

Decision IG.22/17

Reform of the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development (MCSD) and Updated MCSD Constitutive Documents

The 19th Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean, hereinafter referred to as “the Barcelona Convention”,

Recalling the Extraordinary COP (Montpellier, France, July 1996) adopting the Terms of Reference and Composition of the MCSD, and COP 10 (Tunis, Tunisia, November 1997) adopting the Rules of Procedure of the MCSD;

Recalling also Decision IG.17/5 “Governance Paper” of COP 15 (Almeria, Spain, January 2008); the Decision IG.20/13 of COP 17 (Paris, France, February 2012), and Decision IG.21/11 of COP 18 (Istanbul, Turkey, December 2013), which invited the Steering Committee of the MCSD to work on reforming the MCSD taking into account the need to sharpen the mandate of the MCSD, strengthen the role and contribution to integrate the environment in other public policies, and revise the constitutive documents of the MCSD accordingly;

Taking note of the report of the 16th Meeting of the MCSD (Marrakesh, Morocco, June 2015) in particular with respect to the reform of the MCSD which considered that there was a need for further Secretariat support to the work and the reform of the MCSD;

1. *Adopts* the Composition of the MCSD and its terms of reference as an advisory body to the Contracting Parties, as contained in Annex I to this Decision;
2. *Approves* the rules of procedure of the MCSD, as provided in Annex I to this Decision;
3. *Requests* the Secretariat to improve MCSD visibility notably at the United Nations High Level Political Forum and other relevant fora at global and regional level, relying on UNEP institutional capacities;
4. *Requests* the Secretariat to consider the need for at least one face to face meeting of the MCSD Steering Committee in the intersessional period between MCSD Meetings;
5. *Encourages* the members of the MCSD to support this process by hosting the meetings of the Steering Committee, to enable at least one face to face meeting in a biennium;
6. *Decides* on the new non-Contracting Party membership of the MCSD, as proposed by the MCSD and its Steering Committee, which add the parliamentarian group and therefore brings the total number of MCSD Members from 37 to 40:
 - The Local Authorities Group: Association of Italian Local Agenda 21, MEDCITIES, the Mediterranean Commission of the United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG);
 - The Socio-economic Stakeholders Group: Arab Network for Environment and Development (RAED), Union of Mediterranean Confederations of Enterprises (UMCE), ANIMA Investment Network (Cooperation platform for economic development in the Mediterranean);
 - The Non-Governmental Organizations Group: World Wide Fund for Nature – Mediterranean Programme Office (WWF MedPO), Environnement et Développement au Maghreb (ENDA-Maghreb), Mediterranean Information Office for Environment Culture and Sustainable Development (MIO ECSDE);
 - The Scientific Community Group: Forum Euroméditerranée des Instituts de Sciences Economiques (FEMISE), Mediterranean Programme for International Environmental Law and Negotiation (MEPIELAN) and Mediterranean Sustainable Development Solutions Network (Med-SDSN);

- The Intergovernmental Organizations Group: International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) Secretariat, Centre for Environment and Development for the Arab Region and Europe (CEDARE).
- Parliamentarians: Parliamentary Assembly of the Union for the Mediterranean (PA-UfM), Circle of Mediterranean Parliamentarians on Sustainable Development (COMPSUD), Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean (PAM).

7. *Requests* the Secretariat, in accordance with Rule 5 paragraphs 1 and 3 to invite and involve as observers other UN bodies active in the Mediterranean, inter alia UNDP (RBAS and RBEC), UN- HABITAT, UNIDO, GFCM, FAO, UN ESCWA, UN WTO, UNECE, UNECA, UNESCO and the World Bank. Additionally, it should be considered to involve representatives of youth organizations to MCSD as observers;

8. *Requests* the Secretariat to invite Palestine to attend future MCSD meetings as an observer;

9. *Invites* Contracting Parties to participate on a voluntary basis in a simple MSSD peer review process as described in Annex II of this Decision and requests the Secretariat to support this process;

10. *Encourages* MCSD Members to be more involved between meetings, participating in projects and actions to follow-up on the MSSD implementation, sharing good practices, knowledge transfer, and peer review, and enhance the visibility of the MCSD.

