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**MEDITERRANEAN ACTION PLAN**

First meeting of technical experts on the  
Application of the Ecosystem Approach by MAP

Rome, Italy, 8-9 April 2010

**PROGRESS REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ROADMAP  
ADOPTED BY DECISION IG 17/6 OF THE CONTRACTING PARTIES  
FOR THE APPLICATION OF ECOSYSTEM APPROACH**



## **1. Background**

1. The Contracting Parties at their 15th meeting held in 2008, Almeria, Spain, decided that UNEP/MAP should gradually implement the ecosystem approach in view of an ecological vision for the Mediterranean as “a healthy Mediterranean with marine and coastal ecosystems that are productive and biologically diverse for the benefit of present and future generations’. (Decision IG 17/6). The Contracting Parties also adopted three strategic goals and a roadmap with five steps for the progressive and gradual implementation of the ecosystem approach by MAP.

2. The Contracting Parties also established a governmental designated expert group (GDE group) to guide UNEP/MAP work for implementing the roadmap and requested the Secretariat and MAP components (in particular MED POL, SPA/RAC and BP/RAC) to provide substantive scientific and technical support to its deliverables.

3. At its first meeting held in July 2008, the GDE group identified modalities for the implementation of the roadmap, in particular step 3, that implied the identification of marine and coastal ecosystem properties, their economic value, assessment of ecological status and pressures.

4. With a view to facilitating the assessment process, the GDE group decided to provisionally split the Mediterranean sea area into four and agreed on an “Assessment Table of Content” that would cover pollution and biodiversity, physico-chemical characteristics, hydrogeology and oceanographic parameters, as well as a study on the economic value of the Mediterranean marine ecosystems. The finding of the assessment would serve at a later stage, to identify and develop the ecological objectives that should correspond to the Ecological Vision and Strategic Goals, the operational objectives with indicators and targets, revision of monitoring programmes to also include biodiversity and development of new and/or review of management measures/action plans and programmes.

## **2. Progress achieved in implementing Decision UNEP/DEPI (MED) IG 17/6**

5. Since the last meeting of GDE in July 2008, MAP has delivered a number of key outputs with regard to ecosystem approach at programmatic and policy levels, in the framework of regional governance and technical aspects of assessment (step 3 of ECAP roadmap).

### **2.1 *At programmatic level***

6. The 5 year and 2 year MAP programmes of work adopted by the 16<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Contracting Parties, Marrakesh Morocco, 2009, highlighted ecosystem approach as a key horizontal issue and an important principle that should guide MAP work for implementing its policies to pollution reduction, biodiversity protection and conservation and sustainable management of natural resources.

7. The MAP 5 year programme of work refers to the necessary linkage to be established with the work of the *Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA) and its follow-up, as well as the generalization of the ecosystem approach. It provides that the ecosystem approach in MAP should fit logically into this conceptual context with a view to applying the analysis of ecosystems and the services rendered on an operational basis and also be applied in combating pollution, be it from land-based sources, linked to shipping or the result of dumping or offshore activity.*

8. In this regard, the biennial programme of work of MAP 2010-2011, envisages three main outputs with regard to ecosystem approach:

a) *to finalize the assessment (step 3 of ECAP roadmap)*

- *Identification of marine and coastal ecosystem properties in the Mediterranean and their total economic value;*
- *Integrated assessment of ecological status and pressures of the marine and coastal environment for each of the four designated areas.*

b) *to start the work for defining the ecological objectives, targets and indicators (step 3 of the roadmap). The findings of the above studies a) and b) should be used to nourish a preliminary discussion on the ecological objectives; indicators and targets.*

c) *to mobilize external resources for follow up and further implementation of the other steps of ECAP roadmap ( step 4 and 5).*

## **2.2 Regional governance**

9. One key priority under Governance theme of the 5 and 2 year programmes of work of MAP is to ensure ownership and leadership by the Contracting Parties in the work of MAP and to the extent possible, coherence with regard to similar issues addressed in the framework of other regional organisations and processes with a view to avoiding confusion and achieving synergy.

