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Convention

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Third (Interim) Steering Committee Meeting of the EU-funded Marine Litter MED II Project

Istanbul, Türkiye, 8 February 2023

Report of the Meeting

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UNEP/MAP
Athens, 2023

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Introduction

1. The Third (Interim) Steering Committee meeting of the EU-funded Marine Litter MED II project was organized by UNEP/MAP Secretariat (MED POL Programme) in Istanbul, Türkiye, on 8 February 2023, at the kind invitation of the Black Sea Commission Permanent Secretariat (BSC PS). The Marine Litter MED II project is funded by the European Union's (EU) Directorate-General for Environment (DG ENV).
2. The main objective of the Meeting was to review the progress achieved in the implementation of the Marine Litter MED II project, including its financial aspects, communication and visibility plan, as well as to discuss and review the Secretariat's proposal for specific budget reallocation and a 6-month no-cost extension.
3. The overall objective of the Marine Litter MED II project is to reduce and prevent the generation of marine litter in the Mediterranean through an expanded implementation of key reduction and prevention measures as provided for in the updated Regional Plan on Marine Litter Management in the Mediterranean. This will be achieved through: (a) expanding the implementation of selected key marine litter reduction and prevention measures both in terms of geographical scope and impact; (b) contributing to the development of IMAF Candidate Indicator 24 towards making it operational at country level; and (c) contributing in achieving the reduction environmental targets as agreed by the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona in 2016 during COP 18 as reaffirmed during COP 21 and referred to in its Naples Ministerial Declaration.

Participation

4. The Marine Litter MED II project Steering Committee Meeting was attended by representatives of Israel, Lebanon, Morocco, Tunisia, the European Commission DG ENV, the Mediterranean Action Plan/Barcelona Convention Secretariat (UNEP/MAP) along with its Mediterranean Pollution Assessment and Control Programme (MED POL), the MedWaves the Regional Activity Centre for Sustainable Consumption and Production (MedWaves-SCP/RAC) and the Regional Activity Centre for Specially Protected Areas (SPA/RAC), as well as the Permanent Secretariat of the Black Sea Commission.
5. The full list of participants including contact details is attached as **Annex I** to the present report.

Agenda item 1: Opening of the Meeting and Adoption of the Agenda

6. The Steering Committee Meeting of the EU-funded Marine Litter MED II project was opened on Wednesday, 08 February 2023 at 10:00 (UTC +3), by the UNEP/MAP Coordinator and the European Commission DG ENV Senior Expert in charge of the Project.
7. Ms Tatjana Hema, UNEP/MAP Coordinator, welcomed the participants and emphasized the importance of the Marine Litter MED II project. She thanked the European Commission for the continuous support and contribution provided on issues related to the implementation of the Regional Plan on Marine Litter Management in the Mediterranean and for strengthening marine litter management around the region. She made special reference to the important role the beneficiary countries are having in executing national activities, for this project addressing land- and sea-based sources, involving the whole MAP System (i.e., the Coordinating Unit and MAP Components), and most importantly for expediting and significantly progressing in the execution of the project's activities since the previous Steering Committee Meeting in July 2022. UNEP/MAP Coordinator stressed the importance for considering the Secretariat's proposal for a 6-month no-cost extension of the project to allow a full and effective delivery of all project's activities.
8. Mr. Michail Papadoyannakis, Senior Expert at the European Commission (DG ENV) thanked UNEP/MAP and MED POL for organizing and hosting the meeting and welcomed the broad

participation, as well as for organizing the meeting at the premises of Black Sea Commission back-to-back with the Bilateral Coordination Meeting between UNEP/MAP and BSC. He stressed on the importance of the Marine Litter MED II project for the region, as it targets a litter free Mediterranean which will have a positive impact for the citizens in all countries around the Mediterranean. Mr. Papadoyannakis made special reference to the paramount importance for beneficiary countries to execute and expand implementation of the pilots planned in the framework of this project. He also welcomed the progress achieved thus far, and since the previous Steering Committee Meeting, and highlighted the importance and urged the Secretariat and the beneficiary countries in keeping up with the same implementation rate.