Annex I

**CONSTITUTIVE DOCUMENTS OF THE MEDITERRANEAN COMMISSION ON
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

**CONSTITUTIVE DOCUMENTS OF THE MEDITERRANEAN COMMISSION ON
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
RULES OF PROCEDURE, TERMS OF REFERENCE AND COMPOSITION**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- **MEDITERRANEAN COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
RULES OF PROCEDURE**
- **MEDITERRANEAN COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
TERMS OF REFERENCE**
- **MEDITERRANEAN COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
COMPOSITION**

**MEDITERRANEAN COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (MCSD)
RULES OF PROCEDURE**

PURPOSE

Rule 1

The Rules of Procedure shall apply to the meetings of the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development (MCSD). They complement the framework for operation of MCSD, as described by the "Terms of Reference" and the "Composition of the Commission" in the annexed documents adopted by the Contracting Parties.

DEFINITIONS

Rule 2

For the purpose of these rules:

1. the word "Commission" shall apply to the "Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development";
2. the term "Barcelona Convention" shall apply to the 1976 Convention for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea against Pollution as amended in 1995;
3. the term "Coordinator" shall apply to the Coordinator or the Coordinating Unit of the Mediterranean Action Plan or his designated representative;
4. the term "Secretariat" shall apply to the Coordinating Unit of the Mediterranean Action Plan (MAP) as provided in article 17 of the Barcelona Convention as amended.

PLACE OF THE MEETINGS OF THE COMMISSION

Rule 3

The meetings of the Commission shall be held at the seat of the Coordinating Unit of MAP, unless convened in other Mediterranean venues in pursuance of a recommendation of the Commission approved by the meeting of the Contracting Parties.

During the time between the Parties' meeting the approval maybe given by the Bureau of the Parties to the Convention.

For reasons of optimal use of available resources, the meetings within the MCSD context may be coordinated as appropriate with other relevant MAP meetings.

DATES OF THE MEETINGS OF THE COMMISSION

Rule 4

The Commission will hold an ordinary meeting on a biannual basis and extraordinary sessions on a need-be basis.

The Coordinator shall convene the meetings of the Commission.

The Commission shall, at its ordinary meetings, fix the opening date and the duration of the next meeting.

At the commencement of the first sitting of each meeting, the Commission shall elect the Steering Committee, which is composed of a President, five Vice-presidents and a Rapporteur, on the basis of an equitable geographical distribution, and among the various groups in accordance with the distribution indicated in Rule 17.

INVITATIONS

Rule 5

The Coordinator shall invite to send representatives to participate in the Commission's meetings as observers, the United Nations and its competent subsidiary bodies, and the Specialized Agencies if they participate in the activities of the Mediterranean Action Plan, or have direct concern with environment and sustainable development issues in the Mediterranean.

The Coordinator shall, in agreement with the Steering Committee, invite to send representatives to participate in the Commission's meetings as an observer, any state which is a member of the United Nations which so requests and has direct concern with environmental and sustainable development issues in the Mediterranean.

The Coordinator shall, in agreement with the Steering Committee, invite to send representatives to participate in the Commission's meetings as an observer, any other inter-governmental organization, including financial institutions, which would interest itself directly in issues of environmental protection and sustainable development in the Mediterranean, the activities of which are related to the functions of the Commission.

Such observers may, as provided in Article 20(2) of the Barcelona Convention as amended, participate in the Commission's meetings and may present any information or report relevant to the work of the Commission and in matters of direct concern to the organizations they represent.

PUBLICITY

Rule 6

Plenary sittings of the meetings of the Commission shall be held in public, unless the Commission decides otherwise. Sittings of subsidiary bodies of the meetings of the Commission shall be held in private, unless the meeting of the Commission decides otherwise.

AGENDA

Rule 7

In agreement with the Steering Committee of the Commission, the Coordinator shall prepare the provisional agenda for the meeting of the Commission and shall communicate it to the members of the Commission at least four weeks before the opening of the meeting together with supporting documents.

Rule 8

The provisional agenda of each meeting shall include:

1. all items mentioned under the "MANDATE" section of the Terms of Reference of the Commission;
2. all items the inclusion of which has been requested at a previous meeting of the Commission;
3. any item proposed by a member of the Commission;

4. an analytical report of the Coordinator containing information on relevant sustainable development activities, the progress achieved in the implementation of the MSSD and other relevant activities undertaken, and emerging issues to be addressed;
5. the reports of the Task Managers and the Thematic Working Groups as per Rule 20;
6. all items pertaining to the financial arrangements relevant to the Commission.

