Commissions were established by the national authorities and SPA/RAC, and evaluation processes were run for the concerned SPAMIs during March and April 2023, except for the Albanian SPAMI, for which SPA/RAC calls to appoint the necessary team (including a national SPA/BD Focal Point) remained unanswered. Consequently, only the outcomes of the ordinary reviews of Algerian, French and Italian SPAMIs were presented to the 16th Meeting of SPA/BD Focal Points (Malta, 22-24 May 2023), which requested SPA/RAC to revise the Format for the periodic review of SPAMIs and especially the scoring system under sections 4.1 and 4.2 to propose it for adoption by COP 23. SPA/RAC prepared a revised format and proposed it for electronic review by the SPA/BD Focal Points and the independent experts involved in the SPAMI evaluations.

47. Within the framework of the EU-funded ENSERES project, SPA/RAC awarded six four sub-grants to involve local civil society organisations (CSOs) in the management and sustainable development in and around SPAMIs, through the implementation of on-field activities in four (4) SPAMIs: the Tyre Coast SPAMI (Lebanon) and two (2) in the Kneiss Islands SPAMI (Tunisia). SPA/RAC is also coordinating activities to scale-up good practices and enable networking among SPAMI managers, particularly through a dedicated twinning programme.

48. Twinning between the Tyre Coast SPAMI (Lebanon) and Medes Islands SPAMI (Spain) and between the Kneiss Islands SPAMI (Tunisia) and Parc Marin de la Côte Bleue SPAMI (France) are ongoing; Four (4) visits to the concerned SPAMIs have been organized to exchange best practices among managers and with local stakeholders.

49. Within the framework of the Bilateral Cooperation Agreement between the UNEP/MAP and the Italian Ministry of Environment and Energy Security, three Twinning agreements were signed during the SPAMI Twinning Programme Kick off meeting (June 8th, 2023, Rome-Italy) between three (3) Italian SPAMIs namely Miramare MPA, Porto Cesareo MPA and Penisola del Sinis- Isola di Mal di Ventre MPA with Palm Island (Lebanon), El Hoceima (Morocco) and Zembra & Zembretta (Tunisia), respectively. Six exchange visits between the twinned SPAMIs will be organized between June and September 2023 to exchange best practices among managers and with local stakeholders. A call for small projects to involve local civil society organisations (CSOs) in the management and sustainable development in and around SPAMIs will be launched during July 2023 and six small grants will be awarded to CSOs from the twinned SPAMIs area. Consultation for the designation of a specialized firm to maintain and improve the SPAMI Collaborative Platform was launched in June 2023.

Outcome 2.3. Mediterranean endangered and threatened species and key habitats in favourable status of conservation

50. SPA/RAC started implementation of the Global Environment Facility (GEF)-funded project “Fisheries and Ecosystem Based Management for the Blue Economy of the Mediterranean (FishEBM MED)” as part of the MedProgramme led by the Coordinating Unit during the period 2023-2025. The main objective of the project is to reverse the over-exploitation of select commercial living marine resources in the Mediterranean by enhancing the capacity of Mediterranean countries to manage fisheries. The project will be implemented by the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM), UNEP/MAP and SPA/RAC, with oversight from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and UNEP as the GEF Implementing Agencies. The project was officially launched in February 2023 with an inception workshop and the first Project Steering Committee meeting held in a hybrid modality at the FAO headquarters and online.

51. A multidisciplinary group of experts has been established through the designation by the Contracting Parties of national experts with experience in phytoplankton, zooplankton and oceanography (Hydrology,

Chlorophyll-a, etc.). The group met on 5 April 2023 to define parameters allowing to use phytoplankton and zooplankton for relevant IMAP biodiversity indicators and elaborate the List of Reference of Pelagic Habitat Types in the Mediterranean Sea so that it can be used, where necessary, as a basis for identifying reference pelagic habitats to be monitored and assessed at the national level under the Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme of the Mediterranean Sea and Coast and Related Assessment Criteria. The conclusions and recommendations were endorsed by the 16th Meeting of SPA/BD Focal Points in view to be submitted to the MAP Focal Points meeting and COP 23 for consideration.

52. Desk studies of the most important marine caves are expected in Tunisia and Morocco in June 2023 and the studies are planned to be ready by September 2023. A training will be organised further to the approval of the related ToR in early September 2023 in collaboration with the ATUTAX scientific NGO. It will be organised back-to-back with a workshop to discuss progress towards common monitoring methods that could be considered for caves, including modern technologies. Furthermore, support is being provided to the institute of marine biology (Montenegro) to contribute to the implementation of IMAP through the execution of the national monitoring programme in MPAs including the site concerned by the Medkeyhabitats I project (Platamuni MPA and Ratac). The final report including all georeferenced collected data is expected by the end of 2023.

53. All activities related to monitoring are reported under Programme 6, as they are relevant to IMAP.

Outcome 2.4. Non-indigenous species introductions minimized and introduction pathways under control.

54. The updating of the Regional Action Plan on non-indigenous species and species introduction was endorsed by the 16th meeting Focal Point in view to be submitted to the MAP Focal Points meeting and COP 23 for consideration. The updating took into consideration the Ballast water management strategy for the Mediterranean Sea (2022-2027)

55. The ToRs for the elaboration of Guidelines for controlling the vectors of introduction into the Mediterranean of NIS and invasive marine species and Guide for risk analysis assessing the impacts of the introduction of NIS updated considering the Mediterranean BWM, were relaunched and the updating should be finalised by the end of 2023.

56. Egypt and Libya have proposed activities which are under finalization, along the following lines: (a) Libya: Awareness days on blue crab to be organised during the summer of 2023 (15 June 2023). The activity will be organised, after consultation with the Libyan focal point, in collaboration with the Libyan Society for Artisanal Fishery Friend (LSAFF); (b) Egypt: the study of buffer fish will be implemented during summer 2023 by the Arab Union for Sustainable Development and the Environment (AUSDE) after consultation with the national SPA/BD focal point.

57. MAMIAS web application is planned to be deployed on the SPA/RAC production server during fall 2023 in order to be tested with selected user before its official release and use during planned national training on data collection on NIS within the new GEF FISHEBM Med project.

58. REMPEC prepared, in consultation with IMO and, in cooperation with SPA/RAC, Regional Harmonised Procedures for the uniform implementation of the International Convention for the BWM Convention in the Mediterranean Sea, which were reviewed and endorsed by the Fifteenth Meeting of the Focal Points of REMPEC (Kappara, Malta, 13-15 June 2023). REMPEC also organised, in close cooperation with IMO, the IMO Regional Workshop on the BWM Convention (Kappara, Malta, 20-21 March 2023) and is preparing a draft resources mobilisation strategy to implement the Ballast Water Management Strategy for the Mediterranean Sea (2022-2027) adopted by COP 22. Activities related to the management of ships' biofouling in the Mediterranean will be implemented within the framework of the Memorandum of Understanding between UNEP and the Italian Ministry of Environment and Energy Security (MASE), with support from the Project Coordinating Unit of the Global Environment Facility (GEF)-United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)-IMO GloFouling Partnerships Project.

Programme 3. Towards a Climate Resilient Mediterranean

Outcome 3.1. Legal, policy and institutional framework strengthened at the regional and national level to efficiently address climate change related challenges (flooding, erosion, land degradation, pollution, disasters etc.)

59. Within GEF/SCCF project funded by a Special Climate Change Fund of GEF, PAP/RAC has been implementing activities related to coastal adaptation to climate change in complement to the activities of GEF MedProgramme in Montenegro and Morocco. Presentations of the climate change issues were included in all meetings related to the preparation of the Coastal Plans for Boka Kotorska in Montenegro and Tanger-Tetouan-Al Hoceima in Morocco, and national experts in the field have been recruited to work together with the other national team members. The activities are being implemented in close cooperation with Plan Bleu. All

workshops organised with national stakeholders (until now three in each country) used the “Climagine” participatory method to obtain their feedback. The same approach will be followed until the end of the project foreseen for end of 2023.

60. Within the scope of the GEF/SCCF project, GWP Med conducted a comprehensive assessment and examination of the currently accessible tools and guidelines in the Mediterranean area for obtaining domestic and international funding for adaptation purposes. The review has been completed, and draft guidelines have been prepared. A preliminary set of criteria has been formulated to choose two countries for the purpose of developing proposals to secure international financial support specifically aimed at climate change adaptation in coastal zones.

Outcome 3.2. Nature-based, technical solutions promoting prevention or reduction of the impact of climate change on coastal and marine ecosystems and increase resilience to climatic variability and change

61. The UNEP/MAP team, the Secretariat and MAP Components, and especially SPA/RAC and Plan Bleu/RAC, worked with partners involved in the IUCN Congress’s Mediterranean Pavilion, to synthesize and publish the knowledge displayed during the events which have been taking place on this pavilion, with a strong focus on nature-based solutions. A catalogue of Mediterranean Nature-Based solutions has been published.

62. Following the signature of the agreement between UNEP/MAP and the French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, which secured funding for a pilot in one Mediterranean country to mobilise and implement innovative solutions to reduce GHG emissions from ships in selected ports, including energy efficiency and decarbonisation, REMPEC is preparing a study on the opportunities for greening regular passenger and freight lines between France and Algeria. REMPEC has also been contributing to the work of the WestMED Technical Group on Green Shipping and participated in the 2023 WestMED Stakeholders Conference (Malta, 22 June 2023).

63. One of the issues raised during the Climagine workshops in Montenegro and Morocco was the need to prepare a guidance document on possible nature-based solutions for adaptation taking into account different coastal typologies. PAP/RAC has initiated this methodological work in early 2023 and presented its draft version at the Focal Points meeting, which has shown great interest for this kind of document and has recommended PAP/RAC to finalise it as soon as possible.

Outcome 3.3. Better understanding and knowledge of climate change and its impacts on environment and development

64. MedECC Secretariat continues coordinating work for the elaboration of the three Special Reports: 1) Climate and environmental coastal risks, 2) Climate-water-energy-food-ecosystems nexus, and 3) Environmental change, conflicts and human migration. The First Order Draft was circulated for comments and suggestions to the registered MedECC scientific reviewers, and the Summary for Policy Makers to the MedECC community, in May 2023. The Zero Order Draft of the two other reports is currently under coordinated review by all authors. The First Order Draft, and the Table of Contents of the two Zero Order Draft, have been submitted to Plan Bleu Focal Points meeting as InfoDoc.

65. Plan Bleu/RAC is a partner in the successful consortium which applied to the European Environment Agency’s call for the European Topic Center on Climate Adaptation. Plan Bleu contributes to the task related to drafting the report on challenges and solutions related to climate change in Europe’s seas.

Outcome 3.4. Mitigation of Climate Change progressed through Circular Economy, increased resource efficiency and carbon neutrality business strategies

66. SCP/RAC (MedWaves) and Plan/Bleu/RAC supported, technically and financially, the Mediterranean Pavilion, hosted at COP27 in Sharm el Sheikh. The Pavilion hosted two side-events, led by SCP/RAC (MedWaves), focusing on the link between SCP, Circular Economy and Climate Change mitigation strategies. The two events (1.5 Degree Lifestyle: sustainable consumption policies enabling climate action in the Mediterranean & Realizing circularity for a just transition towards net-zero economies in the Mediterranean) highlighted the importance of sustainable consumption and production patterns to achieve net-zero economies in the Region and will be used as starting point to further analyse the nexus between Circular Economy and climate change mitigation strategies.

67. During the MedCOP Climate event held in Tangier, Morocco from June 22-23, the UNEP/MAP Secretariat and PB/RAC were present and actively participated in two dedicated hubs. These hubs focused on the topics of "Sustainable Management of Water Resources and Blue Economy" and "Nature Based Solutions".

Programme 4. Towards the sustainable use of coastal and marine resources including circular and blue economy

Outcome 4.1. Sustainability of coastal and marine resources achieved through the synergetic implementation of planning and management approaches, including the adequate consideration of Land-Sea Interactions (LSI)

68. The work on the preparation of regional Coastal plan (Schéma régional du littoral) for the region Tangier-Tetouan-Al Hoceima in Morocco and Boka Kotorska Bay in Montenegro progresses well. All thematic documents were drafted by the national expert teams and discussed during a series of consultation meetings with all relevant national and local stakeholders. In both areas, interviews with main stakeholders were organised in order to get more detailed insight and collect necessary data. Moreover, a set of sustainability indicators was proposed for both areas and some initial measures were drafted to be presented and discussed in September 2023.