Agenda item 2: Organizational Matters

9. Recalling the Terms of References (ToRs) and relevant mandate of the Steering Committee Meeting included in the project document, the UNEP/MAP Coordinator invited all participants for a *tour de table* which allowed all participants to briefly introduce themselves to each other and to the organizations which they represent.

10. The Project Steering Committee reviewed and adopted the provisional agenda. The Meeting Agenda is included in **Annex II** to the present report.

Agenda item 3: Progress on Marine Litter MED II Project Implementation:

11. The MED POL Associate Programme Management Officer, Mr. Christos Ioakeimidis, presented the Working Documents UNEP/MED WG.553/2 “Progress Report on the Implementation of Marine Litter MED II Project” and UNEP/MED WG.553/3 “Updated Work Plan and Budget - Proposal for Budget Reallocation and Project Extension.” He informed the Project Steering Committee of the progress achieved during the period July 2022 to January 2023.

12. The progress on project’s implementation (UNEP/MED WG.553/2) covered the following topics:

- a) Finalization of the two National Strategies/Monitoring Programmes for IMAP Candidate Indicator 24 for Tunisia and Lebanon, progress in data collection and the capacity building activities carried out in Lebanon (organization of 2 capacity building trainings and one workshop in Sept. 2022).
- b) Finalization of the region-wide approved Data Standards (DS) and Data Dictionaries (DS) for IMAP Ecological Objective 10 (EO10) Candidate Indicator 24 (Ingestion and Entanglement on Marine Turtles)¹, and the preparation of the updated/edited version (WG.555/Inf.3 – CORMON Marine Litter, 3 March 2023) to be incorporated into IMAP InfoSystem.
- c) Engagement of a regional expert from SPA/RAC to work and prepare a proposal for updated Baseline Values (BV) and the establishment of Threshold Values (TV) for IMAP Candidate Indicator 24, including the finalization of the data sharing agreement with PlasticBusters MPA Project.
- d) Finalization of the work pertinent to updating the Baseline Values (BV) and the establishment of Threshold Values (TV) for IMAP Candidate Indicator 23, and in particular seafloor macrolitter and floating microplastics. The next step is the engagement of a regional expert to work in elaborating and proposing updated environmental reduction targets.
- e) Finalization of the guidelines for monitoring riverine inputs of marine litter² followed by the establishment of the Online Working Group on Marine Litter (OWG-ML) since September

¹ UNEP/MED WG.534/3: Data Standards (DS) and Data Dictionaries (DS) for IMAP Ecological Objective 10 (EO10) Candidate Indicator 24 (Ingestion and Entanglement on Marine Turtles).

² UNEP/MED WG.555/5: Guidelines for Monitoring Riverine Inputs of Marine Litter. CORMON Marine Litter Meeting, 3 March 2023.

2022 and the respective review iterations deriving from 4 consecutive online meetings from Nov. 2022 to Jan. 2023, and the upcoming review by the CORMON Marine Litter Meeting (3 March 2023).