Rule 9

The Coordinator shall, in agreement with the Steering Committee of the Commission, include any question suitable for the agenda which may arise between the dispatch of the provisional agenda and the opening of the meeting in a supplementary provisional agenda which the meeting of the Commission shall examine together with the provisional agenda.

Rule 10

At the opening of an ordinary meeting of the Commission, the members of the Commission, when adopting the agenda for the meeting, may add, delete, defer or amend items. Only items which are considered by the meeting to be urgent and important may be added to the agenda.

Rule 11

At the beginning of each meeting, subject to the provision of Rule 10, the Commission shall adopt its agenda for the meeting on the basis of the provisional agenda and the supplementary provisional agenda referred to in Rule 9.

Rule 12

The Commission shall normally consider for the meeting only agenda items for which adequate documentation has been circulated to members four weeks before the beginning of the meeting of the Commission.

REPRESENTATION

Rule 13

All members of the Commission shall participate in the Commission on an equal footing.

Each member of the Commission shall be represented by representative accredited, who may be accompanied by such advisers as may be required.

Rule 14

The names of representatives and advisers shall be officially submitted by the members of the Commission to the Coordinator, before the opening sitting of a meeting which the representatives are to attend.

Rule 15

At the first sitting of each meeting of the Commission, the President of the previous ordinary meeting, or in his absence a Vice-President designated by him, shall preside until the meeting has elected a President for the meeting.

Rule 16

If the President is temporarily absent from a sitting or any part thereof, he shall appoint one of the Vice-Presidents to assume his duties.

STEERING COMMITTEE OF THE COMMISSION

Rule 17

The Steering Committee shall include four members representing the Contracting Parties, including *ex officio* the President of the Bureau of the Contracting Parties, and three representatives from the six categories foreseen by the Terms of Reference of the MCSD.

At the commencement of the first sitting of each meeting, the Commission shall elect the Steering Committee, which is composed of a President, five Vice-presidents and a Rapporteur, on the basis of an equitable geographical distribution, and among the various groups in accordance with the distribution indicated in the paragraph above.

Rule 18

The MCSD Steering Committee oversees the work of the MCSD between sessions. The Steering Committee meets regularly on annual basis during the biennium - at least one of these meetings is to be face-to-face.

The work of the Steering Committee is supported by the Secretariat. In order to secure the necessary financial means, the Secretariat shall include adequate provisions in its biennial Programme of Work and Budget to be discussed and agreed by the Contracting Parties.

Members of the Commission are encouraged to hosting the meetings of the Steering Committee.

Rule 19

The President, or in his absence one of the Vice-Presidents designated by him shall serve as President of the Steering Committee.

If a member of the Steering Committee resigns or otherwise becomes unable to continue to perform his functions, a representative of the same member of the Commission shall replace him for the remainder of his mandate.

ORGANIZATION OF THE MEETINGS OF THE COMMISSION

Rule 20

During the course of a meeting, the Commission shall establish thematic working groups and other working groups as it deems necessary, and to refer to them the themes identified by the Commission as of great importance for the sustainable development of the Mediterranean region for study, and proposal. Such working groups could sit while the Commission is not in session, ensuring thus, together with the Steering Committee, the continuity of the Commission between its sessions. Unless otherwise decided, the Commission shall select task managers for each thematic working group and a chairman for other working groups.

The Commission shall define the mandate and composition of the working groups and Task Managers.

Rule 21

The Coordinator shall act as Secretary of any meeting of the Commission. He may delegate his functions to a member of the Secretariat.

Rule 22

The Coordinator shall provide the staff required by the Commission and shall be responsible for all the necessary arrangements for meetings of the Commission.

Rule 23

The Secretariat shall arrange for interpretation of speeches, receive, translate and circulate the documents of the meetings of the Commission and its working groups; publish and circulate the decisions, reports and relevant documentation of the meeting of the Commission. It shall have custody of the documents in the archives of the meeting of the Commission and generally perform all other work that the Commission may require.

