

PORTOROŽ MINISTERIAL DECLARATION

We, Ministers of the Environment and Heads of Delegation of the Contracting Parties to the Convention on the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean (Barcelona Convention) and its Protocols, meeting in Portorož, Slovenia, on 7 December 2023,

Considering that the year 2025 will mark 50 years since the establishment of the Mediterranean Action Plan (MAP) in Barcelona, under the auspices of UNEP Regional Seas Programme (RSP) and its contribution for inspiring similar cooperation frameworks around the globe, as well as the strengthening of the Regional Seas Programme, which today harbours 18 Regional Conventions and Action Plans, involving more than 146 countries,

Recalling also the adoption of the Barcelona Convention in 1976, its revision in 1995, its further consolidation with 7 Protocols, as a collective major achievement of its Contracting Parties during five decades of continuous cooperation, action and implementation,

Emphasizing that, through their unfaltering commitment to multilateral cooperation, the Contracting Parties have empowered the UNEP/MAP-Barcelona Convention system, which has in turn delivered a comprehensive, science-based package of regulatory instruments and measures, as well as guidelines to facilitate their implementation,

Welcoming progress in the delivery of the UNEP/MAP mandate, the implementation of its Medium-Term Strategy for 2022-2027,

Noting the UNEP/MAP-Barcelona Convention system's linkages with and contributions to the implementation of 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and to the Decade of Action, including in response to calls for accelerating sustainable solutions from the global to the regional and to the national/local level,

Renewing our commitment to translating decisions into action through the effective implementation of the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols as an essential prerequisite for a green transition in the Mediterranean and for addressing the triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution in the region,

Renewing our commitment to supporting the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals (in particular SDG 14),

Welcoming the outcomes of recent multilateral processes and Conferences including the 2022 UN Ocean Conference, the 2023 UN Water Conference, as well as the adoption of the UNGA Resolution (A/RES/76/300) on the human right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment,

Reminding the goals of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration and the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development,

Welcoming the outcomes of the sessions and adopted resolutions of the United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Program (UNEA), especially those with a particular relevance to the Mediterranean,

Recalling the United Nations General Assembly resolution 76/296 of July 2022, entitled "Our Ocean, Our Future, Our Responsibility", which highlights that its goals can also be successfully applied at the regional level through raising awareness and increased cooperation,

Embracing the adoption of the Kunming Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF), at the 15th Conference of the Parties to the Biodiversity Convention, last December 2022, in

particular its target 3 calling to ensure and enable that by 2030 at least 30 per cent of coastal and marine areas, especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem functions and services, are effectively conserved and managed through ecologically representative, well-connected and equitably governed systems of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures,

Welcoming the outcomes of the further resumed fifth session of the Intergovernmental conference on an international legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction (General Assembly resolution 72/249), where the Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction (A/CONF.232/2023/4) was adopted by consensus and which is now open for signature. Recognizing that action is needed from the Mediterranean Region as a contribution to its early entry into force and the pivotal role of the Barcelona Convention Contracting Parties in this process,

Recalling that climate change is one of the greatest challenges of our time, we are deeply concerned about its adverse effects on human life and health, and on marine life, including rising sea temperatures, acidification and deoxygenation of the sea, sea level rise, shifts in the abundance and distribution of marine species, increase of invasive alien species and degradation of marine biodiversity,

Fully aware that urgent action is needed to bolster resilience to the unfolding impacts of climate change, while pursuing efforts towards decarbonization and transition to sustainable green economies,

Welcoming the progress of the intergovernmental negotiating committee, established by resolution 5/14 of the UNEA at its resumed fifth session, in developing an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment, and calling for all efforts to be undertaken to conclude negotiations before the end of 2024,

Fully aware of the need for further promoting sustainable development and guaranteeing quality of life in the Mediterranean region by expediting efforts and mobilizing all actors to this end,

Considering the priorities discussed at the 20th session of the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development, Marseille, France, 14-16 June 2023. Fully aware of the absolute necessity, as identified by the OCEAN DECADE ACTIONS FRAMEWORK (UNESCO), to strengthen scientific knowledge and expertise, notably in Mediterranean Sea region,

Noting the key findings of the 2023 Mediterranean Quality Status Report and highlighting the fact that despite the measures taken to date, work shall continue to achieve and maintain good environmental status of the marine and coastal environment,

Welcoming the designation by the International Maritime Organisation of a Particularly Sensitive Sea Area (PSSA) in the North Western Mediterranean sea as a result of a collective initiative in favour of a more effective protection of oceans and seas.