- f) Engagement of a regional expert since Jan. 2023 to develop: (i) A regional report addressing the main sources and uses of microplastics in the Mediterranean, with a particular focus on microplastic leakages from WWTP (sludge and effluent) into the marine and coastal environment of the Mediterranean; and (ii) Protocol for monitoring microplastic leakage into the marine and coastal environment coming from Wastewater Treatment Plants (WWTP) with a particular focus on the microplastics retained or being present in sludge and effluent of the WWTP.
- g) Organization of two national capacity building and coordination meetings in Morocco (July 2022) and Tunisia (December 2022).
- h) Execution of Adopt-a-beach pilots in three (out of five) Countries (Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco), and the relevant progress achieved with at least two additional sites per country and the collection of data in line with the seasonal sampling frequency.
- i) Execution of Fishing-for-Litter pilots in three (out of three) Countries (Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco), having completed the selection of ports/vessels/fishermen, progressing well with data collection including with the support of scuba divers, and with the capacity building component.
- j) Progress on the work on single-use plastics (SUPs) in Tunisia (work completed) and Lebanon:
 - i. In Tunisia, the project supported the implementation of a dedicated communication campaign on the ban decree on single-use plastic bags was conceived and tools produced (leaflets, posters, roll ups, video and caps), including the realization of a survey on consumption of SUPBs and the relevant perceptions, including policy recommendations.
 - ii. In Lebanon, a baseline report is produced and has been submitted to the MoE, focusing on the implementation of two policy measures (a reward system and a compulsory charge), which were presented during a consultation meeting (17 November 2022) and relevant feedback was received.
- k) Progress on the work on Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) in Morocco, Algeria and Lebanon:
 - i. In Morocco, the development of an EPR scheme for packaging with a focus on plastic (PET) bottles is undergoing, in line with the national EPR Roadmap (WES Project), including the development of a national economic study with a focus on a business model for the collection and final treatment of PET bottles ending up as waste (linked with a decision on EPR fees for producers).
 - ii. In Algeria, a collaboration is in place with GIZ project which has piloted a voluntary EPR system in Willaya of Serif. The National Association of Producers has requested to support this action in three additional Willayas, including for additional SUP products.
 - iii. In Lebanon, a collaboration is in place with WES project to promote EPR at national level (and also in Palestine), and a joint event will be organized having a focus to increase capacities for both public authorities and producers on the implementation of the EPR.
- l) Progress in the implementation of the pilots in ports and marinas in 3 (out of 3) Countries (Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia) with the inclusion of 1 additional port and 1 additional marina. A regional expert is onboard since July 2022 contributing significantly to the preparation of Countries' analysis, preparation of a checklist for selection of ports/marinas, organization of online meetings following an inclusive participation at country level. The selection of ports/marinas is completed for all 3 countries and the national experts are on board. Field visits were initiated in December 2022 and January 2023 and most of field visits will be finalized by March/April 2023.
- m) Organization of the 5th Meeting of the Regional Cooperation Platform on Marine Litter (9 July 2022) during which the 2022-2023 joint workplan was reviewed, including the preparations for the organization of the 6th Meeting of the Platform (26 April 2023) during which the terms

of references of the Platform will be updated and a new workplan will be agreed for 2024-2025.

- n) Compliance with the reporting requirements (i.e., 2022 annual report and 2022 ENRTP/GPGC ENRTP Traffic Light System Reports).
- o) Progress in the recruitment of the project assistant expected to be finalized in Q1 2023.
- p) Follow-up and ensure timely and effective reporting for all legal instruments and relevant administrative developments.

13. UNEP/MAP also informed the Steering Committee about the details encountered for the set of activities planned to be executed by the Black Sea Commission because of the critical situation in the Black Sea Region.

14. Delays have been also reported for the set of activities planned with GFCM, mainly due to the internal institutional difficulties within GFCM, which until very late was without its Executive Secretary. The Secretariat informed the Steering Committee that it is expected to deliver this set of activities by summer 2023.

15. With regards to the updated workplan and budget (UNEP/MED WG.553/3), the Secretariat presented a comprehensive proposal for a 6-month, no-cost extension of the project.

16. UNEP/MAP MED POL informed the meeting that, after assessing the relevant needs to enable the successful completion of project's national activities, and taking into consideration: (a) a number of technical elements (e.g., the seasonality requirements of the AaB pilots, conjunction with related initiatives, delay in reactions by national Focal Points, etc.); and (b) additional scope of work, of added value building on existing project's activities, that is proposed for consideration as considered of added value (e.g., additional interventions for IMAP Cand. Indicator 24), the proposed 6-month (no-cost) extension for the project, should particularly accommodate the following needs:

- a) To extend project's activities up to 31 December 2023 as detailed under **Annex III** to the present report; and
- b) To provide 2 additional months (i.e., till February 2024) to UNEP/MAP to successfully close the project, and most importantly to collect and compile all input and deliverables from all concerned activities and prepare the final project reports (narrative and financial) and respective deliverables.