LANGUAGES OF THE COMMISSION

Rule 24

Arabic, English, French and Spanish shall be the official languages of the Commission. English and French shall be the working languages of the Commission if available financial resources do not allow for the use of the four official languages. English and French shall be the working languages of meetings of the Steering Committee of the Commission and of working groups.

CONDUCT OF BUSINESS

Rule 25

The Rules of procedure for Meetings and Conferences of the Contracting Parties concerning Conduct of Business (Rules 30-41) shall apply *mutatis mutandis* to the Conduct of Business in the meetings of the Commission.

PROPOSALS OF THE COMMISSION

Rule 26

Proposals of the Commission shall be adopted by consensus. These proposals will be presented to the Contracting Parties' meetings.

RECORDS OF THE MEETINGS OF THE COMMISSION

Rule 27

Sound records of the meetings of the Commission shall be kept by the Secretariat in accordance with the practice of the United Nations.

AMENDMENTS OF PROCEDURE

Rule 28

Any amendments of the Rules of Procedure should be approved, after proposal of the Commission, by the meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention.

MEDITERRANEAN COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT TERMS OF REFERENCE

Introduction

1. The Mediterranean Commission for Sustainable Development (MCSD) was established in 1995 in the framework of the Mediterranean Action Plan (MAP) as an advisory body to the Contracting Parties to assist them in their efforts to integrate environmental issues in their socioeconomic programmes and, in so doing, promote sustainable development policies in the Mediterranean region.

2. The Commission is unique in its composition, in as much as government representatives, local communities, socioeconomic actors, IGOs and NGOs participate on an equal footing. The MCSD has so far carried out high-quality undertakings, mobilising work on priority themes for the Mediterranean, notably, water resources, integrated coastal zone management, tourism, industry etc., and developing the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development.

A. PURPOSE

3. The purpose of the MCSD is to assist the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention to implement the objectives of sustainable development and other regional or local actors in their efforts to promote sustainable development in the Mediterranean region and to integrate environmental issues in their socio-economic programmes.

B. MANDATE

4. The MCSD is an advisory body to the Contracting Parties of the Barcelona Convention and represents a forum for debate with essentially the following mission:

- To assist Mediterranean countries and other stakeholders active in the region in the adoption and implementation of sustainable development policies, particularly the integration of environmental considerations into other policies;
- To ensure the follow-up of MSSD implementation through appropriate tools, mechanisms and criteria that would better enhance an efficient follow-up function;
- To promote the exchange of experience and good practices regarding the integration of environmental and socioeconomic policies, as well as examples which show the application of international sustainable development commitments at suitable scales in different countries;
- To identify the obstacles encountered and support regional and subregional cooperation for the effective implementation of the sustainable development principle;
- To coordinate the periodical drafting of the report on the state of implementation of the MCSD recommendations;
- To produce opinions of the overall MAP Work Programme, with the aim of integrating sustainability considerations into the MAP / Barcelona Convention system as a whole.
- To produce opinions and recommendations for integration and coordination of the work of the MCSD with the other existing international and regional sustainable development and environmental programmes, policy frameworks and initiatives.

C. FUNCTIONING

5. Each session of the Commission will focus on sectoral issues relevant to the MSSD, as well as other emerging sustainability issues. MCSD recommendations will be presented for consideration to the Meeting of the Contracting Parties, following discussion at the meeting of the MAP Focal Points with the aim of advising on making practical and effective use of the MSSD and on the implementation of the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols.

D. REPORTS

6. Before each session, each member should provide a concise report focusing on the implementation of MSSD and MCSD recommendations, following a template prepared by the Secretariat. The Secretariat will then prepare a summary report to be presented at the beginning of each session.

7. The analytical report of the Coordinator as per Rule 8 paragraph 4 of the Rules of Procedure will also include reports by the Regional Activity Centres (RACs) on the implementation of MSSD and MCSD recommendations relevant to their line of work.

MEDITERRANEAN COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT COMPOSITION

Introduction

1. The MCSD is an advisory body to the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention and a forum for debate and exchange of experiences on sustainable development issues that concern all interested parties in the Mediterranean region. It is appropriate to involve the greatest possible variety of actors in the work of the Commission, so as to ensure the greatest possible dissemination of the concepts promoted by the MCSD.