69. Back-to-back with the Plan Bleu/RAC's workshop on coastal risks, held in Tangier on 7 December 2022, PAP/RAC organized, on 8 December 2022, a coordination meeting on the progress of preparation of the coastal management plan, along with more than 40 regional Moroccan stakeholders, as well as partners from Plan Bleu/RAC, GWP-Med and MedProgramme Coordinating Unit. Several coordination issues were clarified and good progress with all PAP/RAC-led activities could be stated.

70. On 4 April 2023, representatives of three municipalities overlooking the Boka Kotorska Bay-Herceg Novi, Kotor and Tivat - met with PAP/RAC and Montenegrin Ministry of Ecology, Spatial Development and Urbanism officials, to jointly discuss the progress made in the development of the Coastal Management Plan for Boka Kotorska Bay and agree on the best way forward.

71. Launching of the National ICZM Strategy for Lebanon was on hold for an entire year due to the difficult economic and financial situation in the country. Still, regular online exchanges with the GEF Operational FP and PAP FP were held, which finally allowed to join forces with colleagues from GWP-Med, IHP-UNESCO and Plan Bleu and hold a Multi-Stakeholder Consultations, in Beirut, on 27-28 February 2023. Wide and committed participation of the numerous stakeholders coming from different governmental and non-governmental organisations, academia and private sector allowed to discuss solutions, interlinkages and priorities for water, energy, food, and environment, including coastal zone and its aquifers. One day before, on 26 February 2023, PAP/RAC team held a progress meeting to discuss several other MedProgramme activities contributing directly to the National ICZM Strategy i.e. comparative assessment of the coastal legislation in Lebanon, preliminary calculations of the land cover change, and the findings of the ICZM Strategy scoping phase.

72. Under CP 2.1 of the MedProgramme, UNESCO IHP completed the first phase of the work for the characterization, assessment and vulnerability of the priority aquifers and related ecosystems (Morocco, Tunisia, Lebanon, Albania and Montenegro), in coordination with the national competent institutions. The reports for the 4 priority coastal aquifers are available. UNESCO organized a virtual training session on Conjunctive Management of Surface and Groundwater with beneficiary countries on 22 February 2023 which served as an introduction to the Regional Training on Conjunctive Management of Surface and Groundwater (Valencia, Spain, 17-19 May 2023).

73. Within the Transboundary CAMP for the Otranto area, the first workshop and awareness raising event took place in Vlora, Albania, on 26 January 2023 as an opportunity for stakeholders and local actors (including prefecture, municipalities, academic institutions, local agencies, civil society) to be informed about the progress made so far, as well as tackling relevant topics like the recycling of fishing gear. A similar two-day event in the Puglia region, including the third meeting of the CAMP Steering Committee, Mid-Term Conference and ICZM training, was held in Brindisi, Italy, on 10-11 May 2023. Another awareness raising workshop on cross-country coastal and marine management cooperation and a training course on Fishing for Litter was organised on 31 May in Otranto, Italy.

74. The second Steering Committee meeting of the CAMP Israel took place online on 7 November 2022 to discuss workplan and timeline until May 2023 and prepare the first face-to-face meeting, which took place in Tel Aviv, on 24-25 January 2023, to ensure the involvement and active participation of the coastal municipalities in the project. This first face-to-face meeting included a training session on ICZM for coastal communities, focused on the basic principles of ICZM and an overview of the constraints and opportunities for implementing ICZM in coastal municipalities of Israel. The training, which raised great interest among local stakeholders and actors, was concluded with a session on Ecological Footprint (EF) as an opportunity to learn more about the EF concept and methodology, as one of the broadly used measures of humanity's effect upon the environment.

75. CAMP Israel was promoted during a side-event entitled 'Coastal cities at the forefront of climate change' organized on 17 November 2022 by Coastal Authorities Forum Israel and Tel Aviv University as part of the Mediterranean Pavilion at COP 27 in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt. Its relevance for an improved management of the

Israeli shores was highlighted by the Israeli Minister of Environmental Protection.

76. In the framework of the GEF MedProgramme (Child Project 2.1 and SCCF Project), the fourth and final Tangier-Tetouan-Al Hoceima Region Coastal Plan/Climagine 4 workshop was organised and hosted by PAP/RAC and Plan Bleu in Tangier on 21 June 2023. Moving forward, the elaboration of the Coastal Plan and finalisation of the Climagine participatory foresight process will carry on over the coming months, in preparation of the official submission of the Coastal Plan to the relevant authorities in October 2023.

77. Plan Bleu co-led and moderated a thematic hub on Sustainable Water Management with the Union for the Mediterranean at MEDCOP Climate (Tangier, 22-23 June 2023), which welcomed high-level representatives from Morocco and Spain. It also allowed several partners of the GEF MedProgramme to collectively present the MedProgramme's work underway in Tangier-Tetouan-Al Hoceima region in terms of climate change adaptation, ICZM and the WEF Nexus, with representatives from UNEP/MAP, Plan Bleu, PAP/RAC and GWP-Med.

78. On 21 May 2023, the last session of the in-depth training course on integrated coastal zone management (ICZM) was held in Tel Aviv, as one of the key capacity-building activities in the framework of CAMP Israel. This last training session was used to hand out the certificates of attendance to the training course participants and, most importantly, showcase the lessons learned, reflect on future developments on the local and national levels and share personal insights into the course. Along with the participation of the PAP/RAC Focal Point in Israel, several other honourable guests joined the last session to promote sustainable coastal development: two Israeli parliament members who represent the coastal lobby, Herzliya Mayor and coastal authority's chairman, and Dean of Social Studies Faculty in Tel Aviv University. On 25 May 2023, a regional workshop on coastal legislation was organized in the PAP/RAC premises in Split, Croatia, within the framework of Child project 2.1. of the GEF MedProgramme. During this workshop, 5 experts from Algeria, France, Lebanon, Morocco, and Tunisia shared their good practices in terms of legal frameworks relating to the coast. Following these presentations, the representatives of the countries eligible for the GEF were able to ask questions to understand the details of the legal texts as well as the methods of application. These exchanges of good practices are inspiring for all Mediterranean countries and are an opportunity to reflect on new legislative proposals for the implementation of the ICZM Protocol or the preparation for its ratification. At the end of the workshop, more than 30 priority recommendations were identified and will be presented to all contracting parties in a consolidated document in the coming months.

79. A meeting of experts was held on 26-27 May 2023 in the PAP/RAC premises in Split, Croatia, always within the framework of GEF MedProgramme Child project 2.1. That was an occasion to present and discuss the preliminary analyses of the calculations of Land Cover Change candidate indicator for the Lebanese coastline along with selected examples from the area of Adriatic Sea. The discussion was marked by a contribution in knowledge of different aspects related to the spatial planning and remote sensing topics. One of the goals of the workshop was to discuss key inputs for establishment of the GES for the candidate indicator, as a part of the future Quality Status Report. Experts from various fields contributed in defining the key questions and points directly attached to this broad subject of analysis. An overview of selected experiences from projects in Croatia, Lebanon and Montenegro was given. Last part of the workshop encompassed Coastal zone planning and management with the general objectives towards National ICZM Strategy and Draft ICZM law for Lebanon.

80. Work is ongoing on the main projects which support the implementation of the ICZM Protocol, including the CAMP projects, preparation of coastal plans for the Boka Kotorska Bay (Montenegro) and Tangier-Tetouan-Al Hoceima Region (Morocco) in the framework of the GEF MedProgramme, and the IMAP Cluster on Coast and Hydrography. At the PAP/RAC Focal Points meeting, a document was presented on Marine Spatial Planning in the Mediterranean and the main elements of the Guidelines regarding Nature-based Solutions for adaptation to climate change in different coastal typologies. Both were appreciated by the representatives of the Contracting Parties, who contributed with their suggestions, offering additional support and exchange of know-how.

Outcome 4.2. Sustainable Blue and Green Economy tools and approaches in the context of Sustainable Development and MSSD implementation

81. In the current biennium, the Secretariat, in coordination with EC Directorate General for the Environment (DG ENV) and with the UNEP Liaison Office to the European Union, has advanced its cooperation with the EC Directorate General for Maritime Affairs and Fishery (DG MARE) as well as with the Directorate General for Regional and Urban policies (DG REGIO) and with the Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR), with a special focus on reinforced cooperation in relevant macro-regional Strategies, as well as potential support from the relevant services of the EC to the review process of the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development, maximizing synergies as appropriate, with the new EU agenda for the South Mediterranean.

82. The Secretariat, as Observer of the WestMed Initiative Steering Committee, has actively contributed to the WestMed Ministerial Declaration that has been endorsed on 23 June 2023 in Malta, calling also for a reinforced

cooperation with the Barcelona Convention and with the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (MSSD). Concrete follow up actions are being planned in order to further support the cooperation with DG MARE.

83. As part of the MoU between UNEP/MAP and UFM, bilateral meetings have been held to identify cooperation modalities in the framework of the Blue Mediterranean Partnership and its Blue Economy Fund, the new multi donor instrument, led by EBRD, EIB, EU and donors' countries for investments on Blue Economy pipeline of bankable projects in the non-EU MED area.

84. After 6 years of work, the horizontal Interreg Med project of sustainable tourism (Sustainable Tourism Community - STC) (2019-2022), bringing together more than 200 entities working on 30 sustainable tourism projects in the Mediterranean and in the continuity of the previous project entitled BlueTourMed (2016-2019), concluded its activities. During the 9th "Environment for Europe" Ministerial Conference organized by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, in Nicosia (Cyprus, 5-7 October 2022), Plan Bleu/RAC participated in the side event entitled "Tourism and circularity for sustainable development in the Mediterranean" (see below). On 11 November 2023, the STC organized a hybrid conference "Climate action plans for tourism in the Mediterranean: a vision for the future" in the framework of COP27 of UNFCCC to discuss with European policy makers and representatives of international organizations and local authorities of the potential of the tourism sector to adapt to climate change and mitigate its negative consequences on the environment and Mediterranean communities. On 15 November 2023, Plan Bleu/RAC took part in the launch day of the Green Horizonte Festival in Calvi to present its activities concerning sustainable tourism. On 19 December, a webinar was organized on "Cooperation success stories and best practices: future opportunities for sustainable tourism in North Macedonia", to learn more about the main results of the STC as well as to present some good practices developed by four modular projects. Plan Bleu/RAC published the Catalogue of Best Practices on Sustainable Tourism in the Mediterranean and the State of Play of Tourism: A roadmap for a Greener, Inclusive and resilient tourism in the Mediterranean. The STC also published the Sustainable Tourism Community Catalogue of Outputs gathering 41 of the most tangible outputs produced by the STC, and a handbook on "How to use EU funding for Sustainable tourism".

85. Plan Bleu/RAC published guidelines for sustainable tourism, with a focus on sustainable cruise and leisure boating. Those guidelines have been used by French institutions working on the "Document Stratégique de Façade" for the French Mediterranean coast.⁸⁸ Under activity 4.2.1, Plan Bleu/RAC oversees work carried out by the Regional Center for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency (RCREEE) concerning a state of the art of regulations and strategies for the development of offshore wind power in Mediterranean countries. This study should take stock of the national situations and show the regional trend in terms of offshore wind development potential and the associated regulations and strategies, current and future. Plan Bleu also works on a state of the art of national regulations, achievements and strategies in the Mediterranean countries in terms of the use of non-conventional water (REUSE). The main action to be carried out within the framework of this is an update and updating of the Blue Plan technical notebook n°11 of 2012 (content, graphs, figures, tables and maps). Particular attention will be paid to reliability and to the definition of REUSE evaluation figures and indicators. This study should take stock of the national situations and show the regional trend in terms of the development potential of water reuse and the associated regulations and strategies, current and future. A first presentation was made during an event dedicated to reuse organized in Bonifacio on 1 June 2023.

86. The Secretariat has continued working on the implementation of the Mediterranean Strategy of Sustainable Development (MSSD) 2016-2025 and has initiated the process of MSSD review. Further information on the MSSD is provided under Programme 5.

87. Plan Bleu/RAC is a partner of the consortium awarded the follow-up EuroMed project Community4Tourism which will allow to further develop activities for sustainable tourism. In partnership with "Hautes Etudes Commerciales" (HEC), a major post-graduate school in France, Plan Bleu/RAC prepared a study on the benefits of digitalization in the context of the blue economy, which is going to be published in 2023.