17. A proposal for budget reallocation accompanied the proposal for a 6-month, no-cost, extension and the updated workplan. The proposal entailed the following budget reallocations:

- a) Savings of USD 16,168 from Output 1.3 (Budget Class: Transfer Grants to IPs) to be reallocated to Output 1.1 (Budget Class: Transfer Grants to IPs) to support the additional interventions planned for IMAP Cand. Indicator 24 in Israel and Morocco.
- b) Unspent funds of USD 32,276 from Outputs 2.1³ (Budget Class: Transfer Grants to IPs) to be reallocated to Output 1.1 (Budget Class: Transfer Grants to IPs) to support the additional interventions planned for IMAP Cand. Indicator 24 in Israel and Morocco.
- c) A total of USD 29,262 from Output 2.3 (USD 21,262 under Contractual Services and Travel) and Output 3.4 (USD 8,000 under Contractual Services) to be reallocated to the Project Management Component to support the organization of 1 additional Steering Committee Meeting possibly during Q3-Q4 2023 and top-up the travel-related budget to accommodate the needs for visiting the beneficiary countries and monitoring and supporting the effective execution of the respective activities.

18. In response to the presentations of the Secretariat, several Contracting Parties and the European Commission DG ENV Senior Expert in charge of the Project took the floor, and:

³ Initially planned to be allocated to Egypt and Libya to implement "Adopt-a-beach" pilots.

- a) Acknowledged the significant progress achieved since the 2nd Steering Committee Meeting (July 2022) on the most of project's activities at national and regional levels, and Secretariat's effective and efficient follow-up.
- b) Requested the Secretariat to further follow-up and coordinate the execution of the joint actions envisaged with GFCM, with a focus on the implementation of the IMO Action Plan to Address Marine Plastic Litter from Ships.
- c) Requested the Secretariat to exhaust all possible options and opportunities, as well as undertake the necessary adjustments for executing the regional and national activities in the Black Sea Region.
- d) Welcomed the Secretariat's efforts regarding the visibility of the project and encouraged the Secretariat and the Countries participating to the project to find effective ways and means for enhanced communication and visibility of the project.

19. The Meeting approved the Secretariat's proposal for a 6-month, no-cost extension (i.e., till 29 February 2024); the updated workplan and the relevant budget reallocations in line with provisions of paragraphs 17 and 18; and Annex III to the present report; and requested the Secretariat to initiate the relevant process to submit to European Commission an official request for the extension of the project.

20. The Meeting also agreed to hold a fourth Steering Committee Meeting in the second half of 2023.

21. The Meeting's conclusions and recommendations concerning this agenda item are presented in **Annex IV** to this report.

Agenda Item 4: Updated Communication and Visibility Plan 2021 – 2022

22. The Secretariat presented an updated version of the project communication and visibility plan (UNEP/MED WG.555/4) including specific information on its objectives and target groups, the regular communication activities, and the required resources. Special attention was provided by the Secretariat on the proposed innovative communication activities.

23. Several Contracting Parties and the EU representative took the floor, welcomed and endorsed the updated communication and visibility plan and commended the Secretariat's efforts towards introducing innovative communication activities and streamlining project's aspects and goals into simple-language communication messages.

24. The Meeting proposed and requested the Secretariat to:

- a) Explore the possibility for organizing a side-event at the INC-2 Meeting in Paris in May 2023;
- b) Organize a side-event at COP23 in December 2023 extracting from the project's achievements and outputs; and
- c) Strengthen the communication actions including the contribution of the project in delivering the 2023 MED QSR and other important UNEP/MAP COP Decisions.

25. The Meeting's final conclusions and recommendations concerning this agenda item are presented in **Annex IV** to this report.

Agenda Item 5: Any Other Business

26. No other business was raised under this agenda item.

Agenda Item 6: Conclusions and Recommendations

27. The Meeting reviewed the draft conclusions and recommendations and adopted them as revised and presented in **Annex IV** to this report.

