



United Nations Environment Programme



UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG.369/6
31 August 2012

ENGLISH



MEDITERRANEAN ACTION PLAN

1st Meeting of Ecosystem Approach (EcAp) Coordination Group

Athens, Greece, 29-30 May 2012

REPORT

1ST MEETING OF ECOSYSTEM APPROACH (ECAP) COORDINATION GROUP

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Introduction

1. First Meeting of Ecosystem Approach (EcAp) Coordination Group was held on 29-30 May 2012, at the invitation of the Hellenic Ministry for the Environment, Energy and Climate Change of Greece at the Divani Caravel Hotel, Athens. The meeting was held in order to: (1) Agree on a road-map on the activities to be undertaken by MAP under the EcAp process during this biennium so as to meet the expectation of the Contracting Parties for the 18th Meeting of the COP; (2) Discuss a Governance structure to support EcAp Coordination Group in guiding the EcAp activities in this biennium; (3) Provide substantive inputs upon which a common methodology for defining Good Environmental Status and targets for the 11 Ecological Objectives in the Mediterranean can be based; and, (4) Discuss the activities and coordination needed towards the development of the monitoring program and social and economic analysis.

Participation

2. The meeting was attended by the members of the Ecosystem Approach Coordination Group (EcAp CG) from the following Contracting Parties: Albania, Algeria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Cyprus, European Union (EU), France, Greece, Israel, Italy, Malta, Montenegro, Morocco, Spain and Turkey.

3. The Coordinating Unit for the Mediterranean Action Plan (UNEP/MAP), MED POL Programme (MEDPOL), the Blue Plan Regional Activity Centre (BP/RAC), the Priority Actions Programme Regional Activity Centre (PAP/RAC), the Specially Protected Areas Regional Activity Centre (SPA/RAC) and the Cleaner Production Regional Activity Centre (CP/RAC), the Regional Activity Centre for Information and Communication (INFO/RAC), the Regional Marine Pollution Emergency Response Centre for the Mediterranean Sea (REMPEC) were also represented at the meeting.

4. The following institutions and organizations were represented by observers: the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean – Food and Agriculture Organization (GFCM-FAO), International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the Scientific and Institutional Cooperation to Support Responsible Fisheries in the Eastern Mediterranean project executed by the Food and Agriculture Organization (EASTMED FAO), the Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans in the Black Sea Mediterranean Sea and Contiguous Atlantic Area (ACCOBAMS), the Network of Managers of Marine Protected Areas in the Mediterranean (MEDPAN), the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), the Mediterranean Association to Save the Sea Turtles (MEDASSET), the PEGASO project and the PERSEUS Project.

5. The list of participants is attached as **Annex I** to this report.

Agenda Item 1: Opening of the Meeting

6. The meeting was opened at 9.00 a.m. on Tuesday 29 May 2012 by Ms. Maria Luisa Silva Mejias, Executive Secretary and Coordinator of UNEP/MAP. Ms. Silva opened the meeting by welcoming the participants briefly reviewing the progress made since the decision adopted by the 15th Meeting of the Contracting Parties in 2008 (Decision IG 17/6) to progressively apply the Ecosystem Approach to the management of human activities that may affect the Mediterranean marine and coastal environment for the promotion of sustainable development according to a 7-step road map. She made reference to the steps of the road map covered so far and highlighted the achievements made during the last

biennium including the outcomes of three technical meetings and one Government-Designated Expert Meeting. The work in the last biennium led noticeably to (1) the finalization of the Initial Integrated Assessment of the Mediterranean Sea which will be complemented by a socio-economic analysis during the present biennium, as requested by the decision adopted by the 17th Meeting of the Contracting Parties (Decision IG. 20/4); (2) the agreement on the Ecological Objectives (EOs), Operational Objectives (OOs), and Indicators also adopted by 17th Meeting of the Contracting Parties (Decision IG. 20/4). She further highlighted the decision implications in terms of the Ecosystem Approach becoming UNEP/MAP core implementation strategy, the need for the development of a MAP-Barcelona Convention policy on assessments in the framework of the implementation of EcAp, the development of an integrated monitoring programme and the need for ensuring the continued implementation of the Ecosystem Approach roadmap during the biennium 2012-2013.

7. The Executive Secretary and Coordinator continued by reviewing the objectives of the meeting mentioned above and concluded by thanking the Hellenic Ministry for the Environment, Energy and Climate Change of Greece for hosting the meeting, the European Union for the financial support to the organization of the meeting and the representatives of the Contracting Parties, UNEP/MAP components and partners for their participation.

Agenda Item 2: Election of officers and adoption of the agenda

8. Following informal consultations, the meeting elected its officers as follows:

Chairperson:	Mr Alex Lascaratos (Greece)
Vice-Chairpersons:	Ms Jelena Knezevic (Montenegro) Ms Nassira Rheyati (Morocco)
Rapporteur:	Mr Jorge Alonso (Spain)

9. On the consideration of the agenda the Executive Secretary and Coordinator provided clarification that agenda item 7 would be devoted to the draft Road Map on the implementation of EcAp and that agenda item 9 would be devoted to Governance. It was also agreed that the progress and work plan of the previous and future projects financed by the EC in support of the implementation of the Ecosystem Approach in the Mediterranean would be covered under agenda item 7. The meeting adopted the agenda set out in UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG 369/2 with the necessary amendments. The amended Agenda of the meeting is contained in **Annex II** to the present report.

Agenda Item 3: Review of Methodologies for Setting Targets

10. The Secretariat requested Ms Tundi Agardy to present a review based on document UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG. 369/3 of how targets are determined for ecological objectives in other regions/ countries with focus on what can be learned from other regions and how methodologies might be adapted to guide countries in setting of targets relating to the Ecological and Operational Objectives identified in the Mediterranean Ecosystem Approach Process.