Outcome 4.3. Innovative environmental management and economic instruments implemented for the protection and efficient use of coastal and marine resources

88. Preliminary reports on the assessment of environmentally harmful subsidies in the Mediterranean and on conservative easement tools are currently elaborated. A first draft of the latter has been shared as an InfoDoc to the Plan Bleu Focal Point meeting.

89. The Secretariat has also become member of the Overarching Steering Committee (SC) of the recently launched BlueMissionMed project supporting the Mediterranean sea basin in the implementation of the EU Mission Restore our Ocean and Waters and financed by DG Research and Innovation (DG RTD) and ensuring appropriate links and synergies with the Science We Need for the Mediterranean Sea We Want (SciNMeet) Programme, developed in the framework of the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development.

Outcome 4.4. Measures defined within the Mediterranean Offshore Action Plan applied at regional level and by each Contracting Party within their jurisdiction to ensure the safety of offshore activities and reduce their potential impact on the marine environment and its ecosystem

90. The Intersessional Correspondence Groups (ICGs) of the Barcelona Convention Offshore Oil and Gas Group (OFOG) Sub-Group on Environmental Impact were launched by REMPEC in November 2022. A consultant was also recruited to support with efforts to provide programme implementation support for the practical implementation of the Offshore Protocol in February 2023. The Fourth OFOG Sub-Group on Environmental Impact Meeting was organized by REMPEC (Floriana, Malta, 23-24 May 2023). The Meeting aimed at: i) developing regional offshore standards and guidelines on the removal (decommissioning) of installations and the related financial aspects, ii) establishing an offshore monitoring programme, and iii) proceeding with a technical review of the Annexes to the Offshore Protocol. In accordance with the outcomes of the Fourth OFOG Sub-Group Meeting, preparation of a training activity on the Disposal of Oil and Oily Mixtures and the Use and Disposal of Drilling Fluids and Cuttings, as well as on the Use and Discharge of Harmful or Noxious Substances and Materials, was initiated by REMPEC. The training activity will be held in Malta in November 2023.

Programme 5: Governance

Outcome 5.1. Effective Implementation and Enforcement by the Contracting Parties of the Barcelona Convention, its Protocols, MAP Policies, including Ecosystem Approach related COP decisions, the MSSD and Programmes of Measures achieved at regional and national levels

91. The mandate of the COP 22 Programme of Work and Budget 2022-2023 (Decision IG.25/19) require the advancement the implementation of Ecosystem Approach (EcAp) in the Mediterranean and IMAP in coherence with regional and global developments. In this context an independent evaluation of the implementation of the EcAp Roadmap 2008-2021 was conducted and an analysis of recent developments at global and regional level relevant to EcAp and IMAP was undertaken. These reports underpinned the preparation of technical and policy proposals on the main elements for a renewed UNEP/MAP Ecosystem Approach policy, with the vision of enhancing and strengthening the delivery of the UNEP/MAP-Barcelona Convention system's EcAp mandate in the future. It will be presented to MAP Focal Points and COP 23 in 2023 for their consideration on giving a full mandate for elaboration of a renewed EcAp policy in the biennium 2024-2025.

92. The Secretariat, with contribution of ECP and IMAP Task Force - developed a governance proposal for EcAp implementation to align it with COP22 Decision IG.25/03. It aims at clarifying the flow of work between Correspondence Groups and other decision-making bodies of the MAP system as well as providing clarity on the relationship between MAP Components and the Coordinating Unit for EcAp related products. The 9th EcAp Coordination Group considered and approved the proposal (5 July 2022). It will be presented to the EcAp Coordination Group meeting on 11 September 2023 for transmission to the MAP Focal Points and COP 23 for their consideration.

93. Under CORMON and CORESA guidance, the Secretariat, through the IMAP Task Force and with the support of the EcAp MED III project, and in close collaboration with several partners is finalizing the 2023 Mediterranean Quality Status Report (2023 MED QSR) for its submission to the 10th EcAp Coordination Group meeting, MAP Focal Points Meeting and COP 23. In March 2023, the MAP Components presented draft QSR assessment chapters at dedicated thematic CORMONs meetings per Cluster, and the draft socioeconomic characteristics chapter was presented to a COR ESA meeting. Post-CORMONs and COR ESA revisions to the chapters were consolidated into a single integrated QSR document for the consideration of the Meeting of Integrated CORMONs (Athens, Greece, 27-28 June 2023). The Meeting approved the structure of the integrated 2023 MED QSR document and requested the Secretariat to further advance with its finalization for submission to the upcoming EcAp Coordination Group Meeting (Istanbul, Türkiye, 11 September 2023). The EU-funded projects IMAP-MPA, EcAp MED III, and Marine Litter MED II projects continue to support beneficiary countries to implement the IMAP and to submit their national monitoring data to the Info System, supported by the MAP Components and particularly INFO/RAC.

94. The conceptual analysis of operational annexes to the MAP Data Policy related to different MAP data flows (BCRS, IMAP, NBB, etc.) were initialized by INFO/RAC, to start the implementation at regional and, as appropriate, at national levels. A main structure model has been developed and customization is ongoing. The development of specific rules for the different data flows on the basis of the bilateral meeting with Contracting Parties is ongoing.

95. The 24th Meeting of the MCSDD Steering Committee (Athens, Greece, 14-15 December 2022) reviewed the progress of the work of the MCSDD and implementation of the MSSD, including the MSSD Review Process, which is expected to be launched during the next biennium (2024-2025), the latter corresponding also with the

last biennium of implementation of the MSSD 2016-2025. The proposal for the review of the MSSD was further elaborated by the Secretariat and was presented and endorsed at the 20th Meeting of the MCSD (Marseille, France, 14-16 June 2023).

96. The Compliance Committee, in the course of its 18th Meeting (Athens, Greece, 29-30 June 2022), adopted for the first time since its creation findings and recommendations concerning compliance by a Contracting Party with the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols. The Secretariat has communicated timely with the concerned Party (Spain) and the communicant in accordance with the processes foreseen in the Rules of Procedure. The Party concerned provided timely its response to the findings and recommendations, including on measures set up for the recovery of Mar Menor. The Secretariat has received a new communication regarding a possible case of non-compliance by a Contracting Party at the end of 2022. The Secretariat has transmitted the communication to the Party Concerned, in accordance to the Rules of Procedure, and has received the response from the concerned Party which was then discussed at the 19th Compliance Committee Meeting (Athens, Greece, 4-5 July 2023). The process is ongoing in line with the agreed procedures to verify the admissibility criteria.

97. In accordance with Decision IG 25/2 (Antalya, Türkiye, 7-10 December 2021), a consultation process with the Contracting Parties to review the proposed amendments to the Procedures and Mechanisms on Compliance under the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols (Procedures and Mechanisms) and to the Rules of Procedure of the Compliance Committee (Rules of Procedure) was held on 31st January 2023 through teleconference. The meeting agreed that the revised Procedures and Mechanisms for Compliance, as resulting from this meeting, together with the documents prepared by the Secretariat concerning paragraph 28 and the interim period, would be submitted to the Focal Points meeting in September 2023, in preparation for their consideration by COP 23.

Outcome 5.2. Systemic strengthening and effective functioning and delivery of MAP decision-making and advisory bodies ensured, and efficiency enhanced with new digital approaches

98. In line with the decision-making process, the regular meetings of the governing and advisory bodies of the UNEP/MAP-Barcelona Convention system have been convened with an active participation of representatives of Contracting Parties (CPs) and stakeholders, while in some cases efforts should be made in order for meetings to be attended by all CPs, to the extent possible.

99. During the current biennium, the Coordinating Unit and MAP Components organized the following main governance meetings:

- (a) The 92nd (Istanbul, Türkiye, 24-25 March 2022), 93rd (Thessaloniki, Greece, 30 November-1 December 2022) and 94th (Izola, Slovenia, 20-21 June 2023) Meetings of the Bureau;
- (b) The 18th (Athens, Greece, 29-30 June 2022) and 19th (Athens, Greece, 4-5 July 2023) Compliance Committee Meetings;
- (c) The MAP Components' Focal Points meetings, as follows: The PAP/RAC Focal Points Meeting (Split, Croatia, 23-24 May 2023); the 16th Meeting of the SPA/BD Thematic Focal Points (Sliema, Malta, 22-24 May 2023); the Meeting of the MED POL Focal Points (Athens, Greece, 24-26 May 2023); the SCP/RAC Focal Points Meeting (Barcelona, Spain, 20-21 June 2023); the INFO/RAC Focal Points Meeting (Rome, Italy, 7-8 June 2023); the Plan Bleu/RAC Focal Points Meeting (Marseille, France, 12-13 June 2023); and the 15th Meeting of the Focal Points of REMPEC (Kappara, Malta, 13-15 June 2023);
- (d) The Consultation meeting with Contracting Parties on possible amendments of Compliance Procedures and Mechanisms (Teleconference, 31 January 2023);
- (e) The 20th Meeting of the MCSD (Marseille, France, 14-16 June 2023) in close collaboration with France and with the support of Plan Bleu/RAC, as well as the 23rd Meeting of the MCSD Steering Committee (Teleconference, 1-2 June 2022) and the 24th Meeting of the MCSD Steering Committee (Athens, Greece, 14-15 December 2022);
- (f) The Fourth Meeting of the Barcelona Convention Offshore Oil and Gas Group (OFOG - Floriana, Malta, 23-24 May 2023);
- (g) Five meetings of the Executive Coordination Panel (ECP), namely ECP 46 (Rome, Italy, 16-17 February 2022), ECP 47 (Split, Croatia, 6-7 April 2022), ECP 48 (Floriana, Malta, 3-5 October 2022), ECP 49 (Athens, Greece, 26-27 January 2023), ECP 50 (Marseille, France, 27-28 March 2023) took place in person, while further, informal ECP meetings also took place in an *ad hoc* basis and a last ECP meeting is envisaged in the eve of the MAP Focal Points meeting in September 2023;
- (h) The 9th Meeting of the Ecosystem Approach Coordination Group (Videoconference, 5 July 2022);

- (i) The CORMON/CORESA meetings as follows: Meeting of the Ecosystem Approach Correspondence Group on Monitoring Pollution (Videoconference, 27 and 30 March 2022); Meeting of the Ecosystem Approach Correspondence Group on Monitoring Biodiversity and Fisheries (Videoconference, 28-29 March 2022); Meeting of the Ecosystem Approach Correspondence Group on Monitoring Marine Litter (Videoconference, 31 March 2022); Meeting of the Ecosystem Approach Correspondence Group on Monitoring Pollution (Athens, Greece 1-2 March 2023); Meeting of the Ecosystem Approach Correspondence Group on Monitoring Marine Litter (Athens, Greece 3 March 2023); Meeting of the Ecosystem Approach Correspondence Group on Monitoring Biodiversity and Fisheries (Athens, Greece, 9-10 March 2023); Meeting of the Ecosystem Approach Correspondence Group on Monitoring Coast and Hydrography (Marseille, France, 28-29 March 2023); Meeting of the Ecosystem Approach Correspondence Group on Economic and Social Analysis (Marseille, France and videoconference, 30 March 2023); Integrated Meeting of the Ecosystem Approach Correspondence Groups (Athens, Greece, 27-28 June 2023).

100. The above meetings reviewed progress achieved and provided policy and technical guidance for successfully delivering key outputs mandated by COP 22. They contributed to the effective implementation of the UNEP/MAP Medium-Term Strategy 2022-2027, the Programme of Work and Budget 2022-2023 and the relevant COP Decisions and moved forward the preparations for the 2023 MAP Focal Points Meeting and the 23rd Meeting of the Contracting Parties (COP 23) (Portoroz, Slovenia, 5-8 December 2023). More information on the above meetings can be found in documents UNEP/MED WG.515/Inf.3, Inf.5, Inf.7, Inf.8, Inf.9, Inf.14 and Inf.21.

101. The Bilateral Cooperation Agreement signed with the Italian Ministry of Environment and Energy Security (MASE) on 2 November 2021, which was integrated into the COP 22 Decision on the MAP PoW and Budget 2022-2023 linked with specific PoW activities, as well as in the Project Document and Legal Instruments prepared for its operationalisation is under implementation. A Junior Professional Officer (JPO) came on board in the Coordinating Unit on 1 November 2022, to support the coordination of the Bilateral Agreement, funded at 50% by the MASE funds, as well as a UN Volunteer to provide programmatic and financial assistance to the Agreement implementation. An Addendum to the MoU with MASE was signed on 17 November 2022 to support the full implementation of several activities of the UNEP/MAP PoW 2022-2023 that had non-secured or not sufficient external resources, through an additional allocation of 544,000 EUR, thus bringing the total amount allocated under the Bilateral Cooperation Agreement to 3,344,000 EUR.

