





## **1. Background**

1. The Contracting Parties at their 15th meeting held in 2008, Almeria, Spain, decided that UNEP/MAP should gradually apply the ecosystem approach in order to achieve the ecological vision for the Mediterranean which corresponds to “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 above ecological vision and three strategic goals corresponded to the first two steps of a seven step roadmap also adopted as part of the same decision for the progressive and gradual application of the ecosystem approach by MAP.

2. The work for the implementation of decision IG 17/6 has since been guided by the Government-designated expert (GDE) group supported by the meetings of the technical expert group, the MAP Coordinating Unit and MAP components (in particular MED POL, SPA/RAC and BP/RAC) that have provided substantive, scientific and technical support to its deliverables.

3. Since the last meeting of the GDE group, held in July 2008, the work for the implementation of the ecosystem approach roadmap has focused on steps iii to v corresponding to:

- iii. Identification of important ecosystem properties and assessment of ecological status and pressures.
- iv. Development of a set of ecological objectives corresponding to the Vision and strategic goals
- v. Derivation of operational objectives with indicators and target levels.

4. The present report, covering the time span since the July 2008 GDE meeting, is structured according to the ecosystem approach road map in order to highlight the progress achieved in each of the steps so far and portray clearly nowadays position within the roadmap.

5. Important activities for substantive progress in the above steps have been implemented in the course of the present biennium (2010-2011) with the support of the Mediterranean Trust Fund and the European Commission following a contribution agreement that was signed in 2009. The work on the development of a detailed timeline for the ecosystem approach is also reported in this report. The successful and timely implementation of all steps of the ecosystem approach roadmap requires substantive external resources.

6. The work done towards the coordination and identification of synergies with regional institutions and processes, including the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive is also covered in the last section of this progress report.

## **2. Identification of important ecosystem properties and assessment of ecological status and pressures (step iii)**

7. The work on Identification of important ecosystem properties and assessment of ecological status and pressures has been ongoing since July 2008 when the 2<sup>nd</sup> GDE meeting decided to provisionally split the Mediterranean sea area into four and agreed on an “Assessment Table of Content (ToC)” that would cover physico-chemical characteristics, hydrogeology and oceanographic parameters and focus on pollution and biodiversity, as well as a study on the economic value of the Mediterranean marine ecosystems.

8. The work to compile the subregional reports following the agreed ToC was undertaken by a group of experts consisting of at least one expert from each bordering state with the support of the MAP components. The groups were open to all Contracting Parties. MEDPOL and RAC/SPA components led the preparation of the sections of each subregional reports relevant to their competence. MEDPOL therefore led the sections dealing with physical and chemical characteristics (Ch.X.2) and with pressures and impacts related to contamination (Ch.X.5.1), dumping activities (Ch. X.5.2) and nutrient and organic matter enrichment (Ch. X.5.3). RAC/SPA engaged in the preparation of documents aiming at the identification of important ecosystem properties and assessment of ecological status and pressures to Mediterranean marine and coastal biodiversity.

9. In addition to the above, BP/RAC undertook an economic analysis of the use of the marine and coastal ecosystems. The study, entitled "The economic value of sustainable benefits rendered by the Mediterranean marine ecosystems"<sup>1</sup>, addressed the role of the main coastal and marine ecosystems (posidonia meadows, corallogenic formations, rocky seabed with photolytic algae, seabed with a soft substrate and open seas including both pelagic and benthic ecosystems) as provider of services and benefits with a view to taking them into account more effectively at the regional, national and local levels and provided public decision-makers with a common quantitative measurement to improve the management of environmental issues.

10. The contributions from the three MAP components depicted above were devised as the building blocks of the initial integrated assessment and were subject, prior to their integration as a single report, to discussion during the First meeting of technical experts on the Application of the Ecosystem Approach by MAP held in Rome, 8-9 April 2010 and review comments by representatives of the Contracting Parties.

11. The Coordinating Unit of MAP led the integration of the subregional contributions prepared by MAP components into the Initial Integrated assessment report that was submitted, in its first draft form, for consideration and review to the Second meeting of technical experts on the Application of the Ecosystem Approach by MAP held in Barcelona in July 2010. The report was also subject to comments by the Contracting parties through the second half of 2010 that were incorporated into the second draft version.

12. After the decision of the Bureau of the Contracting Parties the second draft version was submitted to GESAMP for peer review (Joint Group of Experts on the Scientific Aspects of Marine Environment Protection) in March 2011. The review process is ongoing at this moment and the review comments recently received from GESAMP are being considered and incorporated. A nearly finalized version of the report has been prepared for submission to the Third Meeting of Government-designated experts according to the most substantive comments provided by GESAMP while the definitive version of the report will be prepared, after the feedback received from the Government-designated experts and incorporating the rest of technical and editorial comments received from GESAMP, in order to be submitted to the Meeting of Focal Points in September 2011 so it can be endorsed for submission to the next Meeting of the Contracting Parties.

13. The information included in the Initial Integrated Assessment report will be the basis on which the next State of the Environment Report for the Mediterranean will be prepared during the second half of 2011 also for submission to the next meeting of the Contracting Parties

### **3. Development of a set of ecological objectives corresponding to the Vision and strategic goals (step iv) and derivation of operational objectives with indicators and target levels (step v)**

14. The work on the development of a set of ecological objectives (EO) and derivation of operational objectives (OO) and indicators has been ongoing since July 2010 when during the Second meeting of technical experts on the Application of the Ecosystem Approach by MAP decided that the 11 European Union Marine Strategy Framework Directive descriptors should be used as the basis for developing Mediterranean ecological objectives, taking also into account the issues emerging from the finalized integrated Assessment Report, socio economic considerations, ICZM and cumulative impacts to be discussed at the next meeting of technical experts on ecosystem approach.