11. The presentation provided a brief introduction to the principles and steps of the Ecosystem Approach process, reviewing those covered and the ones laying ahead, the considerations relative to the establishment of targets including their different attributes (state, pressures or impact; qualitative vs. quantitative; threshold vs. trend, scale, etc). The presentation also highlighted the use of pressures as proxies to ecological impacts, the cumulative impacts derived from the spatial and temporal concurrency of pressures and the

need to ensure that the management responses address the cumulative impacts. Examples of integrated approaches as the ones used in Great Barrier Reef, the Australian State of Environment Report and in the OSPAR Convention where presented covering a range of different types of indicators and targets from qualitative to quantitative. The presentation concluded by suggesting the main questions and considerations to be had by the EcAp Coordination Group in relation to the establishment of targets:

- Are targets addressing state, pressure or impact?
- Are the targets to be set qualitative or quantitative?
- Does each EO need to have a single or multiple targets?
- Are the targets related to the status quo or to an ideal state?
- The importance of the integration across EOs.
- The importance of a suitable monitoring system capable of tracking progress towards the achievement of the set targets.

12. The Secretariat invited the representative of Spain to provide a presentation on the progress achieved by the OSPAR Commission on the implementation of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) and the work done to ensure the coherent implementation of the MSFD in the OSPAR Area with relation to Good Environmental Status (GES) and targets. The presentation provided the meeting with an overview of the OSPAR Convention including the OSPAR generalities, the response of OSPAR to the MSFD (working structure, strategy and roadmap) and the coordination at the regional level with regards to the initial assessment, the determination of GES and the establishment of targets. The coordination with regards to the determination of GES and establishment of targets eradicated in the development of internal advice documents, sharing methodologies and information and the creation of an inventory with emerging GES, indicators and targets definitions by countries which was later analysed in order assess the regional level of coherence and design specific actions in order to improve regional coordination. This analysis lead to regionally agreed high-level qualitative statements for GES and targets for some Descriptors to which states may refer in their national articulations. Some examples of the inventory tabs for GES and targets determinations for ecological assessment areas and the proposed regionally shared GES and targets were also provided by the representative of Spain.

13. The ensuing discussion focussed on the implications of focussing the work to be done in each of the EOs on pressures or state. It was argued that while the focus on state could help in the determination of GES, focussing on the pressures could, at this stage, lead to the definition of specific targets. It was also stated that it was very important that the process and methodology towards the determination of GES and targets leaned on the progress previously achieved in the discussions towards the agreement of the EOs, OOs and indicators and that the guidance provided was in accordance with Annex II of decision IG. 20/4.

14. At the procedural level clarification was sought to what was the content expected to be covered in the conclusions and recommendations resulting from the meeting to which the Secretariat responded that they should cover the input provided by the meeting on the common methodology for the determination of GES and targets and on the roadmap and governance structure for the further implementation of the Ecosystem Approach. Further the Secretariat added that the common methodology should be developed into a paper that will be circulated to the parties prior to the further discussions to be undertaken on this issue. EC stated that one of the outcomes expected from the meeting was substantial input towards a common methodology to be used by the working groups that will be dealing with each of the EOs.

Agenda Item 4: Proposed methodology for adoption in the Mediterranean context

15. The Secretariat opened this agenda point by providing a presentation focused in the main overarching issues to be considered for the determination of GES and targets namely:

- whether a more **qualitative or more quantitative** approach for determining goals is desired;
- the degree to which targets reflect the **ideal environmental conditions** (including, if necessary, restoration potential) or rather focus on **individual pressures and acceptable levels of pressure**;
- whether or not **current conditions can be taken as baseline for determining targets**, such that management would aim to maintain the **status quo** (as opposed to suggesting priorities for restoration);
- what is the **scope and scale** of the area being assessed to see if targets are being met or exceeded should be; and
- how Ecological and Operational Objectives can be **integrated** across all elements of the coastal and marine ecosystems to achieve an ecosystem approach, using indicators and targets that link to one another.

16. These overarching issues were formulated in the form of specific questions to be addressed by the meeting:

- Is a combination of **qualitative and quantitative** approach applicable?
- Should targets be decided **for each EO**? And if so, should development of targets be **phased**, such that those EOs and OOs that are more mainstreamed and for which monitoring is already taking place would be in the initial round, with an agreed roadmap for coming on line with all EOs by a certain date?
- At **what scale** should changes in regards to targets be evaluated? **National scale** immediately, or a **piloted sub-nation** to begin, or a **collection of sub-nations** that adds up collectively to the entire national waters and coasts? Will the scales differ according to the EO considered?
- Presumably countries will use a common methodology to determine their own targets. **How should Mediterranean-wide targets be determined?**

17. The ensuing discussion covered initially a series of procedural questions related to the further clarification needed on the fact that the purpose of the meeting was twofold: (1) Advance the technical discussions for the establishment of GES and targets so as to advance in the implementation of the roadmap and (2) discuss the necessary governance structure in order to be able to set up the monitoring programs and design the programs of measures related to steps 6 and 7 of the roadmap.

18. Regarding the technical discussions it was stated that they should aim to provide a framework methodology, guidelines and options to be used by the working groups including how to prioritize between the different indicators and establish targets. The proper prioritization of the indicators will allow the establishment of a viable monitoring plan that will allow tracking if the EOs are being met.

19. In relation to the process for developing the methodology and determination of GES and targets several representatives also stated that methodology to define the targets should be fed by national processes supported by Coordinating Unit and RACs. It was further discussed that while maximum synergy with MSFD should be sought, it should also be ensured that the differences between both processes are taken into account and the specificities of the Mediterranean are retained. The agreed Ecological Objectives are clearly synergic with the MSFD descriptors and aimed to ensure that the synergies are used for the

benefit of the states that are member of both frameworks. Several participants also highlighted the importance of the inclusion of all relevant stakeholders in the process of defining GES and determining targets.