102. The Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs of France allocated, through an Agreement signed with UNEP, a voluntary contribution of 1,143,000 EUR to support a number of activities of the MAP PoW 2022-2023, in line with the axes of the PAMEX. This contribution, which is fully integrated into the MAP PoW and Budget 2022-2023 was operationalised and disbursed to the respective Regional Activity Centres through amendment of the Project Document and legal instruments with RACs, signed in November 2022. An expert was seconded by France to the Coordinating Unit to coordinate the implementation of PAMEX and ensure synergies with the UNEP/MAP Barcelona Convention and work under other regional instruments and initiatives. A regional steering committee meeting of the PAMEX with the countries and organisations that have endorsed it was organised in Athens, Greece, in January 2023.

103. The Secretariat proceeded with the preparation of an updated Resource Mobilisation Strategy (RMS) for the MTS 2022-2027, which will be presented as an Annex to the Governance decision submitted to the MAP Focal Points.

104. GEF 8 is open for project proposals, and the Secretariat is considering to participate in the preparation and execution of the relevant child projects related to the following Integrated Programs: (a) Food Systems Integrated Program; (b) Ecosystem Restoration Integrated Program; (c) Circular Solutions to Plastic Pollution Integrated Program; and (d) Elimination of Hazardous Chemicals from Supply Chains Integrated Program.

105. The Secretariat has successfully secured three new EU-funded follow-on projects to IMAp-MPA, EcAp MED III, and Marine Litter MED II: "Bolstering Mediterranean biodiversity and MCPAs for nature" (SEMPA) €4 million euros, will commence 23 August 2023; "Supporting the Southern Mediterranean Contracting Parties in implementing ecosystem approach to achieve GES" (EcAp Med PLUS), US\$2.2 million, to commence March 2024; and Marine Litter MED PLUS: Towards a litter-free Mediterranean (ML Med PLUS), US\$1.2 million, to commence March 2024. The Project Documents and Budgets are under finalisation.

106. A Donor Conference for Biodiversity and Area-based Conservation in the Mediterranean was organised by SPA/RAC on 16 March 2023, in Paris (France). The conference gathered key donors and funding agencies in a roundtable and included the presentation of a four projects' portfolio. Since the project portfolio aims at implementing the Post-2020 SAPBIO and Post-2020 Strategy for MCPAs and OECMs, an overview of their content (outcomes, outputs, targets, implementation plans, concerned countries and budget estimate) was

presented to potential donors. The report of the conference as well as the report of the SAPBIO Advisory Committee Meeting (online, 31 January 2023) and the Resource mobilisation strategy document were presented as information documents to the 16th Meeting of the SPA/BD Focal Points. Several exchanges on the Resource Mobilisation Strategy elaboration process were made with the SAPBIO National Correspondents since early 2022. The 9th Meeting of SAPBIO National Correspondents was held on 24 February 2023 in Barcelona (Spain) in order to inform the Contracting Parties on the Resource Mobilization Strategy process and to consult them and have their support and involvement in the projects' portfolio preparation. The report of the meeting was also presented as an information document to the 16th Meeting of the SPA/BD Focal Points. As a follow-up to the donor conference, bilateral meetings are being held with the attending donors during which they express their interest in specific actions and, we are now in the process of planning with them the next steps to undertake according to their modus operandi, topics of interest and partners involved in the project portfolio.

Outcome 5.3. Policy coherence and complementarity ensured among relevant work at global, regional and national levels and among MAP-Barcelona Convention system's policy and regulatory instruments

107. UNEP/MAP took part in the 2022 UN Ocean Conference (Lisbon, Portugal, 27 June –1 July 2022) to convey the voice of the Mediterranean, and share lessons learned from almost five decades of multilateral ocean governance, including on issues pertaining to plastic pollution where significant progress has been made on the normative front. Three side-events organized/co-organized by UNEP/MAP addressed important elements of the regional response to the triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution.

108. UNEP/MAP took part in the Mediterranean Pavilion located in the Blue Zone at UNFCCC COP 27 (6-18 November 2022, Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt). The Mediterranean Pavilion is the first of its kind to be set up at a UN Climate Change Conference. It is an initiative led by the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) together with UNEP/MAP and the PRIMA Foundation, along with a coalition of institutions dealing with climate action in the region. Two UNEP/MAP Components, Plan Bleu/RAC and SCP/RAC (MedWaves) (the UNEP/MAP Regional Activity Centre for sustainable consumption and production) were among the founding and funding partners of this initiative. The Network of Mediterranean Experts on Environmental and Climate Change (MedECC) acted as a scientific advisory council for the Pavilion activities. The Mediterranean Pavilion operated as a hub for activities and partnerships undertaken by regional public institutions, civil society organisations and private sector entities with the aim of catalysing an effective and rapid transition to a climate-resilient future. Approximately 60 events were organized at the Mediterranean Pavilion by Contracting Parties and partners including 6 events organized by the Secretariat and MAP Components, and two events organized by MedECC.

109. SPA/RAC participated in the 15th Conference of Parties to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity in Montreal, Canada, 7-19 December 2022. A booth (The Mediterranean Corner) has been set up at the conference exhibition area, that aims to showcase solutions for effective biodiversity conservation from the Mediterranean, especially those linked to marine protected areas, and discuss present and future strategies and actions to support the GBF goals and targets. The Mediterranean Corner hosted 14 "Talks for Nature" of 10-15 minutes each, made by 20 speakers attending the COP or joining by videoconference. These talks presented experiences, projects and initiatives from Mediterranean organizations and stakeholders, including the Barcelona Convention. Linking the global and regional levels and following the adoption of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and its related Monitoring framework, the Ad hoc Group of Experts for Marine Protected Areas in the Mediterranean (AGEM) supported SPA/RAC in developing a draft Evaluation and Monitoring Framework for the Post-2020 Regional Strategy for MCPAs and OECMs in the Mediterranean.

110. UNECE Ninth Ministerial Conference "Environment for Europe" - Sustainable Infrastructure, Circular Tourism and Education for Sustainable Development, Nicosia, Cyprus, 5-7 October 2022: The Environment for Europe (EfE) process has been launched in 1991 to support efforts from UNECE Member States to advance environmental governance. 14 UNECE Member States are also Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention, and it was the first time that the EfE Ministerial Conference was organized in a Mediterranean country. The UNEP/MAP side event on "Tourism and Circularity for Sustainable Development in the Mediterranean" was held on 5 October, co-organized by UNEP/MAP and Plan Bleu/RAC. The Third High-level Meeting of Education and Environment Ministries was organized as part of the Conference, with a strong involvement of MIO-ECSDE (MAP Partner) through the Mediterranean Strategy and Action Plan on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), as an integral part of the MSSD. The UNEP/MAP Coordinator participated in this High-Level Event following a personal invitation by the Ministries of the Environment and of Education of Cyprus.

111. The Secretariat has established an informal Task Force under UNEP/MAP to enable coordination among Contracting Party representatives during the negotiations of the new global legally binding instrument on plastic pollution including in the marine environment in view of implementation of the UNEA 5.2 Resolution regarding the development of a legally binding instrument on plastic pollution. The Secretariat is actively participating in the process and was present at the second session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution (Paris, France, 29 May-2 June 2023).

112. The Secretariat participated at the Third Joint Technical Meeting - Identification of Synergies and Possible Cooperation Activities in Marine Region between representatives of the Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context (Espoo Convention) its Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment. The meeting focused on possible cooperation activities to promote the effective application of SEA and transboundary EIA in marine regions – with a focus on activities for 2024–2026; on recommendations, proposals, further steps to be proposed to the Meeting of the Parties to the Espoo Convention (9th session) and Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol on SEA (5th session) on 12 - 15 December 2023; and, on selected example(s) of good practice in the application of the Espoo Convention and the Protocol on SEA in marine regions.

113. Following a bilateral meeting in 2023, there is growing interest for collaboration with OECD, who is expanding its outreach to non-OECD members through its External Committee, which addresses the MENA region relevant to the Mediterranean. It is also increasingly integrating the issue of Oceans, as the item is spanning across several directorates of the organization (Environment directorate; Trade directorate; Agriculture, Fisheries; Science, Technology and Innovation directorate). A sustainable ocean initiative set up in 2019 mapped out ocean-related work across the house including country diagnostic on oceans, country programs with a green growth strategy review in Egypt and Morocco. OECD could support MAP in designing an ambitious new MSSD, inter alia, with general statistic and data to make the environmental and economic dimension converge. Furthermore, there is a lot of interest to collaborate with respect to Environmental Peer Review processes.

114. With regards to Blue Economy work at global level, UNEP/MAP has been in contact and is cooperating with the UNEP Regional Seas Programme for the preparation of a UNEP-led comprehensive Strategic Guide on Blue Economy, which is intended for use by the Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans in elaborating regional Blue Economy strategies as well as supporting the formulation of national Blue Economy strategies and action plans. This activity is an outcome of the discussions held during the UNEP Regional Seas Programme 22nd Annual Meeting, held in May 2022. The Secretariat aims at continuing contributing to relevant regional and global processes on Sustainable Blue Economy, building on and sharing its solid experiences, in particular in areas related to the shipping sector, sustainable aquaculture, sustainable tourism, offshore activities, ICZM and MSP etc.

115. The Secretariat participated in the panel of the thematic session on the promotion of the principles of the Aarhus Convention in international forums, which was held during the 27th meeting of the Working Group of the Parties of the Aarhus Convention (Geneva and online, 26-28 June 2023). The meeting was an opportunity to showcase work related to the MAP data management policy, the cooperation with MAP Partners, the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development and the work on promoting accession to and implementation of the Aarhus Convention under a flagship initiative of the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development.

116. The Secretariat has noted the increasing importance of a number of issues related to environment and sustainable development which are high in the global agenda and of relevance to the Mediterranean. Since there are recent and/or upcoming evolutions on these issues, the Secretariat is pursuing efforts to examine the potential role and mandate of the UNEP/MAP-Barcelona Convention system in a proactive manner and to make an initial assessment of the scope and relevance of these issues in relation to the work of UNEP/MAP within the scope of UNEP/MAP MTS 2022-2027. Such emerging issues include, inter alia, Food Systems, the new Treaty on Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction, Offshore Renewable Energy, Harmful Subsidies and Deep-Sea Mining.

117. The Secretariat is collaborating with the Government of Greece for a possible involvement and active role of UNEP/MAP in the preparation of the 2024 Our Ocean Conference.

Outcome 5.4. Enhanced partnerships and multi-stakeholder engagement, including with the private sector and science policy interface

118. The Secretariat continued collaboration with key partners which have MoUs with UNEP/MAP, including the Secretariat of the Union of the Mediterranean (UfMS), the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean, the Black Sea Commission, ACCOBAMS', IUCN, etc. In view of enhancing collaboration with key partners the Secretariat has started its procedures for renewing the Memorandum of Understandings (MoUs) that have expired. To this end, three new MoUs are under preparation, to replace the expired ones, with the following Organizations and Secretariats: MOU with the Permanent Secretariat of the Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and Contiguous Atlantic Area (ACCOBAMS'); MOU with the Permanent Secretariat of the Commission on the Protection of the Black Sea Against Pollution (BSC); and, MOU with the Regional Organization for the Conservation of the Environment of the Red Sea & Gulf of Aden (PERSGA). Further to the above, the Secretariat is also working with the Secretariat of the Union for the Mediterranean to update the Appendix of the MOU signed in 2012 between the two organizations. The

above MoUs are presented as Annexes to the Governance decision submitted to the MAP Focal Points.

119. Since the signature of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between UNEP/MAP and the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) in 2012, both Secretariats have significantly increased their interaction, exchange of information, expert knowledge, and cooperation. A meeting will be held on 29 May 2023 at the FAO/GFCM Headquarters in Rome between the UNEP/MAP Coordinator and the new Executive Secretary of FAO/GFCM, with the presence also of the Directors of SPA/RAC and INFO/RAC, to discuss advances in relation to the implementation of the MoU, the progress regarding the FishEBM Med Project and ideas for future cooperation.