A. NUMBER OF REPRESENTATIVES

2. The Commission shall be composed of 40 members, consisting of:

- 22 representatives designated by the competent bodies of the Contracting Parties
- 3 representatives of local authorities
- 3 representatives of NGOs
- 3 representatives of socio- economic stakeholders
- 3 representatives of the scientific community
- 3 representatives of intergovernmental organizations working in the field of sustainable development
- 3 representatives of regional parliamentary associations

3. Efforts should be made to ensure participation of representatives from both the environmental and development fields related to the topics of the agenda of each meeting of the MCSD. Appropriate geographical representation and media participation should be ensured.

4. Each Contracting Party to the Barcelona Convention shall be represented by one high-level representative (total 22), who may be accompanied by such alternates and advisers as may be required, in order to ensure interdisciplinary participation of relevant ministerial bodies of the Contracting Parties (e.g. ministries of environment, tourism, economy, development, industry, finance, energy, etc.).

5. All members shall participate in the Commission on an equal footing.

B. METHOD OF NOMINATION OF CANDIDATES OTHER THAN THOSE REPRESENTING THE CONTRACTING PARTIES

6. The Contracting Parties, MCSD members and the Secretariat (in consultation with UNEP/MAP Components, as appropriate) may nominate members of the Commission, other than those representing the Contracting Parties, based on written expressions of interest, and criteria and modalities provided for in Decision IG.19/6 on "MAP/Civil society cooperation and partnership".

Each biennium, the Steering Committee of the Commission, with the assistance of the Secretariat, shall review the list of the MCSD members, particularly in the light of those members whose mandate may be drawing to a close, and decide on any changes required.

The list of candidates shall be submitted for adoption by the next Ordinary Meeting of the Contracting Parties.

7. The following general selection criteria will apply:

- I. The criteria established in Decision 19/6 on "MAP/ Civil society cooperation and partnership" shall be used as a reference text for selection of members representing NGOs.

- II. Priority for selection shall be given to Mediterranean local authorities, NGOs, socio-economic stakeholders, the scientific community, and intergovernmental organizations that are concerned with environmental and sustainable development issues in the Mediterranean.
- III. The principle of equitable geographical distribution should be respected (north/south and east/west).
- IV. Fragile and island ecosystems will be given due consideration;
- V. With reference to the six specific categories, the following are the selection criteria, giving priority to the groups or networks concerned:

(i) Local Authorities

Local authorities to be selected should be concerned with environmental and sustainable development issues.

(ii) Socio-economic Actors

Selection within this group should take into consideration the major problems and decisive factors in the Mediterranean as well as the following factors:

- north/south representation
- developed/developing countries
- rural/urban
- past and current activities at the Mediterranean level.

Priority of selection shall be given to socio-economic networks active in the Mediterranean.

(iii) NGOs

The members representing NGOs should be selected from the list of MAP/NGO partners.

The members should be selected from among three NGO categories, with priority being afforded in the following order:

- NGOs with regional or sub-regional Mediterranean scope
- NGOs with global scope
- NGOs with national or local scope

The NGOs to be selected should have a concrete and action-oriented approach towards the Mediterranean

(iv) IGOs

The members representing IGOs should be selected from organizations with global and/or regional scope, with mandates and activities of direct relevance to the work of the MCSD and the implementation of the MSSD.

(v) Scientific Community

The members representing the scientific community should be selected from among academic/research institutions and individuals with a proven track of relevant work and interest in fields of environment and sustainable development in the Mediterranean.

(vi) Parliamentarians

The members representing Parliamentary Associations should have a Mediterranean regional or sub-regional scope and include individuals with experience in the field of sustainable development.

8. The Secretariat shall develop with inputs from Contracting Parties, MCSD members and UNEP/MAP Components a roster of organizations and individuals from the above categories to be used for future nominations as members of the MCSD.

C. DURATION OF THE MANDATE

9. The duration of the membership of the Commission shall be as follows:

- I. All Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention shall be permanent members of the Commission;
- II. Three representatives from each of the six categories, shall be selected for a duration of two biennia by the meeting of the Contracting Parties. Their mandate is renewable for one additional term
- III. When members do not attend the Commission meetings, enquiries shall be forwarded by through the Steering Committee through the Secretariat to identify and address the reasons for the non-attendance. Non-Contracting Party organizations who have not attended two successive meetings of the MCSD should be considered for replacement.