Agenda Item 7: Closure of the Meeting

28. Following the customary exchange of courtesies, the Meeting was declared closed at 17:00 on Wednesday, 08 February 2023 by the Coordinator of UNEP/MAP.

Annex I

List of Participants

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

ISRAEL / ISRAEL

Mr. Frederic Arzoine

Deputy Director, Marine Environment Protection Division,
Ministry of Environmental Protection

E-mail: freda@sviva.gov.il

LEBANON / LIBAN

Mr. Bassam Sabbagh,

Head, Urban Environment, Ministry of Environment

B.Sabbagh@moe.gov.lb

MOROCCO / MAROC

Ms Rhayour Khadija

National Laboratory for Pollution Studies and Monitoring
Department of Sustainable Development (DDD/MTEDD)

E-mail: khadijarhayour@yahoo.fr

TUNISIA / TUNISIE

Mr. Yassine Marzougui

National Environmental Protection Agency (ANPE)

E-mail: marzougui.y@gmail.com

DONOR

**EUROPEAN UNION / UNION
EUROPEENNE**

Mr. Michail Papadoyannakis

Senior Expert, Marine Environment and Water Industry
Directorate General Environment (DG ENV)

Michail.Papadoyannakis@ec.europa.eu

**THE COMMISSION ON THE PROTECTION OF THE BLACK SEA AGAINST
POLLUTION (PERMANENT SECRETARIAT)**

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PROTECTION OF THE
BLACK SEA AGAINST
POLLUTION (PERMANENT
SECRETARIAT)**

Mr Halil Ibrahim Sur

Executive Director

halil.i.sur@blacksea-commission.org

Ms Iryna Makarenko

Pollution Monitoring and Assessment Officer

irina.makarenko@blacksea-commission.org

**UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME - SECRETARIAT TO THE
BARCELONA CONVENTION AND COMPONENTS OF THE MEDITERRANEAN
ACTION PLAN / PROGRAMME DES NATIONS UNIES POUR L'ENVIRONNEMENT
- SECRETARIAT DE LA CONVENTION DE BARCELONE ET COMPOSANTES DU
PLAN D'ACTION POUR LA MEDITERRANEE**

**UNEP/MAP COORDINATING UNIT /
PNUE/PAM UNITÉ DE
COORDINATION**

Ms Tatjana Hema
Coordinator
tatjana.hema@un.org

Mr. Christos Ioakeimidis
Associate Programme Management Officer
christos.ioakeimidis@un.org

**REGIONAL ACTIVITY CENTER FOR
SPECIALLY PROTECTED AREAS
(SPA/RAC) /
CENTRE D'ACTIVITÉS RÉGIONALES
POUR LES AIRES SPECIALEMENT
PROTÉGÉES (CAR/ASP)**

Ms. Lobna Ben Nakhla
Programme Officer
lobna.bennakhla@spa-rac.org

**MEDWAVES, THE UNEP/MAP
REGIONAL ACTIVITY CENTRE FOR
SCP (SCP/RAC-MedWaves)**

Mr. Pedro Fernandez
Project Manager Marine Litter
pfernandezb@gencat.cat

Annex II
Agenda of the Meeting

Agenda of the Meeting

Wednesday, 8 February 2023

- Agenda Item 1:** Opening of the Meeting
- Agenda Item 2:** Organizational Matters:
a) Adoption of the Agenda
b) Organization of Work
- Agenda Item 3:** Progress on Marine Litter MED II Project Implementation:
a) Project's activities
b) Workplan and budget
c) Synergies and Cooperation
- Agenda item 4:** Updated Communication and Visibility Plan 2022-2023
- Agenda Item 5:** Proposal for Budget Reallocation and Project Extension
- Agenda Item 6:** Any Other Business
- Agenda Item 7:** Conclusions and Recommendations
- Agenda Item 8:** Closure of the Meeting