120. The Secretariat is strengthening collaboration with the European Commission; in coordination with EC Directorate General for the Environment, the Secretariat has initiated cooperation with the Directorate General for Maritime Affairs and Fishery (DG MARE) as well as with the Directorate General for Regional and Urban policies (DG REGIO). The UNEP/MAP Coordinator attended the high-level EIONET celebration held in Brussels, Belgium, on 22 March 2023. With this opportunity the Coordinator also met with EEA's Executive Director, Dr Hans Bruyninckx, to discuss the Joint Work Plan implementation.

121. Collaboration with the International Maritime Organization (IMO) has also been promoted. The President of the Bureau and representatives from the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention as well as the UNEP/MAP Coordinator and a representative from REMPEC attended MEPC 79, which adopted the amendments to MARPOL Annex VI concerning the Med SO_x ECA, with an expected date of entry into effective application on 1 May 2025. The President of the Bureau and the UNEP/MAP Coordinator had a bilateral meeting with the IMO Secretary General, Mr Kitack Lim, in the margins of MEPC 79 to discuss issues of common interest.

122. The First Coordination Meeting on the Mediterranean Strategy for the Prevention of, Preparedness, and Response to Marine Pollution from Ships (2022-2031) (Floriana, Malta, 29 November-1 December 2022) discussed, amongst others, an analytical report produced by REMPEC on the needs and priorities of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention against regional stakeholders' ongoing and future actions as well as projects and available resources, identifying gaps and duplications. The report compiled input from 14 main stakeholders (UfM, OSRL, FEDERCHIMICA, IOI, Cedre, PAM, CLIA, IPIECA, Med Cruise, EMSA, West Med initiative, OceanCare, Sea Alarm and ITOPF) and from the draft National Action Plans (NAPs) for the implementation of the said strategy from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Israel, Montenegro, Tunisia, and Türkiye. With the support of REMPEC, NAPs were fully completed for Albania, Montenegro, Tunisia, and Türkiye, second draft NAPs were completed for Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as Israel, and a first draft NAP was completed for Morocco, whilst the designation of the national consultant in relation to the NAP for Egypt is pending confirmation.

123. The UNEP/MAP – EEA Joint Work Plan (JWP) 2022-2030, concluded at the end of 2021, is expected to contribute to the MAP-Barcelona Convention system responses to the challenges and priorities expressed by the Contracting Parties. The JWP was published, and its implementation has been launched with a first meeting between EEA and UNEP/MAP and its Regional Activity Centres held in September 2022 to identify priority areas of common interest, on which cooperation should be focused in 2022. A second online meeting dedicated to assessment work is planned was held in October 2022.

124. MedECC made progress on evaluating options for its institutionalization and clarifying its terms of reference; the UNEP/MAP Secretariat together with Plan Bleu/RAC are participating actively in this process.

125. As provided for in the Regional Action Plan for the conservation of threatened species and marine key habitats, SPA/RAC has prepared the criteria and procedure for admission as a Regional Action Plan Partner in line with the decision IG.19/61 "MAP/Civil Society cooperation and partnership", the conditions and criteria for the award of the title of Regional Action Plan Partner were endorsed by the 16th SPA/BD Focal Points' meeting in view to be submitted to the MAP Focal Points meeting and COP 23 for adoption.

Outcome 5.5. Coordinated approaches implemented to strengthen public institution capacities for the implementation of the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols

126. PAP/RAC continues to support the Syrian Virtual University (SVU). This cooperation between the PAP/RAC and the SUV was agreed and defined by an MoU and is related to the Master's Programme of Qualification and Specialization in Integrated Management of Natural Resources. Like in the previous year, in 2023 the PAP/RAC team has been contributing with lectures to the third semester focused on Integrated Management of Natural Resources. Topics of relevance for the students were selected: ICZM Protocol and implementation of the ICZM process; MSP and land-sea interactions; addressing climate change challenges by ICZM/MSP and best adaptation practices in coastal zones; Coast and hydrology cluster of IMAP. The assignments for the students were prepared by the PAP/RAC team using the MedOpen experience.

127. The MSP Workspace launched by PAP/RAC in June 2022 was used for the seminar on MSP within the GEF MedProgramme that started online on 15 November 2022. The event brought together around 60 participants, who heard about the training program spanning over more than two months. The goal of the seminar was to support the establishment of a common basis for the implementation of MSP within the Barcelona Convention system by providing the opportunity to share practices and lessons learnt from the MSP application across the Mediterranean region. It ended with an online session on 22-23 February 2023, when the four big topics addressed in the MSP Workspace were discussed in detail.

128. Based on the high priority actions included in the Post-2020 SAPBIO, four project concepts were elaborated in close collaboration with the relevant regional organisations and partners and in close consultations with the SAPIO National Correspondents. Coherent projects to be implemented at the Mediterranean regional, sub-regional or multinational levels are being identified, conceptualised and drafted. They will be developed through a Fundraising Strategy for the Post-2020 SAPBIO including Post-2020 Strategy for MCPAs and OECMs for the period 2022-2030, supported by a donors' conference that was held in Paris, France, on 16 March 2023.

Programme 6: Towards Monitoring, Assessment, Knowledge and Vision of the Mediterranean Sea and Coast for Informed Decision-Making

Outcome 6.1. Inclusive and participatory foresight activities conducted at regional and national and local levels, with associated capacity-building

129. In coordination with, and support of the GEF-funded Mediterranean Sea Programme (MedProgramme/Child Project CP1.1), a pre-publication update of the 2005 Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis (TDA) for the Mediterranean Sea and Coast was prepared by MED POL. The 2023 TDA is aimed to update and strengthen the knowledge and connections between several environmental issues such as impact of climate change on natural and socio-economic systems, impact of emerging pollution on marine ecosystems, and potential for sustainable blue economy (to mention a few) and their causes. The progress on the preparation of the TDA report was presented to the Third Project Steering Committee (SC) Meeting of the MedProgramme, Child Project 1.1 (Sarajevo, 14-15 March 2023). The Steering Committee agreed to convene an additional TDA-SC Meeting in 4th Quarter of 2023 for the initial endorsement of the report prior to submission to the next Child Project 1.1 SC Meeting planned for the 1st Quarter of 2024 for approval. The pre-publication version of the TDA report was shared as information document with the Meeting of the MED POL Focal Points held in Athens on 24-26 May 2023. The Meeting discussed the "Main findings and recommendations of the TDA (2023)." The Meeting took note of the regional assessment of pollution and coastal and marine ecosystems, with the analysis of their causes and effects, and the transboundary prioritized environmental concerns. The Meeting requested that the Contracting Parties undertake a final review of the 2023 TDA with the aim of submitting their comments for the consideration of the Secretariat by 15 July 2023. To date, comments were received by the EU and Montenegro.

130. With the aim to improve monitoring of marine environment in offshore areas and related data collection, an initial draft of the MedProgramme Offshore Monitoring Strategy has been developed. This includes identification of a provisional set of IMAP Common Indicators to be monitored, along with the proposal of 20 proposed offshore monitoring stations located in Albania, Algeria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Egypt, Lebanon, Libya, Montenegro, Morocco, and Tunisia. The work is ongoing, and the intention is support the beneficiary countries to upgrade their national monitoring programmes in line with IMAP requirements to also cover the offshore areas. The work undertaken so far under MED Programme will be considered during the next biennium also in the framework of IMAP upgrade to be decided by COP 23

131. Work on the Med2050 foresight initiative is coming to an end. Specific activities recently implemented include: interviews of 57 key personalities from all Mediterranean countries; a webinar for the youth involving 44 of them, organized on 2 March 2022; a workshop for the youth in partnership with the Mediterranean Youth Commission (Marseille, France, 5-6 December 2022); a presentation during Forum Mondial de la Mer (Bizerte, Tunisia, 23 September 2022); a workshop for the youth from East and South-East Mediterranean, in partnership with Anna Lindh Foundation and funded by French Ministry of Foreign Affairs / Mediterranean Direction (Alexandria, 22 February 2023, and a presentation to the MCSD (Marseille, 15 June 2023). To trigger debates during these two last events, foresight fictions under the format of Pecha Kucha have been prepared. The Med2050 progress overview has been provided as an Information Document to the 20th MCSD meeting and to the Plan Bleu Focal Points meeting.

Outcome 6.2. Science-based IMAP, foresight and other assessments and assessment tools for strengthened science-policy interface and decision making

132. In line with Decision IG.23/6 of COP 20 related to the 2017 Mediterranean Quality Status Report (MED

QSR), and Decision IG.24/4 of COP21 providing the 2023 MED QSR Roadmap implementation (Naples, Italy, December 2019), the 2023 MED QSR has been developed. The draft QSR report is based on the outline and annotated contents agreed by the 8th EcAp Coordination Group meeting (9 September 2021), presented to the Integrated CORMONs meeting (27-28 June 2023). The Integrated CorMons Meeting approved the structure of the 2023 MED QSR document and its chapters and requested the Secretariat to further advance with its finalization for submission to the upcoming EcAp Coordination Group Meeting. With regards to the Executive Summary of the QSR report, the Integrated CorMons Meeting opted for including 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.

133. With regards to contributions of MAP components to the development of the 2023 MED QSR chapters:

- a. MED POL supported the preparation of the Pollution and Marine Litter Chapters developed further to the conclusions and recommendations of the Meetings of CorMon on Pollution Monitoring (2-3 April 2019, 1-3 December 2020, 26-28 April 2021, 27 and 30 May 2022) on the assessment criteria, rules for integration and aggregation, the assessment methodologies and their testing in different areas of the Mediterranean. Specifically, MED POL prepared the assessment criteria on (a) the new Background Concentrations (BC) and Background Assessment Concentrations (BAC) for IMAP Common Indicator 17; (b) the new Environmental Assessment Criteria (EAC) for IMAP Common Indicator 20; (c) further alignment of the list of EAC values for IMAP Common Indicator 17 with the sources originally used; (d) the Mediterranean EAC values for CI 20; (e) the new and updated reference conditions and boundary values of Chla, TP and DIN for the Adriatic Sea Sub-region coastal and open (offshore) waters; (f) the possible approaches for future upgrade of EAC for IMAP Common Indicators 17 and 18; and (g) the updated Baseline Values (BV) and Threshold Values (TV) for IMAP Common Indicator 23 (i.e., seafloor macro-litter and floating microplastics). In this regard, the CorMon Meetings on Pollution and Marine Litter (27 to 31 May 2022 and 1 to 3 March 2023) approved the above assessment criteria which were subsequently submitted for endorsement of the MED POL Focal Points (24-26 May 2023). The MED POL Focal Points Meeting endorsed the integration of the assessment criteria into the respective Decision related to the 2023 MED QSR foreseen for submission to COP 23. The CORMON Meetings including the Integrated CorMons (27-28 June 2023) approved the use of the assessment findings for preparation of the MED QSR Pollution Chapter related to Common Indicators 13 and 14, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 26 and 27, as well as the proposal for the updated Baseline Value and the establishment of a Threshold Value for floating microplastics (CI 23) for the MED QSR Marine Litter Chapter. The Integrated CorMons Meeting approved also the final version of the marine litter assessments for beach macro-litter and floating microplastics and recommended their inclusion into the integrated 2023 MED QSR document.
- b. SPA/RAC supported the preparation of the 2023 MED QSR biodiversity (EO1) and non-indigenous species (EO2) chapters whereby six thematic assessment reports for benthic habitats, cetaceans, Mediterranean monk seal, seabirds, marine turtles and non-indigenous species were developed and discussed by the CorMon Meeting on Biodiversity and Fisheries (9-10 March 2023). These reports were updated, submitted and approved by the integrated CorMon Meeting (27-28 June 2023). Work on the development of the Ecological Objective 4 on marine food webs is also proceeding. The assessment chapter for EO3 on fisheries was developed by GFCM Secretariat, submitted and approved by the integrated CorMon meeting in June 2023.
- c. REMPEC supported the preparation of the initial assessment findings related to IMAP CI 19 of the 2023 MED QSR in January 2023, which was examined by the Meeting of CorMon Pollution (Athens, Greece, 1-2 March 2023), agreed by the Fifteenth Meeting of the Focal Points of REMPEC (Kappara, Malta, 13-15 June 2023) and approved by the Integrated CORMONs Meeting (Athens, Greece, 27-28 June 2023).
- d. PAP/RAC supported the preparation of the Coast and Hydrography Chapter of the 2023 MED QSR. Specifically addressing aspects related to solutions to strengthen the Science Policy Interface (SPI) for the implementation of IMAP with a focus on CI 15 on hydrography; the upgraded Guiding Factsheet for the Candidate Common Indicator 25 "Land cover change"; and the definition of GES for the Common Indicator 16 "Length of coastline subject to physical disturbance due to the influence of human-made structures." The CorMon Coast and Hydrography Meeting (28-29 March 2023) approved submission of the 2023 MED QSR Chapters on EOs 7 and 8. These in turn were discussed and approved in the Integrated CorMons Meeting (27-28 June 2023).
- e. INFO/RAC upgraded the IMAP Infosystem to allow data submission and their quality control checks and processing assessment offline. It also collected data for cartographic representation of the 2023 MED QSR. INFO RAC is preparing the ground for the visualisation of the 2023 MED QSR immediately before or after COP 23.