10. In this respect, the Secretariat, while designing and coordinating the work for implementing step 3 of ECAP roadmap, undertook to:

- *Organize the process in such a manner that would enable the representatives of the Contracting Parties to play a key role and ensure full ownership.*
- *Guide the technical work of MAP components on the assessment.*
- *Align UNEP/MAP work with approaches and experiences gathered under relevant global processes with regard to the ecosystem approach, such as the work carried out in the framework of the CBD, the Regional Seas programme of UNEP, etc.*
- *Ensure synergy, as appropriate, with sub regional policy processes of relevance to the Barcelona Convention Contracting Parties for implementing in particular the European Union Marine Strategy Framework Directive adopted in 2008 (MSFD), which provides for the application of ecosystem approach, definition of good environmental status for marine waters taking into account economic and social assessment. Acknowledging the relevance of regional seas convention for the purpose of EU marine quality status, the MSFD already foresees the application of the directive through regional seas structures, as appropriate.*

## **2.3 Concrete outputs achieved**

11. As a result, the following outputs were achieved during the period under review:

- *Participatory approach designed to fully involve the Contracting Parties in the process (two technical meetings and one GDE meeting are envisaged to be held between April 2010 and March 2011);*
- *Intensive communication with the MAP focal points;*
- *Stock of relevant processes on the regional and global levels, lessons learnt and best practices in implementing the ecosystem approach in the region identified and its linkages with progress in applying the EU marine strategy directive taken into account, as appropriate;*

- *A study on the economic valuation of Mediterranean marine ecosystems is finalized;*
- *Preliminary drafts of sectorial assessments on pollution and biodiversity finalized;*
- *Integrated and no sectorial analysis of data gaps for the assessment process of the marine and coastal environment for each of the four designated areas finalized;*
- *The UNEP/MAP structures have carefully followed the work carried out by the EU members states in this framework with regard to descriptors and indicators proposed, to measure the good environmental status of marine waters and carry out socio economic analysis, including a pre-analysis of the proposed GES descriptors feasibility for the Mediterranean;*
- *First technical meeting organised and held to advance the assessment process (step 2);*
- *Next steps identified, preparations ongoing to finalize the assessment..*

### **3. Process review for preparing preliminary assessment reports**

#### **3.1 MEDPOL**

12. MED POL is in charge of the preparation of the chapters of the assessment dealing with the state of pollution of the marine environment and the land-based pollution sources. Four sub-regional consultants have been contracted to: (i) harmonize the data and information related to the cluster under their respective responsibility and coordinate the merging of inputs transmitted to MED POL by the National MED POL Focal Points, (ii) collate, revise and provide coherence to, additional inputs obtained from the Secretariat and other reliable sources and (iii) prepare and harmonized document for the respective clusters, and (iv) present the draft to MED POL and finalize it in accordance with the outputs of an eventual working meeting, and recommendations and comments by MED POL.

13. The sections of the overall assessment to be prepared by the MED POL consultants will refer to the marine and coastal ecosystems status related to physical and chemical characteristics (Ch.I.2) and to pressures and impacts, related to contamination (Ch.II.1), dumping activities (Ch. II.2), nutrient and organic matter enrichment (Ch.II.3), other interferences on temperature, salinity and desalination plants (Ch.II.6).

14. Four SSAs have been signed with 4 consultants for each of the clusters: Progress reports consisting of preliminary draft assessments were submitted by the consultants for Clusters A and C. For Cluster D, the consultant submitted a report describing the information used and the existing gaps. For Cluster B (Central Mediterranean), where less information was available in MED POL databases, the consultant submitted a Progress Report with a description of the tasks undertaken and the progress of the work.

#### ***Overview of pre-assessment outputs***

15. Progress reports consisting of preliminary draft assessments were submitted by the consultants of all Clusters, with different degrees of detail.