20. It was also discussed that it was necessary to clarify the relation between targets and EOs, OOs and Indicators and whether targets had to be developed for all of them. Further a discussion was held on the possibility to read the EOs as a proxy for GES and if GES had to be established in advance of the establishment of the targets.

21. The discussion addressing the main overarching issues and specific questions presented at the beginning of the agenda point addressed the following issues.

22. With regards to the **state/pressure/impact** it was mentioned that in fact targets would address all of them, as all of them are the subject of the EOs, OOs and indicators. Nevertheless the amount of information available on pressures is often bigger than for state and impacts for a specific issue, which will allow more informed discussions. It was also stated that efforts should be made to move forward with the information already available. The establishment of targets on pressures emanating from human activities will allow the design of coherent management measures using the precautionary approach and serve well the ecosystem approach, as the management of human activities is the ultimate goal pursued. Emphasis was also placed on the need to find a way to prioritize the different pressures addressed with respect to the impact resulting from them so as not to focus on pressures that are irrelevant overall. The need to prioritize the pressures will translate in a need to prioritize the different indicators within the EOs and therefore result ultimately in a phased approach that will allow cautious progressive implementation. Finally there was also mention of the need to understand the interaction between the different scales as the state of the environment at a certain scale may be linked to pressures that are beyond the region being considered.

23. On the subject of **reference conditions or baseline** it was stated that it is very important to define very clearly the terminology used and ensure that the conditions aimed for are well specified avoiding the use of terms such as "ideal". The need to systematically gather information on baselines already collected in existing policy instruments was highlighted together with the need to rank them according to the framework to which they belong as those related to the Barcelona Convention should be taken in close consideration. The analysis of the reference conditions or baseline should be related to that of the discussion of GES. Reference conditions versus background conditions should be discussed as setting targets and GES determinations should steer countries towards priorities for restoration, not just maintenance of status quo when there is already the notion that the current state is less than the desirable one.

24. The discussion related to the use of **quantitative or qualitative targets** resulted in a broad agreement that both would be used as already dictated by the nature of the EOs, OOs and Indicators. It was also emphasized that whenever the data available allowed a quantitative approach this should be pursued. For some EOs targets will likely be qualitative, reflecting upward or downward trend and not tied to specific timelines (slope of trend). Phasing can allow more quantitative approaches to be utilized as EcAp implementation progresses. For some EOs threshold determination may be possible immediately while other may have to rely on trend information.

25. With regards to the **scale** the possible usable scales (sub-national, national, sub-regional and Mediterranean-wide) were identified. Several representatives agreed that the national scale would be the one in which most of the focus would be placed though a phased approach building from the sub-national scale towards broader scales was also favoured. It was then highlighted that efforts should be placed in reaching at least the sub-regional scale

because of the benefits of increased cooperation. Next to the consideration of the different scales at which the ecosystems could be analysed attention should also be placed at the administrative scales as the EcAp is aimed at the management of human activities. The finer scale will allow better understanding of the interactions between the human activities and the environmental impacts and ultimately the state of the environment. One last consideration brought forward to the meeting was that of the **temporal scale** that would very much depend on the information available.

26. On the issue of **integration** besides the considerations already given earlier on the need to integrate beyond the articulations made at the national level it was noted that it would be important to consider all EOs in conjunction when discussing targets as this may lead to more astringent targets than if considered individually because of the interplay between the different pressures. Finally the impact that the existence of knowledge and monitoring gaps will have on each of the issues considered and on the overall integration was brought to the attention of the meeting. The goodness of a phased approach for the implementation of EcAp was discussed in relation to this.

Agenda item 5. Specific discussion relating to each Ecological Objective

27. Prior to the presentation and discussion of each of the Ecological Objectives and the review of the policy instruments that may include relevant references to the establishment of GES and targets some further reflections on the guidance to be provided to the groups were made. Besides the need to:

- (i) include the determination of GES for each EO;
- (ii) to research the natural baseline conditions and the current deviation from them before starting the discussion of targets;
- (iii) to be cautious with the ambition to establish quantitative targets for those indicators in which data may be scarce and;
- (iv) to pay due consideration of the scale specially in clear transboundary issues such as marine litter, a request was made to provide the working groups with any other relevant information related to the EOs, OOs and indicators was made. This information should help in the further prioritization beyond the relevancy of the related pressures and impacts but also considering the relationship to other policies (national, MAP and EU) and the availability of scientific information; and,
- (v) finally there was mention of the need to provide guidance to the working groups in how to proceed in the case that single indicator OOs cannot be filled in with a target due to lack of information for that indicator in a certain region.

28. Following this the Secretariat asked the experts from MEDPOL, RACSPA and PAPRAC to present the different EOs and the considerations covered in document UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG. 369/3 and briefly review the policies related to each of them using the EOs clusters that were proposed for the organization of the working groups that would be later discussed under agenda point 9 on Governance. These clusters are the **Pollution and Litter Cluster** (EOs 5, 9, 10, 11), the **Biodiversity and Fisheries Cluster** (EOs 1, 2, 3, 4, 6) and the **Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) and Hydrologic Conditions Cluster** (EOs 7 and 8). Representatives provided comments that are also reflected under the guidance provided for each of the EOs.

Pollution and Litter cluster

Eutrophication

29. The Barcelona Convention, the LBS Protocol, the Strategic Action Plan for the implementation of the LBS Protocol and the corresponding Regional Action Plans address the issue of pollution by the increased flux of nutrients to marine waters.

30. Both the direct and indirect effects of eutrophication will have to be considered when setting targets. The Mediterranean countries which are members of the EU have had discussions on thresholds and agreed on threshold levels of chl-a but not on nutrient levels. These discussions already indicate that chl-a targets will need to be defined with due consideration of the natural levels (or reference/baseline conditions) of the area being considered. Discussions at MAP level could lead to an agreement of quantitative targets based on previous work especially for chlorophyll-a as there is enough information to undertake a discussion towards an agreement. With regards to the level of nutrients it may also be necessary to treat differently each of the problematic areas including the establishment of different type of targets for each. Due consideration should be given to the determination of targets leading to remediation in heavily impacted areas though this may be only possible after progress has been made in preventing the further degradation.

