



**United Nations
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Mediterranean Action Plan**

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Meeting of the MED POL Focal Points

Athens, Greece, 24-26 May 2023

Agenda item 5: Assessment of marine and Coastal Environment:

- a) **New/Updated IMAP Assessment Criteria for Nutrients, Contaminants and Marine Litter**
- b) **Measures related to assessment findings of the 2023 MED QSR for Pollution and Marine Litter**

**Report of Meeting of the Ecosystem Approach Correspondence Group on Marine Litter Monitoring
(3 March 2023)**

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REPORT

**Meeting of the Ecosystem Approach Correspondence Group on Marine Litter Monitoring
Athens, Greece, 3 March 2023**

DRAFT REPORT

19 May 2023

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Introduction

1. In the framework of the UNEP/MAP Programme of Work adopted by COP22 for the biennium 2022-2023 (Decision IG.25/19, COP22) and the Roadmap and Needs Assessment for the 2023 Mediterranean Quality Status Report (MED QSR) (Decision IG.24/4, COP21), the Meeting of the Ecosystem Approach Correspondence Group on Marine Litter Monitoring (CORMON Marine Litter) was held in Athens, Greece on 3 March 2023, organized by the United Nations Environment Programme / Mediterranean Action Plan - Barcelona Convention Secretariat (UNEP/MAP) and its Programme for the Assessment and Control of Marine Pollution in the Mediterranean (MED POL).

Participation

2. The following Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention were represented at the Meeting: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Cyprus, Egypt, France, Greece, Israel, Italy, Lebanon, Libya, Malta, Montenegro, Morocco, Slovenia, Spain, Syria, Tunisia, Turkey, and the European Union.

3. The following United Nations bodies, specialized agencies, convention secretariats and intergovernmental organizations were represented as observers: the Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and Contiguous Atlantic Area (ACCOBAMS) and the Commission on the Protection of the Black Sea Against Pollution (BSC).

4. The following non-governmental organizations and other institutions were also represented as observers: the Turkish Marine Research Foundation.

5. The full list of participants is attached as **Annex I** to the present report.

Agenda item 1: Opening of the Meeting

6. The Meeting was opened on Friday, 3 March 2023 at 09:30 a.m. by Mr. Gabino Gonzalez, Deputy Coordinator, UNEP/MAP, Barcelona Convention Secretariat. He welcomed the participants and recalled the main objective of the meetings which was to contribute to the preparations for delivering the 2023 MED QSR, and specifically to review: (a) the updated Baseline Values (BV) and proposed Threshold Values (TV) for IMAP EO Common Indicator 23 (seafloor macro-litter and floating micro-plastics); (b) the draft chapters for the 2023 MED QSR pertinent to IMAP Ecological Objective 10 (EO10) Marine Litter; and (c) the updated guidelines for monitoring riverine inputs of marine litter.

Agenda item 2: Organizational matters

a) Adoption of the Agenda

7. The Meeting adopted its agenda on the basis of the Provisional Agenda and Provisional Annotated Agenda, including the proposed timetable, circulated in documents *UNEP/MED WG.555/1* and *UNEP/MED WG.555/2*, respectively.

8. The agenda is attached as **Annex II** to the present report.

b) Election of officers

9. The Meeting agreed that the rules of procedure for Meetings and conferences of the Contracting Parties to the Convention for the Protection of the Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean and its Protocols (UNEP/IG.43/6, Annex XI) would apply mutatis mutandis to their deliberations.

10. Subject to Rule 20 of the rules of procedure mentioned at para. 2(a), the Meeting unanimously elected the following officers from among the representatives of the Contracting Parties:

Chairperson:	Mr. Mohamad Elbouch (Morocco)
Vice-chairpersons:	Ms. Roberta Debono (Malta) Ms. Cecilia Silvestri (Italy) Mr. Bassam Sabbagh (Lebanon)
Rapporteur:	Mr. Uros Robic (Slovenia)

11. The discussions were held in line with the agenda. Simultaneous interpretation in English and French was provided during the Meeting.

Agenda item 3: Updated Baseline Values (BV) and Threshold Values (TV) for IMAP Common Indicator 23 (Seafloor macro-litter, Floating micro-plastics)

12. Mr. Christos Ioakeimidis, UNEP/MAP Secretariat (MED POL Associate Programme Management Officer), presented the working document UNEP/MED WG.555/3 “Updated Baseline Values (BV) and Threshold Values (TV) for IMAP Common Indicator 23 (Seafloor macro-litter, Floating micro-plastics),” which provides the basis for the development of assessment criteria for IMAP EO10 Marine Litter and its Common Indicator 23 (CI23), in line with the 2023 MED QSR Roadmap implementation. He noted that the proposed values, particularly addressing the seafloor macro-litter and floating micro-plastics components of IMAP EO10 CI23, have been used for the preparation of the marine litter chapters of the 2023 MEQ QSR based on the data submitted by several Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention through the IMAP InfoSystem.