16. For Cluster A, an overview of the physicochemical characteristics was drafted providing information on the prevailing circulation, nutrients concentrations, and sediments characteristics. For the pressures, information was provided on pollutants concentrations in biota, initial information on pollution trends in some hot spots. For Cluster B, the consultant reviewed and analyzed the documents provided by MED POL, which were found to be comprehensive and useful for the purpose of the sub-regional report, but data and assessments were unevenly distributed geographically, with very few data available for the Central Mediterranean area. The consultant has identified the relevant information available in those reports and he is working to complete the gaps through literature search. For Cluster C, the consultant presented a summary of the priority issues and major environmental

problems in all the countries of the sub-region based on the NDA Reports. Then he summarized the state of the marine environment of the sub-region in relation to sewage runoff, eutrophication and hazardous substances based on the draft assessment reports of MED POL. More information from satellite imagery will be used to close the spatial and temporal gaps. For pollution sources, information was provided mainly by the MED POL pollution sources database (National Baseline Budget – NBB – 2003/2008) and the State of Environment and Development Report of UNEP/MAP (2009). For Cluster D, the consultant reviewed available information sources including MED POL data, MAP and MED POL Reports, EEA Reports, on-line databases and international scientific literature. She also presented the geographical coverage of data and information from National Reports (NDAs) prepared under the guidance of MED POL, as well as from other sources. These matrixes give an overview of the available information and the gaps in the sub-region.

17. All sub-regional Reports will be finalized by 15 April 2010.

### **3.2 SPA/RAC**

18. SPA/RAC, in close consultation with the national authorities, has selected national consultants in most of the countries (17 countries), which are providing for the preparation of national documents aiming at the “identification of important ecosystem properties and assessment of ecological status and pressures to Mediterranean marine and coastal biodiversity”. In some cases, one Contracting Party has to provide more than one national report since the outputs will be split up according to the coverage of more than one geographical region in that country. For Cyprus, Italy, Lebanon and Malta, the selection of the national consultants is still pending due to administrative constraints. Furthermore, for each of the four areas, an international consultant has been engaged by SPA/RAC in order to manage the work of compilation of inputs delivered to SPA/RAC by the national consultants. The international consultants, under the overall guidance and coordination of SPA/RAC, will assist the national consultants under their clusters and give them guidance and technical support, in order to provide for the preparation of the assessment documents.

19. So far, 10 national consultants have already submitted their national draft reports, namely reports of Algeria, Albania, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Greece (Ionian sea area report and Aegean/Cretan Seas area report), Israel, Morocco, Slovenia, Syria and Turkey. The others are expected to submit their reports soon. The preparation of the national and sub-regional assessment documents, for the sections under SPA/RAC responsibility, is planned to be finalized by 15 April 2010.

### **3.3 BP/RAC**

20. BP/RAC, in collaboration with the MAP Coordinating Unit and its various components, has started working on the economic evaluation of Mediterranean marine and coastal ecosystems in response to the request made by the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention (Almeria Declaration, 2008).

The objectives pursued are to:

- improve knowledge of the services and benefits provided by ecosystems with a view to taking them into account more effectively at the regional, national and local levels;
- provide public decision-makers with a common quantitative measurement to improve the management of environmental issues;
- contribute at the level of the Mediterranean to international initiatives for the economic analysis of ecosystems, such as the European Commission programme “The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity” (2007-2010) and the UNEP programme “Accounting for Economic Activities in Large Marine Ecosystems and Regional Seas” (2006).

21. With a view to undertaking this work, BP/RAC has developed with its MAP partners and interested organizations (FEMISE, ECOMERS) a methodology to assess the economic value of the services provided by ecosystems based on a macroeconomic approach at the regional level, inspired by the principles of the United Nations System of Integrated Environmental and Economic Accounting (2003). BP/RAC has also introduced a sustainability criteria through which the evaluation can be confined to the benefits derived from the sustainable use of services provided by ecosystems.

22. The findings confirm the importance of the services derived from marine and coastal ecosystems, based on a quantification of the direct benefits for socio-economic activities and the welfare of the population, in accordance with the international work programme "Millenium Ecosystem Assessment" (2000-2005).

23. With a view to pursuing an economic approach to the environment that is adapted to the Mediterranean, BP/RAC also called on its network to specify the expectations and priorities of stakeholders in relation to issues of regional interest, such as: analysis of the dependence of economies on the natural heritage; evaluation of the benefits related to the conservation of ecosystems; the viability of establishing payment mechanisms for environmental services or for the compensation of ecological damage; the importance for poverty reduction of the services provided by ecosystems; an estimate of the cost of the degradation of ecosystems; the adaptation of green accounting guides, etc.

24. The draft report is finalized subject to comments by the project steering committee and the meeting of technical experts on the application of the ecosystem approach in Rome, Italy, 8-9 April 2010.