- f. Plan Bleu supported the preparation of the socioeconomic characteristics chapter of the 2023 MED QSR.
- g. Finally, ACCOBAMS' in coordination with MED POL and with the support of the EU-funded EcAp MED III Project provided technical assessment of IMAP EO11 including measures on underwater noise data quality and availability, as well as international and regional management measures, Best Available Technologies and Environmental Practices to be included in the 2023 MED QSR (subject to Countries' approval).
- h. As indicated above several scientific partners and institutions were involved and provided data that were instrumental for the delivery of the 2023 MED QSR.

134. With the support of MTF, EU-funded EcAp MED III, IMAP-MPA and ML MED II projects, as well as the Italian Cooperation Agreement, technical and financial assistance was provided to:

- a. Execute national monitoring programmes and deliver quality assured data, namely:
 - i. An integrated monitoring plan for biodiversity and pollution was elaborated by the Secretariat and SPA/RAC. The plan is implemented in pilot monitoring sites (MPAs and in high pressure areas). Field work and data collection was finalized in Israel and Morocco and is ongoing in Egypt, Lebanon, Libya and Tunisia. Data submission of new and historical data into the IMAP info system is ongoing. These activities will be finalized between June 2023 and February 2024.
 - ii. Implementation of the national IMAP for biodiversity and NIS in Montenegro is ongoing with the support SPA/RAC. Work is undertaken in cooperation with the Institute of Marine Biology in Montenegro. A complete monitoring plan for the field surveys of the selected CIs in selected monitoring sites in line with the national monitoring programme was prepared and agreed with the Institute. The upload of data collected in the framework of previous projects and initiatives into the IMAP Info System is ongoing. The fieldwork has already started. This activity will be finalized by December 2023.
 - iii. Implementation of national IMAPs for biodiversity in Türkiye and Bosnia and Herzegovina is progressing with the assistance of SPA/RAC. Official contacts have been made to identify the national institutional partners for implementation. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the monitoring of sea birds will be implemented. In Türkiye, monitoring of *Posidonia oceanica* meadows will be conducted in Foça SEPA. These activities will be finalized by December 2023.
 - iv. IMAP-based monitoring programmes for marine litter are ongoing in 15 countries with the support of MED POL for uploading datasets for beach macro-litter (M1), seafloor macro-litter (M2) and floating microplastics (M3) extended over the period 2016-2022.
 - v. In Tunisia, two contracts will be signed with two NGOs: The first with "Méditerranée Action Nature" (MAN) to establish a monitoring point for *Posidonia* meadows in La Galite MCPA and to revisit the monitoring point in Cap Negro – Cap Serrat Site (Medkeyhabitats I). Activities will be implemented in July 2023. The second with "Notre Grand Bleu" (NGB) to revisit the monitoring points of *Posidonia* meadows. Activities will be implemented in July 2023.
 - vi. MoA was signed under the EU-IMAP-MPA project to contribute to the implementation of IMAP through the execution of the national monitoring programme in MPAs including the site concerned by the Medkeyhabitats I project and in high pressure areas. The MoA includes the provision of related quality assured data, as well as respective national reporting using the IMAP Info System.
- b. Exchange experiences including:
 - i. The results of the Bycatch Monitoring programme as well as the results of the bycatch mitigation measures and best practices from the MedBycatch project were shared during the 4th Colloque on Sea Turtles France Group (La Grande Motte, France, 18 November 2022), the 45th session of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean, GFCM (Tirana, Albania, 7-11 November 2022) the GFCM Subregional Committee for the central Mediterranean (Tunis, Tunisia, 28 to 30 March 2023), and the 16th SPA/BD Focal point meeting (Malta, 22-24 May 2023). The MedBycatch project has been awarded the first prize: the Navy Blue Award as part of the EU4Ocean coalition during the EU maritime day 2023 in Brest on May 25th, 2023.
 - ii. Sea turtles rescue centre twinning programmes have been launched as follows: Albania-Italy/ Libya-Tunisia/ Lebanon-France. The programme mainly focuses on exchange visits between the rescue centres staff to improve their scientific and technical knowledge as well as logistical measures. A first exchange visit took place from 11 to 12 April 2023 at la Grande Motte in France, between the French Centre for the Study and Protection of Mediterranean Sea Turtles (CEST Med) and the sea turtles rescue

- centre of the Tyre Coast Nature Reserve SPAMI (Lebanon). In this regard, a review of available data on marine turtles stranding in the Mediterranean is under preparation.
- iii. The final report of dolphin population in the northern area of Tunisia supported by the INTERMED Project was prepared. Following the compilation of the preparatory phase, the Monk seal Alliance approved the full project proposal “Med-Monk Seal” project: Enhancing knowledge and awareness on monk seal in the Mediterranean” in December 2022. The overall objective of the Project is to support the Contracting Parties of the south Mediterranean countries to implement the Priority Goals stated in the Regional Strategy for the Conservation of Mediterranean Monk Seal.
 - iv. As Partner to the EU funded QUIETMED 2 project, SPA/RAC contributed to: (i) the elaboration of its deliverables 2 and 4 which are respectively the “Setting of EU Threshold Values for impulsive underwater sound – recommendations from the Technical Group on Underwater noise” and the “Background document: executive summary of TG Noise; recommendations for EU threshold values for impulsive and continuous underwater sound” (ii) The organization, in collaboration with ACCOBAMS, of 2-day training on Data reporting/Data Call, tools developed, use of collected noise data, held back-to-back to the Summit on the underwater noise management latest updates (Fuente Álamo, Spain, 14 – 16 March 2023).
 - v. A desk review of available data sources, best practices and methodologies in the Mediterranean for the monitoring and assessment of seafloor damage was elaborated. This study was used for the elaboration of the proposal on the Ecological Objective 6 on sea floor integrity.
 - vi. Contribution to the CAMP Bosnia and Herzegovina by implementing the sub-activity to prepare a document/report: “Marine species and habitats in the territorial waters of BiH, issues, monitoring, protection and future financing”.
- c. Capacity building activities including:
- i. The “Guidelines for Monitoring Riverine Inputs of Marine Litter” were developed by MED POL. In support of the development process, the Online Working Group on Marine Litter (OWG-ML) was activated with membership of more than 20 experts from Turkey, Spain, Italy, Croatia, Israel, Tunisia, France, Slovenia, Morocco and EC/JRC. The Guidelines focus is on monitoring macro- and micro-litter through the application of visual observations, surveys on the riverbanks and dams; and the use of manta nets, water pumps and floats. The Guidelines were approved by the Integrated CorMons Meeting (27-28 June 2023) which supported also the development of common guidelines by the four Regional Seas (BSC, HELCOM, OSPAR and UNEP/MAP).
 - ii. The guidelines for monitoring microplastics from wastewater treatment plants are also under preparation by MED POL. Work is expected to be completed in the third Quarter of 2023.
 - iii. Updated Regional Action Plan on seabirds listed in Annex II to SPA/BD protocol as well as its implementation assessment and Mid-term evaluation of the Monk seal regional strategy implementation in the Mediterranean as planned by the 2022-2023 POW.
 - iv. Support to Lebanon, Israel, Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro by MED POL including coaching and guidelines regarding implementation of substantive activities within the monitoring and assessment efforts for IMAP Pollution Cluster at national level; providing training modalities for national counterparts and contributing to training workshops, as required.
 - v. Support by SPA/RAC to Lebanon and Tunisia for the implementation of the national monitoring programme of CI 24, as well as the elaboration, in close consultation with MED POL and INFO/RAC for the Data Standards (DS) and Data Dictionaries (DD) for IMAP Ecological Objective 10 - Common Indicator 24 (Ingestion and Entanglement on Marine Turtles).
 - vi. Support by SPA/RAC to Morocco and Israel to further advance and operationalize the monitoring programme of IMAP CI24 with focus on the ground implementation of the regional operational strategy
 - vii. In order to reinforce national capacity on seabird monitoring, organization of the bird winter census by SPA/RAC implemented by the AAO (BirdLife Partner in Tunisia), and Tour du Valat, in a training format where participants from Mediterranean countries took part. Moreover, support provided to the bird winter census implemented by Libyan Society for Birds under the coordination of the Ministry of Environment.
135. Plan Bleu/RAC has started work in the framework of the EU-funded MSFD support-project ABIOMMED to elaborate methodological guidance on ex-post socio-economic analysis of measures aiming at achieving GES

in the Mediterranean. In this framework, a socio-economic analysis of one regional biodiversity measures will be conducted. Results are expected by Summer 2023.

136. The MSSD Dashboard has been updated for its 2023 version under the WESR Platform and presented as an on-line dashboard to the MSSD.

Outcome 6.3. IMAP implementation and Environment and Development Observation provide updated and quality assured data in support of decision-making by Contracting Parties and assessment of GES.

137. Further to the signing of a renegotiated UN to UN Agreement with IAEA/MESL, the Proficiency Tests (PTs) related to the determination of trace metals and organic contaminants in sediment and biota matrixes have been launched, along with the preparation of related Training Courses which took place in November 2022. The ongoing activities managed by MED POL will result in the preparation of the programmes for nutrients and contaminants in commonly consumed seafood, whereby the programme for biomarkers is expected to be provided during in the coming biennium. Ongoing activities also continue to address the specific knowledge gaps of the IMAP competent laboratories, along with the technical missions to the IMAP competent laboratories with the greatest need.

138. The best practice review of Descriptor 8 (D08C04, 2018 Reporting) of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) was prepared by REMPEC in November 2022 to contribute to the development of IMAP Common Indicator (CI) 19.

139. The mapping of key relevant policies and institutions in the EU and non-EU countries, nationally, regionally and internationally in the Mediterranean and other European seas was concluded by SPA/RAC in the framework of the ILIAD Digital Twin of the Ocean project (consortium of 56 partners, Horizon Europe project). The capacity building needs of the ILIAD pilots were assessed, and a capacity building programme is currently under development. In addition, a series of webinar related to ILIAD topics have been initiated since January 2023. Exchanges with REMPEC are launched in order to evaluate their further involvement in some ILIAD activities related to NIS and Ballast water.

140. Exchanges and collaboration with the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) are being facilitated by SPA/RAC regarding various fishery related policies and is providing technical support for the organization of an ILIAD Summer School on "Innovative Tools and Applications for a sustainable Blue Economy" planned in September in Al Hoceima, Morocco. Progress made was presented during the 16th SPA/BD Focal point meeting (Malta, 22-24 May 2023).

141. The annual upgrade and vulnerability analysis of InfoMAP and the Barcelona Convention Reporting System (BCRS) and its functionalities are being assessed by INFO/RAC in order to evaluate the needs for further improvement. The terms of reference for the MAP Data Management Task Force have been developed and the kick-off meeting was held. The integration of available databases and integrated data coming from the other MAP Components has started in line with the work carried out by the Data Management Task Force. The maintenance and repower of the InfoMAP platform have been ensured as well as the integration of their modules. Data management tasks for CAMP BiH and CAMP Transboundary Otranto have been carried out toward a full integration with infoMAP System.