13. The Secretariat requested the Meeting participants to provide their review comments as well as to approve this document for use for the needs of the 2023 MED QSR.

14. Several participants took the floor and welcomed the Secretariat’s effort in preparing the updated BV and proposing the establishing of TV for IMAP EO10 CI23 (i.e. seafloor macrolitter and floating microplastics). Other participants took the floor and highlighted the need to take into consideration the “non-deterioration” principle while calculating and elaborating the TV for seafloor macro-litter, whereas they endorsed the used of the 15th percentile (Q15) for the calculation and elaboration of TV for floating microplastics. In response the Secretariat, accepted to revise the document in order to reflect the “non-deterioration” principle for seafloor macrolitter and Q15 for floating microplastics and to submit the revised version of the document to the Integrated CORMON Meeting to be organized in June 2023.

15. The meeting participants provided comments on the need for the Secretariat to liaise with specific Contracting Parties to review and proof-check the data submissions pertinent to IMAP EO10 CI23 (i.e., seafloor macro-litter and floating micro-plastics), and requested the Secretariat to provide additional time for the submission of revised and/or additional datasets. In response the Secretariat set a deadline after the Meeting for the Contracting Parties to proof check, revise and submit as appropriate the respective datasets for IMAP EO10 CI23.

16. The Meeting agreed to move forward with the submission of the updated version of the Working Document UNEP/MED WG.555/3 to the Integrated CORMON Meeting to be held in June 2023 further to the Secretariat incorporating the following elements:

- a) Revision of data for floating microplastics from Lebanon, Slovenia and Spain;
- b) Validation of data submitted by Malta for seafloor macro-litter;
- c) Submission of data by Contracting Parties to be submitted and if possible validated through the IMAP InfoSystem no later than 17 March 2023;
- d) Revision of Table 1 to include the source of the data used;
- e) Revision of Table 6 and Figure 2 based on the outcomes of point (a) of this clause;

- f) Introduction of the “non-deterioration” approach for the calculation of threshold values for seafloor macrolitter; and
- g) Proposition of intermediate environmental targets towards achievement of GES.

17. The Secretariat agreed to prepare a revised version of the document to be presented to the forthcoming Integrated CORMON Meeting to be held in Athens, Greece, 27-28 June 2023.

18. The conclusions and recommendations regarding the Updated Baseline Values (BV) and Threshold Values (TV) for IMAP Common Indicator 23 (Seafloor macro-litter, Floating micro-plastics) are included in **Annex III** to this Report.

Agenda item 4: 2023 Mediterranean Quality Status Report (QSR): Marine Litter Ecological Objective (EO10)

19. Mr. Ioakeimidis presented the working document UNEP/MED WG.555/4 “2023 Mediterranean Quality Status Report (QSR): Marine Litter Ecological Objective (EO10)” comprising the marine litter chapter of the 2023 MED QSR, in particular for IMAP EO10 Common Indicators 22 and 23. He explained the respective GES/non-GES assessment for IMAP EO10 Marine Litter, with a focus on beach macro-litter, seafloor macro-litter and floating micro-plastics as resulted by the application of the CHASE+ and NEAT assessment methodologies.

20. Several participants took the floor and welcomed the Secretariat’s effort in preparing the first version of the marine litter chapter for the 2023 MED QSR and its preliminary assessment findings.

21. The Meeting recommended the submission of the final version of the Working Document UNEP/MED WG.555/4 to the Integrated CORMON Meeting to be held in June 2023 further to the Secretariat incorporating the following elements:

- a) Inclusion of additional data for beach and seafloor marine litter from Contracting Parties to be submitted and if possible, validated through the IMAP InfoSystem no later than 17 March 2023;
- b) Validation of data submitted by Malta for seafloor macro-litter, as well as France and Morocco for beach marine litter;
- c) Comparison of the CHASE+ and NEAT methodologies with regards to the assessment findings for marine litter in the Adriatic Sea Sub-region;
- d) Preparation of an information document detailing the application of the CHASE+ methodology for assessing marine litter; and
- e) Preparation of a table to be annexed to Working Document WG.555/4, comparing the methodologies used for the assessments in the framework of the Barcelona Convention, and other Regional Seas Conventions and within MSFD, including for their objectives, to allow discussion for possible harmonization at the Integrated CORMON Meeting to be held in June 2023.

