

ATHENS DECLARATION

We, Ministers and Heads of Delegations of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean (the Barcelona Convention) and its Protocols, meeting in Athens, Greece on 11 February 2016,

Celebrating with pride the 40 years of the regional cooperation framework established through the Mediterranean Action Plan and the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols, and *being aware* of its significant contribution for achieving a healthy and productive Mediterranean Sea and coast and of the great progress spurred by the solidarity and shared commitments of the MAP system and its partners,

Recalling the historic and transformative body of decisions, strategies, plans of action, ecological objectives and targets, and programmes of measures that have been providing guidance and shaping action at regional, sub regional, national and local level within the scope of the MAP-Barcelona Convention mandate,

Recalling the aim of the UNEP Regional Seas Programme, which is to address the accelerating degradation of the world's oceans and coastal areas through the sustainable management and use of the marine and coastal environment and by engaging neighbouring countries in comprehensive and specific actions to protect their shared marine environment,

Welcoming the outcome document of the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit, 'Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development', which was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 27 September 2015, its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and especially Sustainable Development Goal 14 to 'conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development' and related regional strategic documents,

Welcoming the agreement for combating climate change adopted at the 21st session of the Conference of the Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Paris, on 12 December 2015, which *inter alia* recognizes the importance of protection of oceans and biodiversity,

Taking note of the Recommendations of the 13th and the following meetings of the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development, the Declaration of the Ministerial Meeting on Environment and Climate Change of the Union for the Mediterranean adopted in Athens, on 13 May 2014, as well as the Declaration of the Union for the Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on Blue Economy adopted in Brussels, on 17 November 2015,

Reaffirming the fundamental value of biological diversity and natural resources, as well as their critical role in maintaining marine and coastal ecosystems which are essential for the sustainable development of the Mediterranean region,

Concerned by the continued threats posed to the Mediterranean by major drivers and pressures affecting the sea and its coastal inhabitants, the Mediterranean environment's condition, the current and prospective impacts of collective human activity,

Welcoming the commitments of all the Contracting Parties to implement their obligations under the Convention and the partnership and cooperation that has allowed for accelerated implementation, and acknowledging the differences in capacities and need for capacity building and technical assistance,

Determined to continue our common efforts to tackle the existing and emerging challenges to the achievement of the good environmental status of the Mediterranean, and *being aware* that this

increases expectations from the operation of the UNEP/MAP, its Regional Activity Centres and Programmes and its various strategies and action plans,

Welcoming the adoption by COP 19 of several new and updated MAP-Barcelona Convention regional policies, strategies and action plans to respond effectively to the growing environmental challenges that face the region and boost the implementation of the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols,

Welcoming the efforts and measures taken by Contracting Parties and the Secretariat in the past biennium to strengthen and stabilize the MAP system and its activities and to respond to the complex challenges of the Mediterranean with renewed trust in the value and relevance of the MAP-Barcelona Convention and its Protocols,

Recognizing with appreciation the valuable contribution of national, regional, and international non-governmental organizations and other stakeholders in the work and achievements of the MAP-Barcelona Convention and its Protocols,

1. **Decide** to renew our commitment and step up our efforts to address together the challenges related to environmental protection and sustainable development of the Mediterranean Sea and coast, in the global framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,
2. **Resolve** to accelerate our efforts to ensure the implementation of the Convention and its protocols and to match the Mediterranean Action Plan's past history of achievements and its ambitious goals,
3. **Commit** to further implement the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols at regional, sub-regional and national level, with the application of the ecosystem approach as an overarching principle to achieve the Mediterranean Ecological Objectives and related targets towards good environmental status of the Mediterranean and to contribute to sustainable development,
4. **Commit** to enhance measures to reduce pressures on marine and coastal environment, to stop the decline of endangered species and to safeguard and promote ecosystem services, and resource efficiency,
5. **Commit** to implement the UNEP/MAP Mid-Term Strategy 2016-2021, as the strategic framework for a healthy Mediterranean with marine and coastal ecosystems that are productive and biologically diverse, contributing to sustainable development for the benefit of present and future generations,
6. **Welcome** the adoption of the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (2016-2025) as a strategic guiding document for all stakeholders and partners to contribute to a sustainable future for the Mediterranean region and **encourage** all partners to promote and support its implementation,
7. **Commit** to implement the instruments, programmes, action plans and guidelines adopted at COP 19 as crucial means for the achievement of the objectives of the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols with renewed impetus,
8. **Welcome**, as an example of an innovative financial mechanism for biodiversity, the establishment of a Trust Fund for Mediterranean MPAs promoted by Monaco, Tunisia and France and **welcome** the progress made in this regard, in particular the financial contribution by Monaco,
9. **Commit** to take the necessary measures to ensure the effective implementation of the National Action Plans in accordance with the LBS Protocol of the Barcelona Convention and the related Regional Plans to progressively eliminate pollution reaching the Mediterranean sea with a particular focus on marine litter as an emerging issue of regional and global concern and with the goal of

achieving its significant reduction by 2024 in synergy with relevant initiatives at global and regional levels,

10. **Reaffirm** our commitment to promote adaptation to climate change and increase the resilience of the Mediterranean marine and coastal, natural and socioeconomic systems to the impacts of climate change and to further elaborate the Regional Climate Change Adaptation Framework and translate it into action, making use of existing and new strategic instruments in collaboration with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the United Nations Convention to combat desertification and in synergy with the Union for the Mediterranean,

11. **Commit** to continue our efforts for the implementation of the ICZM Protocol and Action Plan and to prepare the Mediterranean framework as a strategic tool for promotion of sustainable development and integrated management of coastal zones,

12. **Commit** to accelerate the shift towards sustainable consumption and production patterns and as a first step to implement the SCP Action Plan for the Mediterranean, acknowledging the need for capacity building and technology transfer in this matter,

13. Mindful of the Mediterranean Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development, **resolve** to enhance public awareness and the role of education promoting sustainability and the implementation of the SDGs in the Mediterranean,

14. **Welcome** the establishment of the “Istanbul Environment Friendly City Award”, as a means to promote awareness on the importance of coastal cities and communities' efforts in improving their resilience and addressing pressures on the marine and coastal environment, in particular through the implementation of Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP),

15. **Reaffirm** our commitment to face new and emerging natural and socioeconomic challenges, such as climate change and increased migrant flows across the Mediterranean, to better protect the environment and increase its resilience,

16. **Invite** the President of the Contracting Parties to forward this declaration and the outcome of the 19th Meeting of the Contracting Parties, for the attention of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA), other regional seas conventions and programmes, and other relevant organizations.