Annex II
MSSD PEER REVIEW

Introduction

1. The Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention have been developing national activities and putting in place structures and processes pertaining to sustainable development, with varying degrees in scope, content, approach and level of implementation.
2. The approaches for sustainable development policies and actions are diverse and consist of cyclical and interactive approaches for planning, participation and action to foster progress towards sustainability goals. Globally, one of the key noted weaknesses is the feedback mechanisms, including monitoring, learning and adaptationⁱ. Similarly, the Contracting Parties, collectively, or individually, are facing varying challenges in elaborating, implementing, monitoring and reviewing their strategic and operational actions towards sustainable development. This is particularly relevant as the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development 2016-2025 is being approved and implemented.
3. These challenges offer a great potential for exchange of experiences and sharing of good practice, as well as gathering information that could be used for the assessment of progress across the Mediterranean in terms of adoption and implementation of sustainable development in general and more specifically of Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development.

Mandate to Put in Place a Simplified Peer Review

4. The mandate to prepare a proposal on putting in place a simplified peer review is given by the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention, through the adoption of the Decision IG. 21/12, at their 18th Ordinary Meeting (COP 18) in Istanbul, December 2013. Key statements of this Decision read as follows (excerpts):
 - *Request the MCSD to encourage, through its meetings and operations, the exchange of good practice; and*
 - *Request the Secretariat to prepare a proposal for the consideration of the MCSD on how a simplified peer review process could be put in place.*
5. This decision was based on the recommendations of the 15th Ordinary Meeting of the MCSD (Floriana, Malta, June 2013) on the reform of the MCSD and its mission. Among these recommendations were:
 - *In terms of the periodic review of national implementation of the MSSD, a simplified peer-review mechanism was suggested by several participants as a way to upgrade the very useful role of the MCSD as a regional platform for exchanges of experiences (...); and*
 - *Encourage the exchange of good practice, for which a simplified peer review could be a tool.*

Examples of Existing Peer Review Mechanisms

6. According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), “peer review is basically an examination of one state’s performance or practices in a particular area by other states. The point of the exercise is to help the state under review improve its policymaking, adopt best practices and comply with established standards and principles”. It relies heavily on mutual trust among the actors involved, as well as on their shared confidence in the processⁱⁱ.
7. There are certain structural elements shared by all existing peer reviewsⁱⁱⁱ: (i) a basis for proceeding; (ii) an agreed on set of principles, (iii) standards and criteria against which the performance of the reviewed country will be assessed; (iv) designated players to carry out the review; and (v) a set of procedures leading to the final result.
8. Among the existing peer reviews, three are relevant to the development of a simplified peer review process as they represent two different approaches: The OECD peer review process – A

tool for cooperation and changeiv, BRICS+G - Dialogue About Sustainability And Growth In Six Countries - Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa (the BRICS) and Germanyv, and African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM)vi. Those peer review processes are the main sources of inspiration for the simplified peer review on implementing sustainable development in Mediterranean countries.

Simplified peer review on implementing sustainable development in Mediterranean countries

Aim

9. To undertake a simplified peer review, in form of a dialogue about national sustainable development structures and processes through which two or more Mediterranean countries engage in a mutual improvement and learning process. This peer review mechanism will contribute to the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (MSSD) implementation and monitoring.

Scope

10. The thematic scope of the peer review process will be the reviewed country's overall structures and processes that have been put in place to implement sustainable development at the national level, with focus placed on concrete experiences in designing, managing, implementing and monitoring national policies and activities for sustainability. One or more of the MSSD objectives, along with their social dimension, might be the core themes for exchange and dialogue.

Underlining principles

11. *Voluntary and equal participation:* The involvement in the simplified peer review process is voluntary and it is the choice of two or more countries to undertake a collaborative meaningful process of mutual improvement and learning. Concerned countries participate at an equal level (no reviewed country, no examiner country).
12. *Learning by doing and sharing:* Countries involved engage in constructive and positive joint process based on gathering and sharing information on respective practices and experiences.
13. *Participation:* The participation of relevant national stakeholders (e.g. government departments, economic actors, civil society, academia, donors), at the level of experts and/or practitioners, is crucial to the success and credibility of the process. The involvement of high-ranking officials will facilitate the credibility and commitment to the process.
14. *Flexibility:* The process is sufficiently flexible so that involved countries can agree on thematic scopes, as well as procedures leading to final results.