Switching to Green

1. *Commit to halt the degradation of marine and coastal biodiversity through the effective implementation of the Mediterranean region's own post-2020 Biodiversity Framework (SAPBIO) in close interaction with the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF) and the Agreement on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction,*

2. *Enhance* actions to address climate change in the Mediterranean and increase protection of the marine ecosystems against the detrimental impacts from climate change, and strengthen scientific knowledge and expertise in this area, such as through the Network of Mediterranean Experts on Climate and environmental Change (MedECC),

3. *Commit* to advance decarbonization, including in the blue economy sectors supporting *inter alia* the increased levels of ambition of the International Maritime Organization's Strategy for reducing GHG emissions from ships, in particular its goal of reaching net zero by 2050, while also recognizing the Water-Energy-Food-Ecosystem Nexus as an important approach to maximize benefits for environment and sustainable development in the region,

4. *Commit* to the implementation of the Mediterranean SO_x Emission Control Area, which will become effective on the 1st of May 2025, ensuring a uniform application and level playing field and to engage in the process for the possible designation of the Mediterranean as a whole as Nitrogen oxides emission control area (NECA),

5. *Urge* the Contracting Parties to ratify and effectively implement MARPOL Annex VI, as soon as possible, if they have not yet done so, at least by the date of entering into force of Med SECA, to the extent possible,

6. *Commit* to implement at the regional level the global framework for chemicals adopted at the 5th International Conference on chemicals management (ICCM5 - Bonn, Germany, 25-29 September 2023), to manage chemicals and waste safely, with possible references to relevant Protocols/ Regional Plans and concrete results achieved by the GEF-funded MedProgramme, with the intention that UNEP/MAP joins the High Ambition Alliance on chemicals and waste and continues to support Contracting Parties in this process,

7. *Take concrete actions* to ensure effective and timely implementation of the regional legally binding measures adopted under the Land-Based Sources and Activities (LBS) Protocol of the Barcelona Convention, with the aim of achieving substantive pollution reduction and prevention by 2030 and commit to addressing plastic pollution including through the promotion of circular approaches and reduction of single-use plastics,

8. *Commit* to raise the level of ambition and implement targeted actions to accelerate progress towards achieving Good Environmental Status and Sustainable Development Goals, considering the very important processes of revision and update of the Ecosystem Approach RoadMap and of the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (MSSD),

9. *Accelerate* the implementation of Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) and Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) through national and local measures, as appropriate, so as to enable the development of a sustainable and resilient blue economy as a vehicle for the green transition, and through the application of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) as important tools to integrate environmental considerations in MSP plans,

10. *Enhance action and synergies* with other relevant global and regional frameworks as well as initiatives and processes, in particular UNEA and its ocean-related resolutions, relevant IMO conventions, and other Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs), the European Green Deal the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) Ministerial Declarations on Sustainable Blue Economy and on Environment and Climate Action, the WestMED Initiative Ministerial Declaration, to maximize the effective implementation of the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols,

11. *Welcome* global and regional multi partner collective initiatives, coalitions and partnerships addressing the preservation of marine and coastal biodiversity and climate change, such as GOA (Global Ocean Alliance), the ENACT partnership (Enhancing Nature Based Solutions for an Accelerated Climate Transformation) and PAMEx (Plan of Action for a Model Mediterranean Sea),

12. *Encourage* to take action to ratify, approve, accept or accede to the Agreement on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction as a contribution from the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention to its early entry into force,

13. *Commit* to promote and raise awareness on the importance of the Particularly Sensitive Sea Area (PSSA) in the North Western Mediterranean sea as a key achievement for the protection of marine and coastal biodiversity, an effective contribution to the Post-2020 Strategic Action Programme for the Conservation of Biological Diversity and Sustainable Management of Natural Resources in the Mediterranean Region and a model to be reproduced in other areas of the Mediterranean, and also commit to enhance synergies for similar collective initiatives to be undertaken in the Mediterranean,