Pollution

31. The prevention, reduction and elimination of pollution is one of the main objectives of the Barcelona Convention and the focus of five of its seven protocols with the corresponding strategic plans and regional action plans. Within these instruments targets exist for pressures that are quantitative when dealing with the sources as for example for mercury and POPs. The existing state targets are referred to levels of contaminants within sediments and biota as the levels in water are too low and it is sometimes difficult to discern the natural variability from that caused by human activities. A good wealth of information is available for a discussion on quantitative targets but there is a need for further work. In the case of targets dealing with the impact of pollution further work is needed in order to accurately describe the relationship between the pressure and the resulting impacts.

32. The representative of REMPEC added that oil and other accidental spills of noxious substances could easily be assigned a pressure related target aimed at the reduction towards no accidental releases.

Marine litter

33. The newly adopted Strategic Framework for Marine Litter management of UNEP/MAP addresses fishing gear related litter and land-based sources including solid waste management and beach generated litter. Qualitative pressure related targets could be derived out of the Strategic Framework. The targets are mostly addressing the source and the accumulation in beaches while this does not preclude the work in offshore litter. The target discussion should also incorporate the work of the working group in litter of the MSFD.

34. The ACCOBAMS Secretariat expressed its wish to develop collaboration with MEDPOL on the marine litter issue, in particular on the ghost nets that are a threat to cetaceans.

Energy including underwater noise

35. With regards to energy including underwater noise, which is an issue that has raised attention and been the subject of focussed research in recent years only, targets will more easily be developed with regards to the pressure/sources using the precautionary approach. The advances made in relation to the implementation of the MSFD could be used in order to develop a common approach. The MSFD working group is focusing on noise and indeed addressing mostly the sources (impact noise and shipping-related noise).

Biodiversity and fisheries cluster

Biodiversity

36. Biodiversity is directly addressed by both the Barcelona Convention and by the Protocol concerning Specially Protected Areas and Biological Diversity in the Mediterranean but in comparison with pollution there is not so much monitoring derived information. Targets will therefore need to be addressed to specific endangered or threatened species and priority habitats for the functionality of the Mediterranean. The type of target will be specific to the specific biodiversity indicator and there will be a combination of qualitative and quantitative targets.

37. It was emphasized that the Strategic Action Programme for the Conservation of Biodiversity (SAP-BIO), the Action Plans addressed to threatened species and habitats and biannual Program of Work to be taken into due consideration during the discussion of GES and targets. It was further stressed that targets should be developed in relation to indicator species for functional groups and to the priority benthic habitats included in SAP-BIO while also taking into consideration the work done for the identification of Ecologically or Biologically Significant Areas (EBSAs) and the relevant benthic habitats in the waters of all State Parties. The use of benthic invertebrate infaunal quality indexes from the EU Water Framework Directive in order to assess benthic biodiversity was also suggested.

Non-indigenous species

38. The introduction of non-indigenous species is directly addressed by the Protocol concerning Specially Protected Areas and Biological Diversity in the Mediterranean and the Action Plan concerning species introductions and invasive species in the Mediterranean Sea. Related to these there are programs that monitor spatial distribution of particular non-indigenous species. The complexity of controlling the expansion of non-indigenous species once they have been introduced will condition that the targets developed are related to the vectors of introduction.

39. It was stated that there is a need to consider this EO and related OOs very carefully when proceeding to the discussion of targets, as they are extremely ambitious especially considering the specificities of the Mediterranean with the permanent connection to the Red Sea through the Suez Canal and the important influence of climate change. The lengthy discussions that lead to the wording of this objective were recalled and it was clarified that the intention was to ensure work in reducing the introductions but also in preventing species from becoming invasive.

Harvest of commercially exploited fish and shellfish

40. Following the presentation of the EO, OOs and indicators and highlighting the intricate relationship of this EO with the one dealing with marine foods webs a discussion was initiated on the data available to populate the indicators and its relevancy for supporting the discussion of targets. The General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) has been collecting data on fisheries related indicators for a number of years and also providing recommendations for fisheries conservation and management.

41. The representative of the GFCM stated that the GFCM would like to actively participate in the working groups for the definition for targets and added that most of the indicators are of a quantitative nature and that the data available at the GFCM for their population would be made available to this process. She further clarified that the targets would be addressed to the pressure brought by fishing effort that is the only segment that can be dealt with. She further added that it would be important to consider the recovery of overharvested stocks when addressing the discussion of the targets and it would be important to choose the adequate scale of aggregation so it would be commensurate with the available data.

Marine food webs

42. This EO is intricately related to the one on harvest of commercially exploited fish and shellfish. Therefore the relevant policy instruments that could be used to feed the targets discussion are the same. Quantitative and qualitative targets should be possible to be established for the indicators but there is a need to further define some of the indicators in order to further fill them up with data.

Sea floor integrity

43. As for the marine food web's indicators there will be a need to further define the OOs and indicators of the EO to be able to undertake a proper discussion towards the establishment of targets.

ICZM and Hydrologic Conditions Cluster

Hydrologic Conditions

44. With regards to the targets related to hydrographical changes it should be possible to look for references and inspiration within the ICZM Protocol and the action plan for implementation of the ICZM, especially for the changes near the shoreline.

45. It was also noted that some states in the Adriatic expressed the willingness to actively support the target discussions on hydrography.

46. It was also highlighted that there will be a need to take into consideration the climate variability / change in the discussion of the hydrography related targets and be aware that climate variability / change is an issue of the global scale.

Coastal ecosystems and landscapes

47. With regards to the targets related to coastal ecosystems and landscapes it was noted that there are no internationally agreed targets for ICZM but it will be equally important to retain ICZM protocol and implementation action plan. The suite of indicators covers well many of the issues of the coastal zone.