Annex III

Agreement for Extension of the Marine Litter MED II Project's Outputs

Agreement for Extension of the Marine Litter MED II Project's Outputs

	Project Output	Agreed Extension
Outcome 1	<u>Output 1.1:</u> Support countries to further advance and operationalize monitoring of IMAP Candidate Indicator 24, with a focus on the ground implementation of the operation strategy as developed during the previous ML MED Project.	Extension till December 2023
	<u>Output 1.2:</u> Develop reporting templates, data standards and data dictionaries based on the agreed standardized monitoring protocols, including data quality assurance and quality control tools, to enable the reporting to the Secretariat of national data with regards to IMAP Candidate Indicator 24, through the IMAP (Pilots) Info System.	
	<u>Output 1.4:</u> Assess and further specify the environmental reduction targets as agreed by COP 19 in 2016 and reconfirmed in Naples Ministerial Declaration of COP 21 in December 2019, including to prevent and significantly reduce plastic leakage in the Mediterranean Sea and to progressively achieve 100% plastic waste collection and recycling by 2025.	Extension till August 2023
	<u>Output 1.5:</u> Assess knowledge and data gaps for the riverine inputs of marine litter in the Mediterranean; propose relevant monitoring methodologies based on existing experience and adjust them into the Mediterranean needs; ensure synergies with the EU MSFD TGML work. This would prepare the grounds for consider expanding the marine litter common indicators of IMAP to include an indicator on riverine inputs.	Extension till December 2023
	<u>Output 1.6:</u> Assess the main uses and sources of microplastics in the Mediterranean, as well as microplastic leakages into the marine and coastal environment of the Mediterranean, focusing on existing studies with the aim to fill the gap for the Mediterranean and subsequently will result in proposing accordingly necessary measures as well as a protocol for microplastic monitoring coming from WWTP.	Extension till August 2023
	<u>Output 1.7:</u> Support national Governments and competent entities in building capacity through technical assistance, training and collaboration for monitoring IMAP Candidate Indicator 24, riverine inputs, and microplastic deriving from WWTP.	Extension till November 2023
Outcome 2	<u>Output 2.1:</u> Implement Adopt-a-Beach measures, with the scope to expand their geographical scope (at least 1 additional pilot per country) and related impact on further enhancing awareness raising of national/local communities.	Extension till December 2023
	<u>Output 2.2:</u> Implement Fishing-for-Litter measures (i.e., passive scheme), in at least one additional fishing port with the scope to remove existing marine litter from the marine environment; Efforts will be made to test to the extent possible the FAO voluntary guidelines on marking of fishing gear and to cooperation with GFCM towards addressing the contribution of aquaculture on marine litter and microplastic generation.	Extension till December 2023
	<u>Output 2.3:</u> Further sensitize and engage fishermen to the purpose of minimizing sea-based sources; and contribute to extent possible with data on seafloor marine litter.	Extension till December 2023
	<u>Output 2.4:</u> Phase out priority single-use marine litter items from the Mediterranean marine and coastal environment, with a focus on advancing the existing work on single-use plastic bags promoting proper and sustainable alternatives, including on single-use plastic items intensively used, or produced during the COVID-19 Pandemic; and to further support the improvement of the legal framework for other single-use items ending up as marine litter, in line with the new EU Single-Use Plastics Directive and possibly the updated Marine Litter Regional Plan.	Extension till December 2023

Outcome 2	<u>Output 2.5:</u> Expand the implementation of pilots (at least one additional port and one marina for the countries participated to the first phase of the project and, where possible, one port and one marina for those countries that did not participate in the first phase of the project) related to the enhanced management of marine litter from sea-based sources in ports and marinas in the Mediterranean, with a focus on advancing the existing work on the application of charges at reasonable costs for the use of port reception facilities or, when applicable, application of the No-Special-Fee system as well to the provision of reception facilities in ports and the delivery of ship-generated wastes, and to explore and establish synergies between the Marine Litter Regional Plan and the IMO Action Plan to address marine plastic litter from ships, as well as other relevant plans or initiatives.	Extension till December 2023⁴
Outcome 3	<u>Output 3.1:</u> Assist the development of national marine litter monitoring programmes based on BS IMAP in two countries and their implementation; update the marine litter regional assessment for the Black sea countries based on the structure of their regional and national IMAP.	Extension till December 2023
	<u>Output 3.2:</u> Implement selected reduction and prevention measures, namely “Adopt-a-beach” and “phasing out single-use plastic bags”, at pilot scale in the Black Sea based on the Mediterranean experience from the application of relevant measures.	
	<u>Output 3.3:</u> Identify and implement common actions with GFCM and ensure synergies with other European Regional Seas Conventions and Programmes, related Regional Fisheries Bodies, and the G7 and eventually G20 work on marine litter without budget implications for the project.	Extension till August 2023
	Project Management	Extension till February 2024