Enabling Conditions and Criteria for Success

15. *Commitment and ownership:* The improvement and learning process can function properly only if there is an adequate level of commitment of and ownership by the involved countries. The political back-up is essential to its success.
16. *Adequacy of Resources:* Involved countries should secure sufficient resources (financial and human) to undertake this joint cooperative process. Depending on the approval of the UNEP/MAP Programme of Work and Budget, Mediterranean Trust Fund may contribute to two workshops per biennium as part of the Programme of Work. External funding shall also be sought.
17. *Value Sharing:* Participating countries should share the same views on the standards and criteria for a successful improvement and learning process.

18. *Mutual Trust*: A climate of mutual respect and sharing and large degree of mutual trust are important to the success of the improvement and learning approach.
19. *Credibility*: The effectiveness of the improvement and learning process heavily relies on the credibility of the review process and its mechanisms. For this it is key to involve an independent body (namely UNEP/MAP staff supporting the MCSD and staff from Plan Bleu) and, if needed, external experts (from another country or organisation).

Process

20. This is meant to be a cooperative, constructive and positive process of mutual improvement and learning.
- The MCSD, with the support of the Coordinating Unit of the Mediterranean Action Plan (CU), will be the body within which the review is undertaken. This is in line with COP 18 Decision IG. 21/12, requesting the MCSD to encourage, through its meetings and operations, the exchange of good practices.
 - The CU will initiate the process through a call for proposals, for the Contracting Parties, to undertake a bilateral or multi-lateral improvement and learning process.
 - Two or more countries will be involved on a voluntary basis in the improvement and learning process. The participation of at least three countries would be a more effective option as it will enrich the exchanges and dialogue.
 - The participating countries, with the assistance of the Secretariat and the guidance of the MCSD Steering Committee, should agree on lead questions that will guide the overall dialogue discussions and related round-tables.
 - The process will include: (i) national preparatory round-tables; (ii) international (bilateral) joint meetings, and (iii) joint presentation of the outcomes at the MCSD Meeting.
 - The CU, with the support of Plan Bleu, will be the entity responsible for facilitating the effective implementation peer review. It will, in particular, support the process by producing documentation and analysis, facilitating interactions with involved countries, organising meetings, stimulating the exchanges and ensuring conformity and continuity.
 - Depending on the scope of the improvement and learning process the participating countries will chose, there might be a need to involve external experts who can bring an independent perspective and enhance the richness of the process.

Expected Benefits for Involved Countries

21. *Enhanced cooperation and partnership*: The improvement and learning process can further the cooperation among the involved countries, and lead to enhanced partnerships among various stakeholders, nationally and internationally.
22. *Contribution to capacity building*: The proposed process can be an important capacity building instrument. It will foster sharing information and skills, benefiting concerned countries and involved stakeholders. The national experts and/or practitioners, otherwise focussed on domestic issues, will be engaged in international exchanges and experiences.
23. *Encouragement and enhancement of compliance*: As the Mediterranean countries are engaged in environmental governance, this improvement and learning process offers a platform for encouraging and enhancing the compliance for the Contracting Parties.
24. *Cost-effectiveness*: The participating countries will have access to expertise from other countries, free of charge. This simplified form of peer review will be definitely more cost-effective than the expensive assessments by consultants and specialised firms.

ⁱ Swanson DA and Pinter L et al. (2004): National Strategies for Sustainable Development: Challenges, Approaches and Innovations in Strategic and Co-ordinated Action International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD).

ⁱⁱ <http://www.oecd.org/site/peerreview/peerreviewataglance.htm>

ⁱⁱⁱ <http://www.oecd.org/site/peerreview/howdoesitwork.htm>

^{iv} <http://www.oecd.org/site/peerreview/theprocedures.htm>

^v PRIME-SD - Peer Review Improvement through Mutual Exchange on Sustainable Development: A guidebook for peer reviews of national sustainable development strategies; 2006.

^{vi} <http://aprm-au.org/>