48. The meeting highlighted the need for clarification of the terms erosion and coastal instability in order to proceed to the discussion of targets.

Concluding discussion

49. After the presentation of the EOs and the review of the relevant policy instruments the Secretariat provided a technical wrap-up by to start synthesizing the guidance to be provided to the working groups on GES and targets.

50. The wrap-up included the following points:

- GES determination should be tackled in conjunction with the determination of targets. For some EOs the EO formulation may be leading to the determination of GES.
- The level and scale of GES will need to be specified when the determination is made in order to have full clarity. GES determinations may be done at a broader scale (sub-regional to Mediterranean).
- Policy instruments relevant for the establishment of targets (especially those under the framework of the Barcelona Convention but also those in EU Directives where relevant) will have to be considered.
- Targets should allow for remediation where needed and possible.
- The working groups will need to be provided with guidance on the detailed interpretation of the EOs, OOs and indicators and previous background documents that could help where clarity is not enough.

- The target determination process should aim to define quantitative targets as far as possible and use qualitative targets as the fall back option.

Agenda Item 6: Integrating across Ecological Objectives

51. The Secretariat opened this agenda point by providing a presentation with considerations on the importance of integration. The presentation highlighted that EcAp is a management approach that goes beyond examining a single issue, species, or ecosystem function in isolation. Instead, EcAp recognizes marine and coastal ecosystems for what they are: a rich mix of elements, including human and social, that interact and change over time. EcAp ultimate aim is to conserve and sustain ecosystems to benefit current and future human generations. Therefore **integration is crucial if EcAp** is to make a substantial difference in comparison to the sectorial management approach. Integration should be attempted both **thematically and geographically**.

52. **Thematic integration** should happen across all EOs considering carefully all the cumulative impacts. The grouping of EOs in clusters should help in the integration. However, with a “phased approach”, certain EOs may lend them to integration first.

53. In order to undertake a proper **geographic integration** the different scale levels at which GES and targets are defined need to be well defined and clarified. The different scales proposed are: Mediterranean, sub-regional (in some cases using the 4 sub-regions used for the initial assessment), transboundary, national and site (sub-national) level. With regards to be able to undertake aggregation / disaggregation it would also be important to discuss if the work should proceed from the broader scale (Mediterranean) to the finer scale (national or site level) or the reverse as both approaches are possible.

54. The meeting agreed that integration is definitely necessary. It was emphasized that it is important to work on the individual objectives to be able to integrate them afterwards. Thematic integration has to capture the many interactions between the different environmental aspects and across objectives. Integration should also help in the prioritization of the issues. It was also emphasized that prioritization should not attempt to weigh the different ecological objectives but to rank them so as not to hide an issue under a bigger one.

55. The Secretariat suggested that **pilot studies** would allow thematic integration to be tested and that pilot studies at the subnational could be a good scale to start, as there are potential sites that are ready for such an exercise. Several representatives agreed to this suggestion and several sites and regions were proposed as candidates for the pilot studies. The use of pilots would also allow testing the beneficial effects of the application of the ecosystem approach for both the environment and the coastal populations. Further it was stated that the use of very specific sites and the number of areas to be chosen should be guided by the characterization of the environment to inform which the meaningful areas to study are. Pilot studies should be representative of a certain ecosystem type in order to be sure that the messages coming out of the pilot studies are useful for the application in other sites/countries. Several partners also stated their readiness to support the pilot studies through the activities they are already implementing or adapting their activities to better serve the needs of the pilot projects.

56. The discussion also touched upon the possibility of broadening the scale of some of the pilot study sites suggested so the northern Adriatic or even the whole sub-region could be used as a pilot study to test integration and application of EcAp at the sub-regional level. A specific proposal by the interested countries in the **Adriatic** was suggested as the way forward to materialize this possibility into an actual pilot study.

Agenda Item 7: Road Map in implementing the Ecosystem Approach

57. The Secretariat opened this agenda point by providing a presentation on the road map for the implementation of the EcAp during the 2012-2013 biennium based on sections III.A and III.B of the document UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG. 369/4.

58. The presentation reviewed the framework for activities in relation to the outcomes of the last COP highlighting the following areas of work:

- Facilitating concrete actions through **the establishment of methodologies for defining GES and targets** towards achieving the agreed 11 ecological objectives;
- Revising and/or adopting **monitoring programmes and management measures**;
- Further fostering **integration of the sectorial approaches under UNEP/MAP Strategies and Plans of Actions**, with a view to strengthen the ability to better understand and address **cumulative risks and effects** as well as enhancing **impact of responses**; and,
- Consolidating MAP strategies and action plans in a harmonized and synergetic **implementation cycle** which is adapted to evolving priorities and is periodically **monitored, evaluated and revised on a six years basis**.

59. The presentation also clarified the link of these areas of work with the main steps for the implementation of the ecosystem approach as laid out in the approved timeline and to be tackled in the present biennium being:

- **Assessment:** Complement the integrated assessment of the Mediterranean Ecosystem with a socio-economic assessment and establish an assessment cycle by developing a UNEP/MAP policy on assessments of the marine and coastal environment to be periodically implemented;
- **Targets:** Work on methodologies for the definition of targets in accordance with the agreed Ecological and Operational Objectives and their corresponding indicators
- **Monitoring:** Preparation of an integrated monitoring system based on the indicators and targets;
- **Develop and review relevant measures for implementation of EcAp:** Updates and revisions of regional measures and sectorial policies in accordance with the Ecosystem Approach.

60. With regards to the development and review of measures the presentation was complemented with contributions from SPA/RAC (review of SAPBIO), MEDPOL (review of SAPMED), REMPEC (action plan for the implementation of the Offshore) and PAP/RAC (action plan for the implementation of the ICZM protocol and use of Coastal Area Management Plan (CAMP) projects). Further CP/RAC provided a presentation on the role of Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) in the application of the Ecosystem Approach which is the focus of a CP/RAC report that will be launched soon and INFO/RAC brought up the challenges of the information system that needs to be put in place for the management of the EcAp related information.