142. The completion of the IMAP Info System with the related implementation of data flows is ongoing in line with the finalization and final approval by Contracting Parties of the Data Standards for all the remaining CIs (EO3 not included). New Data Standards and Data Dictionaries for an additional 7 Common Indicators are being integrated into the IMAP Info system, extending the reporting to a total of 18 CIs. DSs and DDs under finalization are related to the following IMAP Common Indicators: 3, 4, 5, 18, 19, 20 and candidate 24. The available final versions have been implemented as correspondent data flows in the IMAP Info System to enable the reporting of the new data and support the elaboration of the 2023 MED QSR. In the second semester 2022 Draft DDs & DSs for IMAP CIs 3, 4 and 5 have been fine-tuned and submitted to the CorMon Meeting on Biodiversity and Fisheries held in March 2023. At the same time the implementation of the correspondent data flows have been made and the testing phase is in course. Draft DSs & DDs for IMAP Common Indicators 18 & 20 (biomarkers and contaminants in seafood) developed by INFO/RAC, reviewed by the Online-Working Group (OWG) on Pollution and approved by the CorMon Pollution (27-30 May 2022), have been finalized with inputs received from the Contracting Parties. Implementation of the relative data flows have been carried out and currently are in testing phase.

143. Data scheme of the elaborated SDF web Application and the annexes of the SDF are updated with the new "Updated Reference List of Marine Habitat Types for the Selection of Sites to be Included in the National Inventories of Natural Sites of Conservation Interest in the Mediterranean," and "Annex II: List of endangered and threatened species." The functional prototype to be tested with the SDF, which is already compiled, will be undertaken during the last trimester of 2023.

144. The MAMIAS web application is planned to be deployed on the SPA/RAC production server during the 4th quarter of 2023 in order to be tested by selected users before its official release and use during the planned national training on data collection on NIS within the new GEF FISHEBM Med project.

145. The current MAPAMED data is online for the Mediterranean Biodiversity Platform. GIS Data was updated with its quality checked for data collected in several projects implemented by SPA/RAC so as to be available on MBP by mid-2023 on: (a) marine Turtles in Tunisia, Libya, Lebanon, Egypt, Italy and France; (b) marine spatial planning in Albania; and (c) Specially Protected Areas in the Mediterranean. Partnership will be established with data providers to cover some data gaps like EMODNET, COPERNICUS. Furthermore, the terms of reference for the preparation of a SPA/RAC Data Management policy withing the main data management policy of the UNEP/MAP is under preparation.

Programme 7: For informed and consistent advocacy, awareness, education and communication

Outcome 7.1. Stakeholders and policy makers properly informed about the state of the Mediterranean Sea and coast and aware of the environmental priority issues

146. The Parliamentarian's Guide to protecting the Mediterranean Sea and coast has been approved by the UNEP Publications Committee for publication during the biennium. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean (PAM), a MAP Partner, is providing substantive input and undertaking a survey aimed at members of its regional network. The Guide will serve as a handbook for parliamentarians around the Mediterranean, harnessing their role for a greater implementation of, and compliance with, the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols through adequate national laws and by holding governmental actors to account. This publication will be launched in December 2023 on the side lines of COP 23 in the framework of a side-event jointly organized with PAM

147. The Secretariat launched the first call for applications for the fourth edition of the Istanbul Environment Friendly City Award in November 2022. The survey for the application has been developed and easy access has been provided. The video developed by INFO/RAC facilitates IEFCA dissemination and gives the main information to candidates. The deadline for application was recently extended to end of July 2023, while a collaboration with MedCities, a MAP Partner, initiated with a view to promoting the Award to eligible cities around the Mediterranean. A dedicated online workshop has been organized in 18 May 2023, to provide interested municipalities with the necessary information and support for the preparation of their applications, while a dedicated helpdesk has been also created under INFO/RAC.

148. The second edition of the SPAMI Day Celebration, a day to celebrate the Specially Protected Areas of Mediterranean Importance and expand ocean conservation efforts, taking place on 15 April 2023, was celebrated through various events and activities at the SPAMIs level. The theme for this year's celebration is 'Co-management and Civil Society Participation and involves the participation of SPAMI management stakeholders and civil society organizations from six countries.

149. Preparatory activities for the Mediterranean Coast Day 2023 celebration have started. As envisaged by GEF MedProgramme, this year's celebration should take place in Albania and should focus on coastal aquifers. Therefore, PAP/RAC has agreed with Plan Bleu and IHP-UNESCO to propose a combined event in Vlora i.e. to organise an international technical workshop on this theme to be followed by a high-level panel and a series of awareness raising activities.

150. During this period the Secretariat worked closely with Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) to enhance collaboration and outreach. To this end, UNEP/MAP took part in the Mediterranean Pavilion at UNFCCC COP 27 (6-18 November 2022, Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt); the MedPavilion is the first of its kind to be set up at a UN Climate Change Conference. It is an initiative led by UfM together with UNEP/MAP and the PRIMA Foundation, along with a coalition of institutions dealing with climate action in the region. The Secretariat issued a media advisory (dated 13 September 2022) presenting the rationale and the purpose of the participation in the Mediterranean Pavilion in COP 27 of UNFCCC: <https://bit.ly/MedPavilion>.

151. A joint effort at the MAP system level is on-going regarding gender mainstreaming and for potential better inclusion of gender aspects in the PoW 2024-2025. Gender focal points were identified by the RACs and together with the Coordinating Unit, a MAP Gender Strategy is under finalisation, in order to support and coordinate efforts made at the MAP level to reach the objectives of the SDG 5.

152. Web stories published in the news section of the UNEP/MAP website addressed several themes pertaining to the implementation of the PoW, including gender-sensitive assessments of climate resilience, PAMEx objectives, the MedProgramme intervention to address mercury pollution in Bosnia and Herzegovina and biodiversity protection in the wake of the adoption of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. press releases announcing the formal adoption of Med SOx ECA by IMO and the 20th meeting of the MCSD

outcomes were also issued (in English and French). In the lead-up to the MCSD meeting in Marseille, the Office of the Spokesperson of the Secretary-General published the media advisory prepared by the Coordinating Unit on their global calendar of UN events.

153. To enhance communication activities, the Secretariat collaborated with Association Africa 21, a network of African journalists, to develop three briefing notes (in Arabic and French) for journalists operating in North Africa and organize a webinar that addressed the need for environmental journalists to acquaint themselves with the mandate of the UNEP/MAP-Barcelona Convention system. The webinar, which saw the participation of media professionals, scholars and journalism students, also saw a discussion on options for the mainstreaming of the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols into journalism curricula in Maghreb countries. Additional information, the briefing notes and the webinar recording are available on Africa 21 website. All the deliverables were produced by Africa 21 experts for journalists with the Coordinating Unit providing backstopping and background material. The products are fully owned by the media network and will serve as resources for future reporting on the Barcelona Convention's implementation in North African countries.

Outcome 7.2. Citizen and general public awareness and outreach raised through citizen science and digital campaigns

154. Plan Bleu/RAC continued its series of webinars in the frame of its new communication initiative "Les Rendez-vous du Plan Bleu". During the third edition, on 27 October 2022, experts and specialists from Plan Bleu, but also from its partners MedECC and the Platform Océan Climat explained coastal risks linked to climate change in the Mediterranean basin to an audience of 68 listeners. The fourth edition of the Blue Plan/RAC Meetings took place on 6 April 2023 in front of an audience of 70 persons and focused on the following theme: the concrete environmental protection obligations resulting from the Barcelona Convention. The fifth edition of the Rendez-vous du Plan Bleu took place on 31 May 2023 on the following theme: The Mediterranean Commission for Sustainable Development, what challenges in 2023?"

155. For the 2023 edition of SPAMI Day, SPA/RAC issued a call for project proposals aimed at Mediterranean CSOs. The call aimed to solicit ideas for activities to celebrate the SPAMI Day and promote marine biodiversity conservation. Six projects were selected for funding to be implemented in collaboration with the SPAMI managers in Albania, Algeria, Italy, Lebanon, Slovenia and Tunisia between 15 April and 15 June 2023.

156. The documentary films "Salt in the Eyes" and "My name is blue" produced within MAVA projects, respectively on bycatch and marine turtles conservation, were made available on WaterBear, whose content has an exclusively ecological stance and a worldwide audience.

157. A documentary film titled "Sentinels of the Mediterranean", was produced as part of the "Together for the Med" initiative set up by MAVA. The documentary is currently being presented at international environmental film festivals and was featured in Oceanographic magazine.

158. Until December 2022, film screenings and debates on environmental issues were organized in Tunisia as part of the EnviroFest Environmental Film Festival, attracting around 4,000 spectators annually. The activity was supported by MAVA-funded projects MedKeyHabitats II, MedBycatch, Turtles, and the EU-funded IMAP-MPA project.

159. Within The MAVA funded MedBycatch project, the fisherman Mr. Fahmi Ben Mustapha, who collaborated with SPA/RAC, Association "Les Amis des Oiseaux" (AAO), and WWF Tunisia collected data on bycatch in Tunisia, resolved to continue the work to reduce bycatch after the project's end. In March 2023, he removed all shark-targeted fishing gears from his boat and turned it into a space to share his experience and the techniques he had tested as part of the MedBycatch project. He has installed two 7-meter-long sails depicting vulnerable species and displaying the slogan "We have chosen to protect."

160. In May 2023, a letter was addressed by the MAP Coordinator to the Albanian Minister of Tourism and Environment with regard to hosting of the 2023 edition of the Mediterranean Coast Day in Vlora, Albania, on 25 September. Waiting for the official confirmation by the Minister, PAP/RAC has already started the preparatory activities in cooperation with Plan Bleu and IHP-Unesco.

Outcome 7.3. Towards a digital transformation: use of digital technologies to improve networking and MAP visibility

161. Information on the SPAMI collaborative Platform are yearly updated with the support of SPAMI managers. The webpage on the SPAMI Day, created in April 2022 has also been updated for the 2023 edition of the SPAMI Day: <https://spami.medchm.net/en/spami-day-->.

III. Financial, Personnel and Administrative Matters

162. According to the audited and certified Statement of Financial Position, the Mediterranean Trust Fund (MTF) balance amounted to USD 7.9 million as of 31 December 2021. The balance reflects the accumulated surplus for MTF and the amount put aside for the Working Capital Reserve (WCR). It represents the total net assets as at the end of the financial year and as such it includes the assessed contributions receivable (arrears) and advance transfers to implementing partners. The financial statements of 2021 and 2022 are presented in Annex I.

163. According to the audited and certified Statement of Financial Position, the host country contribution (CAL) fund balance amounted to USD 992,031 as of 31 December 2021. This balance reflects the accumulated surplus for CAL. It represents the total net assets as at the end of the financial year. The balance of the host country contribution will be utilized for the refurbishment of the current premises of the Secretariat. According to the Interim Certified Financial Statement for the period ended 31 December 2021, the available balance of the EC Discretionary Contributions (QML account) amounts to USD 1,256,346. Document UNEP/MED WG.568/17 (draft decision on the Programme of Work and Budget for 2024 – 2025) contains detailed information on the status of the MTF.

1. Financial Matters

164. The status of Contributions to MTF as at 30 June 2023, as reflected in detail in Annex II, is summarized below:

- *Total annual pledges of ordinary contributions for 2022 and 2023: EUR 5,706,788 annually*
- *Total collections for 2022 as at 30 June 2023: EUR 5,668,821 (99.33%)*
- *Total collections for 2023 as at 30 June 2023: EUR 2,854,119 (50.01%)*
- *Total arrears as at 30 June 2023: EUR 1,114,454*

165. The EC Discretionary Contribution, amounting to EUR 596,484 annually, has been received.

166. With regards to consultancy, MAP Components are continuing the efforts to utilize mainly and on a priority basis external funding resources for the consultancies and to use MTF complementary, as need be, in most of the cases and apart from the cases where consultants/individual contractors are recruited to execute functions similar to vacant staff posts. During the year 2022, the consultancy costs were funded by the MTF/EC Discretionary Contribution at a rate of 21%. During the first three months of the year 2023, the consultancy costs were funded by the MTF/EC Discretionary Contribution at a rate of 40%.