⁴ Revised date, against the initial date included under Table 1 of UNEP/MED WG.553/3.

Annex IV
Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions and Recommendations

The Meeting reviewed the working documents WG.553/1 to WG.553/4 (i.e., Provisional Agenda, Progress Report, Updated Work Plan and Budget - Proposal for Budget Reallocation and Project Extension, Communication and Visibility Plan for 2022-2023). Further to its deliberations, the Meeting reached the following conclusions:

1. The Meeting thanked the European Commission and DG ENV for the continuous support and contribution streamlined through the EU-funded Marine Litter MED II Project, and most importantly for further supporting the implementation of the updated Regional Plan on Marine Litter Management in the Mediterranean.
2. The Meeting acknowledged the substantive progress achieved since the Second Steering Committee (July 2022) for the majority of project's outputs at national and regional levels and stressed the importance to keep up the same speed till the closure of the project, to enable a successful and efficient project implementation.
3. The Meeting requested the Secretariat to further follow-up and coordinate the execution of the joint actions envisaged with GFCM, and to follow-up closer on the implementation of the IMO Action Plan to Address Marine Plastic Litter from Ships.
4. The Meeting requested the Secretariat to exhaust all possible options and opportunities, as well as to undertake the necessary adjustments for executing the regional and national activities in the Black Sea Region, and warmly welcomed the back-to-back organization of the Bilateral Coordination Meeting between UNEP/MAP and BSC PS on 9 February 2023.
5. The Meeting welcomed the Secretariat's efforts regarding the visibility of the project and encouraged the Secretariat and the Countries participating to the project to find effective ways and means for enhanced communication and visibility of the project.
6. Subsequently, the Meeting approved the updated communication and visibility plan for 2022-2023 and requested the Secretariat to: (a) explore the possibility for organizing a side-event at the INC-2 Meeting in Paris in May 2023; (b) organize a side-event at COP23 in December 2023 extracting from the project's achievements and outputs; and (c) strengthen the communication actions including the contribution of the project in delivering the 2023 MED QSR and other important UNEP/MAP COP Decisions. It was also agreed that the beneficiary countries should further enhance Marine litter Med communication actions/results at national and local level through the official communication channels (e.g., Ministries' websites, communication accounts etc.).
7. The Meeting approved proposal for a 6-month (i.e., till 29 February 2024) no-cost extension, the updated workplan and the relevant budget reallocations. The project extension should focus in prolonging the implementation of project's outputs till December 2023, as well as providing to the Secretariat 2 additional months (i.e., till 29 February 2024) to successfully close the project and prepare the final reports. The extension of the project's outputs is reflected in Table 1 of WG.553/3 (except for the case of Output 2.5, which will be finally extended till December 2023). The Meeting requested the Secretariat to further clarify the proposals included under paragraph 14 of

WG.555/3 pertinent to the proposal for travel-related budget reallocations for the needs of the Project Management Unit (i.e., the organization of 1 additional Steering Committee Meeting and travel needs). In response the Secretariat committed in providing additional clarifications to be included in the report of the Meeting. The Secretariat will initiate the relevant process to submit to European Commission an official request for the extension of the project.

8. The Meeting agreed to hold a fourth Steering Committee Meeting in the second half of 2023. It also requested the Secretariat to inform the Steering Committee about the outcome of the bilateral consultation meeting with BSC PS and to request the endorsement of any change in the workplan and approved budget through written process with the Steering Committee