22. The conclusions and recommendations regarding the 2023 Mediterranean Quality Status Report (QSR): Marine Litter Ecological Objective (EO10) are presented in **Annex III** to this Report.

Agenda item 5: Guidelines for Monitoring Riverine inputs of Marine Litter

23. Mr. Ioakeimidis presented the working document UNEP/MED WG.555/5 “Guidelines for Monitoring Riverine inputs of Marine Litter” developed in the framework of the EU-funded Marine Litter MED II project. He indicated that the guidelines were prepared considering the need to fill the methodological gaps on monitoring riverine inputs of marine litter entering into the marine/coastal environment, detailed the changes introduced from the initial version in May 2022, and thanked the experts who participated to the Online Working Group on Marine Litter (OWG-ML) and contributed to the updated version of the document.

24. Several representatives stressed the fact that the documents extract from several valid scientific and technical sources and presents in a consistent and coherent way four principal methodologies for monitoring riverine inputs of marine litter with a focus on both macro- and micro-plastics. Moreover, the participants commented that this document will be of significant added value for the Mediterranean and for strengthening relevant monitoring efforts.

25. Following the review and discussions related to the document, the Meeting requested the Secretariat to submit a revised version of the Working Document UNEP/MED WG.555/5 to the Integrated CORMON Meeting to be held in June 2023 further to incorporating the following elements through OWG-ML :

- a. Further strengthening the linkage between seasonal streams discharging to the Mediterranean and the application of the related proposed methodologies;
- b. Further strengthening the importance of conducting surveys for riverine input of marine litter after extreme weather events;
- c. Revision of Chapter 5.2 reflecting additional recommendations and specifications for sampling microplastics in the water column using water pumps; and
- d. Incorporating a new chapter/subchapter *interalia* on the application of a methodology for sampling marine litter including micro-litter on river dams, and floats.

26. Moreover, the Meeting recommended the Secretariat to share the Working Document UNEP/MED WG.555/5 with the European Commission and the three Regional Seas Conventions (i.e., BSC, HELCOM and OSPAR), for their input taking into consideration the respective deadlines for its preparation and submission to the Integrated CORMON Meeting to be held in 27-28 June 2023.

27. The Meeting approved the use of the guidelines by the Secretariat, subject to addressing the above-listed recommendations, for testing its applications in different contexts (e.g., testing methodologies, strengthening IMAP implementation through pilot projects, updating IMAP etc.).

28. The Meeting conclusions and recommendations regarding the development of the Guidelines for Monitoring Riverine inputs of Marine Litter are presented in **Annex III** to this Report.

Agenda item 6: Any Other Business

29. No additional element was presented under this agenda item.

Agenda item 7: Conclusions and Recommendations

30. Under this agenda item, the Secretariat invited the Meeting participants to review the draft conclusions and recommendations. The Meeting approved the conclusions and recommendations as slightly amended by the Meeting and contained in **Annex III** to the present report.

Agenda item 8: Closure of the Meeting

31. After the expression of usual courtesies, the Chair declared the Meeting closed at 17.30 on Friday, 3 March 2023.

Annex I

List of Participants

**REPRESENTATIVES OF THE CONTRACTING PARTIES / REPRESENTANTS DES
PARTIES CONTRACTANTES**

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(IGOS)/REPRESENTANTS DES ORGANISATIONS INTERGOUVERNEMENTALES
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**UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME - COORDINATING UNIT AND
COMPONENTS OF THE MEDITERRANEAN ACTION PLAN
PROGRAMME DES NATIONS UNIES POUR L'ENVIRONNEMENT - UNITÉ DE
COORDINATION ET COMPOSANTES DU PLAN D'ACTION POUR LA MÉDITERRANÉE**

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Annex II
Agenda of the Meeting

Agenda of the Meeting

- Agenda Item 1:** Opening of the Meeting
- Agenda Item 2:** Organizational Matters
- Agenda Item 3:** Updated Baseline Values (BV) and Threshold Values (TV) for IMAP Common Indicator 23 (Seafloor macro-litter, Floating micro-plastics)
- Agenda item 4:** 2023 Mediterranean Quality Status Report (QSR): Marine Litter Ecological Objective (EO10)
- Agenda Item 5:** Guidelines for Monitoring Riverine inputs of Marine Litter
- Agenda Item 6:** Any Other Business
- Agenda Item 7:** Conclusions and Recommendations
- Agenda Item 8:** Closure of the Meeting

Annex III

Conclusions and Recommendations

Adopted Conclusions and Recommendations

1. On 3 March 2023, the Meeting of the Ecosystem Approach Correspondence Group on Marine Litter Monitoring was held in Athens, Greece. The Meeting was organized by UNEP/MAP Secretariat (MED POL Programme).