2. Personnel Matters

167. The information regarding the new recruitments is as follows:

- P5 Deputy Coordinator (position No. 30600864): Mr. Gabino Gonzalez Deogracia (Spanish national) was selected for the position and reported for duty at UNEP/MAP on 1 December 2022.
- P5 Senior Programme Officer (MedPol) (position No. 31046424): Recruitment was launched, and post was advertised under JO 192951 in Inspira with a deadline for applications of 8 January 2023. Recruitment is underway.
- P3 Programme Management Officer (MedProgramme) (position No: 31032929): Ms. Maren Mellendorf (German national) was selected for the position and reported for duty at UNEP/MAP on 19 April 2022.
- P3 Programme Management Officer (EcAp MED III Project) (position No: 30606551): Ms. Patrizia Busolini (Italian national) was selected for the position and reported for duty at UNEP/MAP on 17 October 2022.
- P3 Legal Officer (position No: 31012355): Mr. Ihab Tarek (Egyptian national) was selected for the position and reported for duty at UNEP/MAP on 1 September 2022.
- P3 Programme Management Officer (Socio-Economic and Sustainable Development) (position No. 31046424): Following the departure of the previous incumbent, effective 18 October 2022, recruitment was launched, and post was advertised under JO 189200 in Inspira with a deadline for applications of 10 November 2022. Interviews took place and the case is under review by Headquarters.
- P3 Programme Management Officer (MED QSR) (position No: 31025245): following the departure of the previous incumbent, effective 21 May 2023, recruitment for temporary position and regular staff position was launched.
- P2 Associate Finance and Budget Officer (MedProgramme) (position No: 31039463): Ms. Timea Minaei (Hungarian national) was selected for the position and reported for duty at UNEP/MAP on 13


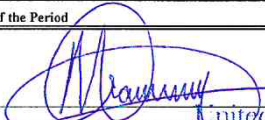
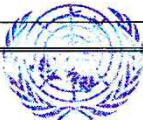
June 2022.




- P2 Junior Professional Officer (Bilateral Cooperation Agreement with the Italian Ministry for Ecological Transition): Ms. Ellen Svensson (Swedish national) reported for duty at UNEP/MAP on 1 November 2022.
- G6 Meetings and Procurement Assistant (position No: 30606486): Following the departure of the previous incumbent, effective 22 August 2022, recruitment for temporary replacement was launched, and post was advertised under TJO 197003 in Inspira with a deadline for applications of 1 January 2023. Recruitment exercise is completed. It is expected that the selected candidate reports in the coming month.
- G5 Programme Management Assistant (EcAp MED III Project and Marine Litter MED II) (position No: 31009278): The post was advertised under JO 181377 in Inspira with a deadline for applications of 28 July 2022. Recruitment exercise is completed. It is expected that the selected candidate reports by 1 August 2023.
- G5 Temporary Finance and Budget Assistant (IMAP MPA EU Project): (position No: 30606487): The temporary post was advertised under TJO 199600 in Inspira with a deadline for applications of 31 January 2023. Recruitment is underway.
- G4 MedPol/Coordinating Unit Team Assistant (position No. 31046426): Recruitment was launched, and post was advertised under JO 190229 in Inspira with a deadline for applications of 29 October 2022. Recruitment exercise is completed. It is expected that the selected candidate reports by end of July 2023.
- G4 Administrative Team Assistant (position No. 30600877): the post became vacant as at 1 July 2021 following the promotion of Mr. Apostolos Apostolopoulos to the post of Administrative Assistant (payments and travel). Recruitment was launched and post was advertised under JO 207685 in Inspira with a deadline for applications of 13 July 2023.
- Secondment of an Expert from France on a Non-Reimbursable Loan until 31 December 2023: Ms. Elisabeth Chouraki (French national) reported for duty at UNEP/MAP on 15 September 2022.

168. Reference is made to the Resolution adopted by the United Nations Environment Assembly on 2 March 2022, (UNEP/EA.5/Res.13), due regard to the principle of equitable geographical distribution, in accordance with paragraph 3 of Article 101 of the Charter of the United Nations, to which the MAP is requested to comply with by UNEP HQs within the mandate and framework of the Barcelona Convention. This new development affects recruitments which so far were carried out in accordance with the “Recommendations on MED Unit, MED POL and RACs structure” approved by Contracting Parties, at COP11 (Tunis (Tunisia), 18-21 November 1997), stating that “The principle of equitable geographical distribution within the Mediterranean region should be respected whenever vacant or new internationally recruited posts are to be filled.”

169. The Directors of four MAP Components are expected to leave their positions this or early next year or have already left (SPA/RAC, Plan Bleu/RAC, PAP/RAC, SCP/RAC, REMPEC). The Host Countries have started the process for their replacement in consultation with the Secretariat in line with the respective COP Decisions.

Annex I
Financial Statements of 2021 and 2022

 Trust Fund for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea Against Pollution (Fund code: 40MEL) I. Final Statement of Financial Performance for the year ended 31 December 2021 (United States Dollars)	
Total	
Revenue	
Assessed Contributions	7,002,193.86
Other Revenue	305,472.90
Investment Revenue	12,328.04
Total Revenue	7,319,994.80
Employee salaries allowances and benefits	1,933,000.26
Non-employee compensation and allowances	250,498.01
Grants and other transfers	4,431,734.86
Supplies and consumables	107.22
Depreciation	2,076.34
Travel	105,636.53
Other operating expenses	710,597.02
Allowance for doubtful debt (AFDA)	40,936.50
Programme support expenses	868,129.99
Foreign Exchange Losses	590,175.08
Total expenses	8,932,891.81
Surplus/(deficit) for the period	(1,612,897.01)
II. Final Statement of Financial Position as at 31 December 2021 (United States Dollars)	
Total	
Current Assets	
Cash and Cash equivalents	6,803,276.35
Assessed contributions receivable	618,469.23
Advance Transfers	653,216.48
Other assets	34,782.50
Total Current Assets	8,109,744.56
Non-Current Assets	
Property plant and equipment	3,240.25
Total Non-Current Assets	3,240.25
Total Assets	8,112,984.81
Current Liabilities	
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	214,228.06
Advance receipts	3,935.30
Employee benefits liabilities	23,833.03
Total Current Liabilities	241,996.39
Non Current Liabilities	
Total Non current Liabilities	-
Total Liabilities	241,996.39
Net of Total Assets and Total Liabilities	7,870,988.42
Net Assets:	
Accumulated surpluses/ (deficits) - unrestricted	6,685,385.81
Reserves	1,185,602.61
Total Net Assets	7,870,988.42
III. Final Statement of Changes in Net Assets for the year ended 31 December 2021 (United States Dollars)	
Total	
Net Assets at the Beginning of the Period	9,483,885.43
Surplus/(deficit) for the period	(1,612,897.01)
Total Net Assets at the End of the Period	7,870,988.42
 Miriam Nanyonga Chief, FINANCIAL REPORTING UNIT BUDGET AND FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT SERVICE	
 United Nations Office at Nairobi ACCOUNTS SECTION Budget and Financial Management Service	
07/07/2022	

	
Trust fund for the protection of the Mediterranean Sea against pollution (Fund code: MEL)	
I. Final Statement of Financial Performance for the year ended 31 December 2022 (United States Dollars)	
	Total
Revenue	
Assessed Contributions	6,477,625
Other Revenue	9,162
Investment Revenue	6,341
Total Revenue	6,493,129
Expenses	
Employee salaries allowances and benefits	1,637,015
Non-employee compensation and allowances	69,498
Grants and other transfers	3,106,017
Travel	146,757
Other operating expenses	99,883
Allowance for doubtful debt	130,377
Programme support expenses	668,150
Net Foreign exchange losses	658,182
Total expenses	6,515,880
Surplus/(Deficit) for the period	(22,752)
II. Final Statement of Financial Position as at 31 December 2022 (United States Dollars)	
	Total
Current Assets	
Cash and Cash equivalents	6,422,071
Assessed contributions receivable	435,952
Other receivables	548
Advance Transfers	1,303,675
Other assets	27,837
Total Current Assets	8,190,082
Non-Current Assets	
Property plant and equipment	3,240
Total Non-Current Assets	3,240
Total Assets	8,193,322
Current Liabilities	
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	(2,249)
Advance receipts	311,665
Employee benefits liabilities	35,670
Total Current Liabilities	345,086
Non Current Liabilities	
Employee benefits Liabilities	-
Total Non current Liabilities	-
Total Liabilities	345,086
Net of Total Assets and Total Liabilities	7,848,237
Net Assets:	
Accumulated surpluses/ (deficits) - unrestricted	6,591,929
Reserves	1,256,308
Total Net Assets	7,848,237
III. Final Statement of Changes in Net Assets for the year ended 31 December 2022 (United States Dollars)	
	Total
Net Assets at the Beginning of the Period	7,870,988
Surplus/(Deficit) for the period	(22,752)
Total Net Assets at the End of the Period	7,848,237
<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; align-items: center;"> <div style="text-align: center;">  Miriam Kizito Chief, Financial Reporting Unit BFMS, UNON </div> <div style="text-align: center;">  United Nations Office at Nairobi ACCOUNTS SECTION Budget and Financial Management Service </div> <div style="text-align: right;"> 14/06/2023 </div> </div>	

Annex II

Status of Contributions as at 30 June 2023

Status of Assessed Ordinary Contributions apportioned to the Parties of the Barcelona Convention as of 30 June 2023

Ordinary Contributions to MTF													
Country	Unpaid Pledges for 2020 and prior years	Unpaid Pledges for 2021	Unpaid Pledges for 2022	Unpaid Pledges as of 31/12/2022			Pledges for 2022	Collections for 2022		Pledges for 2023	Collections for 2023	Unpaid Pledges for 2023	Deferred Income
	EUR	EUR	EUR	EUR			EUR	EUR		EUR	EUR	EUR	EUR
Albania	-	-	-	-			3,704	3,704		3,704	3,704	-	
Algeria	146,076	59,801	-	205,877			50,469	50,469		50,469	-	50,469	*
Bosnia and Herzegovina	-	-	-	-			5,556	5,556		5,556	-	5,556	
Croatia	-	-	-	-			42,135	42,135		42,135	42,135	-	
Cyprus	-	-	-	-			16,669	16,669		16,669	-	16,669	
Egypt	-	-	-	-			64,360	64,360		64,360	-	64,360	
European Union	-	-	-	-			142,670	142,670		142,670	142,670	-	
France	-	-	-	-			1,999,323	1,999,323		1,999,323	-	1,999,323	
Greece	-	-	-	-			150,482	150,482		150,482	150,482	-	
Israel	-	-	-	-			259,755	259,755		259,755	-	259,755	
Italy	-	-	-	-			1,476,573	1,476,573		1,476,573	1,476,573	-	
Lebanon	47,512	20,367	16,669	84,548			16,669	-		16,669	-	16,669	
Libya (State of Libya)	667,930	13,000	8,334	689,264			8,334	-		8,334	-	8,334	*
Malta	-	-	-	-			8,797	8,797		8,797	8,797	-	
Monaco	-	-	-	-			5,093	5,093		5,093	5,093	-	
Montenegro	-	-	-	-			1,852	1,852		1,852	-	1,852	
Morocco	-	-	-	-			25,466	25,466		25,466	-	25,466	
Slovenia	-	-	-	-			36,579	36,579		36,579	36,579	-	
Spain	-	-	-	-			988,086	988,086		988,086	988,086	-	
Syrian Arab Republic	117,034	4,767	4,167	125,968			4,167	-		4,167	-	4,167	*
Tunisia	-	-	8,797	8,797			8,797	-		8,797	-	8,797	
Türkiye	-	-	-	-			391,252	391,252		391,252	-	391,252	
TOTAL	978,552	97,935	37,967	1,114,454			5,706,788	5,668,821		5,706,788	2,854,119	2,852,669	

Year	2018	2019	2020	2021
Collection Rate	97.82%	97.49%	99.33%	98.28%

2022	99.33%
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2023	50.01%
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EC Discretionary Contribution													
							Expected contribution for 2022	Received contribution for 2022		Expected contribution for 2023	Received contribution for 2023	Open Receivable for 2023	
							EUR	EUR		EUR	EUR	EUR	
European Commission							596,484	596,484		596,484	596,484	-	

Host Country Contribution													
							Expected contribution for 2022	Received contribution for 2022		Expected contribution for 2023	Received contribution for 2023	Open Receivable for 2023	
							EUR	EUR		EUR	EUR	EUR	
Greece							344,800	380,120		344,800	-	344,800	

*Unpaid pledges for 2016 and prior years have been reduced in order for the receivable balances reflected on the current table to be in line with Umoja accounts, as reconciled in liaison with UNEP Contributions Unit: by EUR 42 for Algeria, by EUR 9,804 for the State of Libya and by EUR 1,509 for the Syrian Arab Republic.

Note: Financial Regulations and Rules of the United Nations: Regulation 3.5. Contributions and advances shall be considered as due and payable in full within 30 days of the receipt of the communication of the Secretary-General referred to in regulation 3.4 or on the first day of the calendar year to which they relate, whichever is later. As of 1 January, of the following calendar year, the unpaid balance of