61. After the presentations several representatives argued about the importance of ensuring the inclusion of the determination of GES in the roadmap and in the Programme of Work 2012-2013 and ensure that it is translated to activities.

62. Further it was also noted the importance of including and involving fully all the RACs in the further implementation of the EcAp and also that all the MAP protocols were considered in the mainstreaming of EcAp into MAP policies, strategies and measures. With regards to full integration it was also mentioned that it would be important that the CAMP

projects take into consideration all EOs and not only those more clearly linked to the coastal zone (i.e EOs 7 and 8).

63. The ACCOBAMS Secretariat recalled that it has always worked in close collaboration with SPA/RAC for implementing the SAP-BIO and informed the meeting that it will support SPA/RAC in the SAP-BIO updating process contributing as a Member of the SAP-BIO Advisory Committee. In addition, the ACCOBAMS Secretariat expressed its interest to collaborate with REMPEC in the ad-hoc working group that will draft an action plan for the implementation of the offshore Protocol, and in the same way, the ACCOBAMS Secretariat expressed its wish to develop a collaboration with MED POL Programme on the marine litter issue, in particular on the ghost nets which are a threat to cetaceans.

64. The Secretariat closed the discussion on this agenda point by agreeing on the need to fully integrate GES in the roadmap and ensure mainstreaming at both the policy and governance level. The fact that EcAp implementation is an open process and on-going process and that it can be adapted as progress is achieved was also highlighted.

Agenda Item 8: Review of Terms of Reference for Socio-Economic Assessments

65. The Secretariat requested the representative of Blue Plan to present the ToR for the Socio-Economic Assessment collected in document UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG. 369/5. The presentation covered the relationship of the assessment with the EcAp implementation process, the links with the UN Regular Process on the state of the marine environment, the previous efforts done by BP that can contribute towards this assessment, specially the previous report Mediterranean marine ecosystem services valuation, and the approach, process and timeline envisaged to be followed for its production.

66. After the presentation several representatives requested clarification on the approach, process and timeline for the production of the assessment. With regards to the approach it was stated that it should be clarified that the goal is socio-economic assessment and not valuation of ecosystem services and this will very much condition the type of data that will be included. Requests were also made to ensure that the assessment includes consideration of the cost of degradation. With regard to the process it was also highlighted that the need to set up a working group with states representatives is not part of the decisions of the last COP. In addition the importance of including the results of the socio-economic assessment for the consideration in the discussions of GES and targets was also highlighted.

67. The discussion on this agenda point was concluded by requesting the Secretariat to adapt the ToR of the socio-economic analysis taking into account the considerations and requests for clarification raised during the meeting.

Agenda Item 9: Governance of the Ecosystem Approach in the Mediterranean

68. The Secretariat opened the agenda point by providing a presentation on the EcAp Governance proposal included in point III.C of the paper UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG. 369/4.

69. The governance structure of the EcAp process will be led by the EcAP Coordinating Group (CG) that will replace the previous Government Designated Experts Group. The EcAP CG will consist of MAP focal points, the Coordinating Unit, the MAP components and MAP partners to oversee the implementation of the ecosystem approach, identifying progress gaps in the implementation of the road map and find feasible solutions for the advancement of the ECAP agenda.

70. Beyond the EcAp CG three correspondence groups will be formed in the process of application of EcAp in the Mediterranean: the Correspondence Group on GES and Targets (COR-GEST), the Correspondence Group on Monitoring (COR-MON) and the Correspondence Group on Economic and Social Analysis (COR-ESA).

71. The COR-GEST will be composed of national experts designated by the Contracting Parties, and will be coordinated by the UNEP/MAP CU. It will work to ensure efficient coverage and in-depth discussions and analysis of all EOs and it will be made up of 3 clusters: 1) Pollution and Litter related EOs (EOs 5, 9, 10 and 11); 2) Biodiversity and Fisheries related EOs (EOs 1, 2, 3, 4 and 6); and 3) ICZM and Hydrologic Conditions related EOs (EOs 7 and 8). A Regional Thematic Expert will be assigned to each cluster to ensure coordination and provide technical assistance. The expected outcome of the COR-GEST is defining the methodology for Mediterranean targets through a participatory process involving contracting parties and MAP components, to be submitted to COP 18.

72. The COR-MON will be composed of national experts designated by the Contracting Parties, and will be coordinated by MEDPOL. It will work to ensure efficient coverage and in-depth discussions and analysis regarding monitoring, with reference to the outcomes of WG-GEST and it will be made up of 3 clusters: 1) Pollution and litter related EOs (EOs 5, 9, 10 and 11); 2) Biodiversity and Fisheries related EOs (EOs 1, 2, 3, 4 and 6); and 3) ICZM and Hydrologic Conditions related EOs (EOs 7 and 8). A Regional Thematic Expert will be assigned to each cluster to ensure coordination and provide technical assistance. The expected outcome of the COR-MON is determination of the methodology to be applied for the preparation of the integrated monitoring programme, which will be submitted to EcAp CG for endorsement.

73. The COR-ESA will be composed of national experts designated by the Contracting Parties and invited experts, and coordinated by BP/RAC. It will further develop a socio economic analysis of marine ecosystems uses, focusing on priority sectors such as fisheries, aquaculture, maritime transport, recreational activities, oil industry and offshore. The overall objective of this Group is to elaborate a common understanding and to foster a broad appropriation by Mediterranean riparian countries of the social and economic dimensions involved in the EcAp implementation.