14. *Commit* to make every effort to ensure and enable that by 2030 at least 30 per cent of coastal and marine areas are effectively conserved and managed, as a contribution of the Mediterranean Region to the achievement of target 3 of the CBD KMGBF,

15. *Support* an ambitious new global framework under the United Nation Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management beyond 2020 and agree that UNEP/MAP will join the High Ambition Alliance on chemicals and waste in support of this objective,

16. *Ensure* that the contribution of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols to the negotiation process for an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution including in the marine environment pursuant to UNEA Resolution 5/14 considers the regional and national contexts, challenges and achievements in tackling marine litter and plastic pollution, and that the implementation of the future instrument capitalizes on the work undertaken within the Regional Seas Action Plans and Conventions, aiming at maximizing synergies and coordination, as appropriate. In that context, we highlight the importance of a comprehensive approach that addresses the full lifecycle of plastics,

17. *Commit* to strengthen cooperation with other relevant Regional Seas Conventions and their Action Plans, to foster complementarity with G7 and G20 fora, in particular through the 2024 Italian G7 Presidency, and with respect to the key role of the Regional Sea Programmes in implementing and achieving global commitments, and to enhance interregional cooperation between the Mediterranean, the Danube and the Black Sea, through a 'Source to Sea' approach,

Investing in future generations

18. *Involve* youth in environmental issues and decision-making processes innovatively through:

- a. Modernizing education programs and promote education for sustainable development and global citizenship in both formal and informal settings to raise young people's awareness on the importance of the environment and sustainable development from an early age and as an instrumental tool for the achievement of the SDGs giving also due consideration to the gender perspective, also in line with the Mediterranean Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development and its Action Plan towards 2030,
- b. Raising the level of inter-generational collaboration,
- c. Involving young people in the activities of local, national, and regional institutions and environmental programs and devolving climate change adaptation policies and plans from the national to the local level (top-down and bottom-up),
- d. Developing and enhancing inter-generational cooperation in planning and implementing measures for adaptation to climate change to improve resilience and responses to climate

related risks and disasters, biodiversity conservation as well as prevention and reduction of marine pollution, in particular marine litter.

19. *Encourage* civil society, private sector, and other key stakeholders to support education and awareness raising on environmental and sustainable development challenges and solutions, including those based on circular economy, and encourage concrete action to maximize effectiveness and results on the ground,

20. *Intensify* activities at all levels, to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) being at the midpoint to 2030, and to this end, *commit* to a swift update of the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (MSSD) 2016-2025 in order to effectively implement Agenda 2030 on Sustainable Development and its SDGs at the regional level, seeking to amend current unsustainable trajectories and place the region on alternative pathways to sustainability and resilience,

50 years of UNEP/MAP in 2025

30 years of Post Rio Barcelona Convention

21. *Celebrate with pride* and undertake an ambitious campaign to raise awareness at the global, regional and national levels, including through the attendance of relevant events, on the achievements of the UNEP/MAP - Barcelona Convention system and highlight its commitment and vision to “Progress towards a healthy, clean, sustainable and climate resilient Mediterranean Sea and Coast with productive and biologically diverse marine and coastal ecosystems, where the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development and its SDGs are achieved through the effective implementation of the Barcelona Convention, its Protocols and the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development for the benefit of people and nature,”

22. *Invite* all MAP Partners and regional institutions having Observer status in the meetings of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention to support and join the communication campaign on the celebration of the 50th anniversary year by undertaking concerted outreach activities,

23. *Urge* the Contracting Parties to ensure universal ratification of all Protocols to the Barcelona Convention, and in this context to ratify as a priority within 2024 the Amendments to the Dumping Protocol so as to celebrate this important achievement in this milestone anniversary of the UNEP/MAP-Barcelona Convention system,

24. *Commit* to contribute to the 6th Session of the United Nations Environment Assembly under the Presidency of the Kingdom of Morocco (26 February to 1 March 2024), and to organize a high-level event for the UNEP MAP 50th year anniversary at the 3rd UN Ocean Conference in Nice under the leadership of France, Spain, Slovenia and Egypt, and *also commit* to raise the profile of the Barcelona Convention system at the 2024 Our Ocean Conference hosted by Greece, the 2025 UN Ocean Conference and other global events with the participation and support of the Secretariat.