2. Following the review and discussion of Working Documents UNEP/MED WG.555/3 “Updated Baseline Values (BV) and Threshold Values (TV) for IMAP Common Indicator 23 (Seafloor macro-litter, Floating micro-plastics),” UNEP/MED WG.555/4 “2023 Mediterranean Quality Status Report (QSR): Marine Litter Ecological Objective (EO10),” UNEP/MED WG.555/5 “Guidelines for Monitoring Riverine Inputs of Marine Litter,” the Meeting reached the following conclusions:

Agenda Item 3

3. The Meeting recommended the submission of the final version of the Working Document UNEP/MED WG.555/3 to the Integrated CORMON Meeting to be held in June 2023 further to incorporating the following elements:

- a. Revision of data for floating microplastics from Lebanon, Slovenia and Spain;
- b. Validation of data submitted by Malta for seafloor macro-litter;
- c. Submission of data by Contracting Parties to be submitted and if possible validated through the IMAP InfoSystem no later than 17 March 2023;
- d. Revision of Table 1 to include the source of the data used;
- e. Revision of Table 6 and Figure 2 based on the outcomes of point (a) of this clause;
- f. Introduction of the “non-deterioration” approach for the calculation of threshold values for seafloor macrolitter; and
- g. Proposition of intermediate environmental targets towards achievement of GES.

4. The Secretariat confirmed that additional data submitted and validated through the IMAP InfoSystem will be accepted no later than 17 March 2023.

5. The Meeting approved the use of the updated Baseline Values (BV) and Threshold Values (TV), which will finally adopted during the Integrated CORMON Meeting to be held in June 2023 after reflecting the revisions elements under clause 1 to the present conclusions and recommendations, for preparation of the marine litter chapter of the 2023 MED QSR.

Agenda Item 4

6. The Meeting recommended the submission of the final version of the Working Document UNEP/MED WG.555/4 to the Integrated CORMON Meeting to be held in June 2023 further to incorporating the following elements:

- a. Inclusion of additional data for beach and seafloor marine litter from Contracting Parties to be submitted and if possible, validated through the IMAP InfoSystem no later than 17 March 2023;
- b. Validation of data submitted by Malta for seafloor macro-litter, as well as France and Morocco for beach marine litter;
- c. Comparison of the CHASE+ and NEAT methodologies with regards to the assessment findings for marine litter in the Adriatic Sea Sub-region;
- d. Preparation of an information document detailing the application of the CHASE+ methodology for assessing marine litter; and
- e. Preparation of a table to be annexed to Working Document WG.555/4, comparing the methodologies used for the assessments in the framework of the Barcelona Convention,

and other Regional Seas Conventions and within MSFD, including for their objectives, to allow discussion for possible harmonization at the Integrated CORMON Meeting to be held in June 2023.

7. The Meeting approved the use of the CHASE+ and NEAT assessment methodologies for the marine litter chapter of the 2023 MED QSR in line with the approach elaborated in UNEP/MED WG.555/4.

8. The Meeting appreciated the contribution and endorsed incorporating ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative (ASI) into the 2023 MED QSR.

Agenda Item 5

9. The Meeting recommended the submission of a revised version of the Working Document UNEP/MED WG.555/5 to the Integrated CORMON Meeting to be held in June 2023 further to incorporating the following elements:

- a. Further strengthening the linkage between seasonal streams discharging to the Mediterranean and the application of the related proposed methodologies;
- b. Further strengthening the importance of conducting surveys for riverine input of marine litter after extreme weather events;
- c. Revision of Chapter 5.2 reflecting additional recommendations and specifications for sampling microplastics in the water column using water pumps; and
- d. Incorporating a new chapter/subchapter *inter alia* on the application of a methodology for sampling marine litter including micro-litter on river dams, and floats.

10. The Meeting recommended to streamline the revision of the Working Document UNEP/MED WG.555/5 through the work of the established Online Working Group on Marine Litter (OWG-ML). The Meeting approved the participation of Morocco in the OWG-ML.

11. The Meeting recommended to share Working Document UNEP/MED WG.555/5 with the European Commission and the Regional Seas Conventions, for their input taking into consideration the respective deadlines for its preparation and submission to the Integrated CORMON Meeting to be held in June 2023, no later than 31 March 2023.

12. The Meeting agreed on approving the use of Working Document UNEP/MED WG.555/5 subject to addressing the above-listed recommendations, for testing its applications in different contexts (e.g., testing methodologies, strengthening IMAP implementation through pilot projects, updating IMAP etc.).