74. It was requested from the Secretariat to ensure full participation of all UNEP/MAP components in supporting relevant groups and clusters;

75. It was further stated that at national level the MAP FP would be the member of the EcAp Coordination Group (as decided by COP17). It was further proposed that the Contracting Parties would delegate a representative to each of the proposed Correspondence Group. Also in order to ensure ownership, countries would be asked to assign experts for consultation purposes, which could be an expert per each EO, or otherwise as per country's own decision as relevant.

76. Finally it was added that in support of the CG, UNEP/MAP CU and its components will make additional efforts to effectively program and coordinate to ensure efficient implementation of EcAp.

77. The ensuing discussion touched upon the legitimacy of the CG for the creation of correspondence groups and clusters. The Secretariat clarified that the CORs will not report to COP but will support the work of the EcAp CG. To make clear a distinction, it was decided that the initially referred "working groups" would be named correspondence groups, and the sub-groups as "clusters". The need to have a structure matching the complexity of the EcAp and to swiftly respond to COP mandate was also mentioned in this respect.

78. Beyond the creation of the Correspondence Groups it was highlighted that their role, functions and participation would need to be clearly specified through agreed terms of reference to ensure ownership and define the responsibility for their outcomes. The ToR should be shared with the Bureau during its first meeting in July 2012. Several partners expressed their willingness to be represented and contribute towards the work of the different correspondence groups and clusters. The Secretariat noted and thanked the interest for participation of the partners and stated that it would ensure the inclusion of all MAP components, partners and stakeholders.

79. Several representatives also discussed the goodness of using the Parties and MAP internal capacity instead of using external resources for fulfilling the roles assigned to the Regional Thematic Expert in view of the good internal capacity existing and the need to rationalize the use of external resources both in amount and costs. The Secretariat clarified that the work of the Correspondence Groups would be nourished by the information provided by the Contracting Parties and that RACs would provide the regional technical expertise. External assistance would only be used for punctual coordination and moderation of thematic discussions through Regional Thematic Experts supporting MAP in ensuring that the expected outputs are delivered.

80. It was further emphasized the importance of designing very well the timeline for activities of the different correspondence groups and clusters so their work could be carefully coordinated (simultaneous or phased) leading to saving efforts and resources both from the Secretariat and the Contracting Parties as representation in all Correspondence Groups may be challenge. With regards to this it was also pointed that the work of the COR-GEST and COR-MON is tightly related and the monitoring program will have to consider very closely the arrangement for the establishment of GES and targets but also that the determination of GES and targets relied on the amount of available data which would be for sure part of the stock taking work of the COR-MON. The need to ensure that the work of the COR-ESA is fed into the work of the COR-GEST was also emphasized. The Secretariat clarified that the timeline for activities for 2012-2013 would be refined to include these considerations.

81. The Secretariat concluded this agenda point by reemphasizing that i) work will be done to ensure the involvement of Contracting parties, MAP components, partners and stakeholders but that of course self-representation in each of the groups is a choice by the Contracting-Parties; ii) that a well-planned and coordinated phased approach would be used; and that iii) the responsibility of the process sits with the Secretariat that will go to the extent that ownership and resources allow though flexibility would for sure help.

Agenda Item 10: Adoption of recommendations and conclusions

82. The meeting considered the draft conclusions prepared by the Secretariat on which comments were made and modifications requested.

83. The recommendations and conclusions included in **Annex III** were approved by the meeting.

Agenda item 11: Closure of the meeting

84. Prior to the closure of the meeting the Secretariat highlighted the achievements of the constructive discussions had during the last two days, noted the financial constraints and requests for flow of information and transparency and announced that the next EcAp Coordination Group meeting would be held at the beginning of 2013.

**ANNEX I
LIST OF PARTICIPANTS**

ANNEX I - LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

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**ANNEX II
AGENDA**

ANNEX II - AGENDA

DAY 1: TUESDAY, 29 MAY 2012

Agenda Item 1: Opening of the Meeting

Agenda Item 2: Election of officers and adoption of the agenda

Agenda Item 3: Progress in implementing the Ecosystem Approach roadmap

Agenda Item 4: Review of Terms of Reference for Socio-Economic Assessments

Agenda Item 5: Review of Methodologies for Setting Targets

Agenda Item 6: Proposed methodology for adoption in the Mediterranean context

Agenda Item 7: Specific discussion relating to each Ecological Objective

DAY 2: WEDNESDAY, 30 MAY 2012

Agenda Item 7: Specific discussion relating to each Ecological Objective (cont'd)

Agenda Item 8: Integrating across Ecological Objectives

Agenda Item 9: Activities to further the application of the ecosystem approach in the Mediterranean in this biennium in line with the timeline agreed at COP17

Agenda Item 10: Adoption of recommendations and conclusions

Agenda Item 11: Closure of the meeting

ANNEX III
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

ANNEX III - CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

First Meeting of Ecosystem Approach (EcAp) Coordination Group, held in Athens, Greece on 29-30 May 2012, welcoming the progress achieved in the implementation of EcAp since 2008, especially prior to and after the 17th Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention, where it was requested from UNEP/MAP to complete all pending activities in the 7 steps process for the implementation of the EcAp in the Mediterranean moving towards ensuring that EcAp becomes MAP's core implementation strategy, had the objective to :

- *Agree on a road-map on the activities to be undertaken by MAP under the EcAp process during this biennium so as to meet the expectation of the Contracting Parties for the 18th Meeting of the COP;*
- *Discuss a Governance structure to support EcAp Coordination Group in guiding the EcAp activities in this biennium;*
- *Provide substantive inputs upon which a common methodology for defining Good Environmental Status and targets for the 11 Ecological Objectives in the Mediterranean can be based; and,*
- *Discuss the activities and coordination needed towards the development of the integrated monitoring program and socio-economic analysis.*

The meeting agreed on a number of conclusions and recommendations as follows:

1. Road-map of the implementation of EcAp in the Mediterranean

- 1.1. To request the Secretariat to amend the draft terms of reference for the socio-economic assessment (Document UNEP(DEPI)MEDWG. 369/5) with regard to decision IG. 20/4 and reflecting the outcome of the discussions under agenda item 8;
- 1.2. To appreciate and acknowledge the financial support provided by European Union for the Project "Implementation of the Ecosystem Approach in the Mediterranean-(EcAp-MED)" and to request the Secretariat to distribute the Project Document when the administrative procedures are finalized and integrate its work in the EcAp Coordination Group;
- 1.3. To request the Secretariat to ensure that UNEP/MAP components take ownership of EcAp objectives in their Plans of Action and other activities;
- 1.4. To request the Secretariat to ensure and provide regular updates to the EcAp Coordination Group on all sectorial and integrated activities related with the implementation of EcAp by UNEP/MAP components; and,
- 1.5. To request UNEP/MAP to notify all MAP and component focal points of the EcAp process and timeline.