15. A methodology for the development of the ecological objectives was developed before the work on actually developing the proposed draft EOs. The closely related nature of the EOs, OOs and indicators motivated the derivation of a draft set of OOs and indicators at the same time that the EOs. The work needed for the derivation of targets (last part of step v) will be undertaken at a later stage as that involves the availability of the finalized Initial Integrated Assessment report and a dedicated participative and inclusive process to discuss first the concept of Good Environmental Status and second the methods to derive targets for each of the previously agreed indicators.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.planbleu.org/publications/Cahier8\\_marin\\_EN.pdf](http://www.planbleu.org/publications/Cahier8_marin_EN.pdf)

16. The draft EOs and draft set of OOs and Indicators was submitted for consideration to the Third meeting of technical experts on the Application of the Ecosystem Approach by MAP held in Istanbul, 7-8 March 2011 where they were substantially discussed, amended and recommended for submission to the Third Government-designated expert meeting.

17. A final version including the rationale for the selection of EOs, OOs and Indicators and some additional details on the availability of information to be used in order to populate the different indicators has been compiled and is submitted to the Third Government-designated expert meeting (Document UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG.360/4).

18. A pilot study has been formulated in order to test the utility of the proposed ecological objectives in suggesting management responses with the specific objectives, for its first phase, of verifying in an actual site at small scale (i) the data availability and accessibility; (ii) the data geographical coverage and georeferentiation to allow its spatial analysis and the integration of information across EOs, OOs and Indicators; (iii) the overall potential of the compiled data set and its analysis for suggesting management options for indicative purposes; and (iv) the additional needs for data collection both in terms of gaps in data coverage and of monitoring programs, infrastructure and technical capacity for data collection. This pilot study is nowadays under discussion with the representatives of Tunisia and should be implemented within 2011. Discussions are also undergoing to seek participation of other Contracting Parties, though at their own cost due to limited resources. Once these objectives have been reached a second phase to test the rest of the steps of the ecosystem approach roadmap (also tentatively designed) could be implemented.

#### **4. Development of the ecosystem approach short- and long-term timelines**

19. Following the recommendations the 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting of GDE a detailed work plan including a timeline for the application of the ecosystem approach has been prepared. The preparation process is described below.

20. The First meeting of technical experts on the Application of the Ecosystem Approach by MAP held in Rome, 8-9 April 2010 reviewed the progress made in the implementation of the roadmap with focus on the assessment report but also discussed the steps beyond the initial integrated assessment and concluded on the need of developing a timetable for implementing the ECAP roadmap steps iv-vii, for the consideration of the Government Designated Expert (GDE) meeting not later than in spring 2011.

21. The Second meeting of technical experts on the Application of the Ecosystem Approach by MAP held in Barcelona in July 2010 reviewed the criteria for the establishment of the timetable and agreed to a short-term work plan covering the time span and the work to be done by the end of 2011.

22. The abovementioned criteria were used to formulate a first draft version of the timeline for the long-term application of the Ecosystem Approach in the Mediterranean that was submitted for review to the Third meeting of technical experts on the Application of the Ecosystem Approach by MAP held in Istanbul, 7-8 March 2011. A further refined version has since then been prepared and is submitted for review and approval as appropriate to the Third Meeting of Government-designated experts (Document UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG.360/6).

#### **5. Coordination and synergy with other regional partners and processes including the EU MSFD**

23. Since July 2008 when the work on identification of important ecosystem properties and assessment of ecological status and pressures started the MAP Secretariat and its components have been working in close cooperation with different regional bodies in order to compile the necessary data for the Integrated Assessment Report.

24. Beyond the compilation of the information for the Integrated Assessment Report close cooperation has been established with regional partners (IUCN, WWF, GREENPEACE, MEDASSET,

MIO-ECSDE, CIESM, GFCM-FAO, EC-JRC) other Regional Seas and their partners (OSPAR, HELCOM, ICES) in order to get and incorporate their input and views and benefit from similar experiences. The cooperation with GFCM-FAO has been very close in the development of the final EOs, OOs and Indicators related to the harvest of fisheries and the trophic chain.

25. Finally remarkable efforts have been placed in the identification of all possible synergies with the implementation of the EU MSFD seeking a coordinated approach in both processes. In this context, UNEP/MAP Secretariat is also participating as observer in the working groups set up for the implementation of the EU MSFD.

26. The EU MSFD coordination process includes the Marine Strategy Coordination Group and three main Working groups on Good environmental status (GES), on Information & Knowledge Exchange (DIKE) and on Social-Economic analysis (ESA), at times supported by technical groups. With a view to ensure synergies and coherence with the progress made by MAP in the context of the ecosystems approach as well as more generally to contribute to the reflection from the Mediterranean perspective, the MAP Secretariat has participated in the work and meetings of the MSFD Coordination group, GES WG, DIKE WG, ESA WG as well as the meeting of task groups related to EU MSFD descriptors.

27. The Secretariat has also cooperated with the EU member states that are party to the Barcelona Convention in analysing MAP Regional actions which are of relevance for and assist them in implementing the EU MSFD.