2. Governance

- 2.1. To request the Secretariat to finalize a Terms of Reference for the EcAp Coordination Group for endorsement during the next meeting of the Bureau;
- 2.2. To request the Secretariat to establish a GES & Targets Correspondence Group that will define GES and set targets using a common methodology at the Mediterranean and appropriate subscales;
- 2.3. To request the Secretariat to also establish a Monitoring Correspondence Group that will carry out the necessary activities to develop an integrated monitoring program;
- 2.4. To request the Secretariat to also establish a Socio-economic Analysis Correspondence Group;

- 2.5. To request the Secretariat to prepare ToRs for the Correspondence Groups on GES & Targets, Monitoring, and Socio-economic Analysis including their composition, mission statement and a tentative calendar of activities, and share for consideration by the EcAp Coordination Group by correspondence;
- 2.6. To request the Secretariat to ensure that the work of the GES & Targets and Monitoring Correspondence Groups is logically sequenced and coordinated in a holistic manner;
- 2.7. To endorse the three-cluster approach under both GES & Targets Correspondence Group and the Monitoring Correspondence Group, and request the Secretariat to establish them. These clusters are Pollution and Litter (EO 5, 9, 10 and 11), Biodiversity and Fisheries (EO 1, 2, 3, 4 and 6) and ICZM (EO 7 and 8);
- 2.8. To request the Secretariat to ensure full participation of all UNEP/MAP components in supporting relevant groups and clusters;
- 2.9. To request the Secretariat to promote the participation of UNEP/MAP partners, relevant projects (PEGASO, PERSEUS and others) and the scientific community, at all relevant levels, such as Correspondence Groups and clusters;
- 2.10. To request the Secretariat to share with the Bureau the plans to use external expertise in the EcAp implementation process; and,
- 2.11. To note efforts to ensure parties' ownership while allowing countries flexibility in deciding the extent of their participation in the subgroups.

3. Guidelines for the Correspondence Group on GES & Targets

- 3.1. To agree that the Correspondence Group on GES and targets will propose definition of Mediterranean GES & targets corresponding to the agreed Ecological Objective and associated Operational Objectives and/or Indicators;
- 3.2. To agree that the work of the Correspondence Group on GES and Targets will be carried out in a progressive manner;
- 3.3. To provide guidance for the Clusters to enable a common methodology, including the following points:
 - 3.3.1. Clusters should initially establish GES, focused on state, for each EO;
 - 3.3.2. Clusters should consider thematic integration as targets are being defined, such that targets for one EO are developed with other EOs in mind, reflecting the interplay of various ecosystem components and processes. Initially this integration might occur across the Clusters (i.e. within biodiversity and fisheries cluster, pollution and litter cluster, or ICZM and hydrological conditions cluster), but at later stage, integration may happen across all EOs. Geographic integration will be accomplished at various scales in the roll-out of pilots and national initiatives – but data compatibility should be considered in order to allow integration at the sub-regional and Mediterranean scale;
 - 3.3.3. The Secretariat is requested to prepare an inventory of already identified objectives / targets existing under protocols, strategies, action plans, protected areas and other areas of ecological significance, biennial implementation plans, other treaties, etc. to serve as a foundation for discussion of targets and GES. Priority should be given to what has been agreed under the Barcelona Convention;
 - 3.3.4. Targets should address pressure, state or impacts related to the ecological objectives, operational objectives and indicators. More information is generally available on pressures than on state and impacts for a specific issue. The establishment of all relevant targets, mostly emanating from human activities will allow the design of coherent management measures using the precautionary approach and serve well the ecosystem approach;

3.3.5. The detailed understanding of OOs, as related to the indicators accepted by the COP, should be agreed early in the work of the Clusters, so as to capture the intent of EOs and the need to identify reasonable targets with regards to criteria defined by socio-economic analysis;

3.3.6. Scale should be tackled in the discussion of each EO, including whether at a specified scale, indicators associated with OOs can be assessed qualitatively, quantitatively, and whether data exist. In principle, scales should be national and when possible regional (Mediterranean) and transboundary or sub-regional. GES would normally be defined at a higher scale (Mediterranean or sub-regional) than the targets (which will be defined at national or sub-national);

3.3.7. The aim of all Clusters should be to identify targets that are as quantitative as possible. For some EOs targets will likely be qualitative, reflecting upward or downward trend and not tied to specific timelines (slope of trend). Phasing can allow more quantitative approaches to be utilized as EcAp implementation progresses. For some EOs threshold determination may be possible immediately while others may have to rely on trend information;

3.3.8. Reference conditions versus background conditions should be discussed by each cluster; setting targets and GES determinations should steer countries towards priorities for restoration, not just maintenance of *status quo*;

3.3.9. Indicators should be quantitative whenever possible, but may be defined as qualitative if needed data is not available;

3.3.10. Indicators and Targets should be prioritized in regards to contribution to overall Mediterranean-wide ecosystem health and productivity. The degree to which some indicators and targets are more of a priority than others, and perhaps some EOs are more of a priority than others, should be addressed by each cluster and the criteria used specified; and,

3.3.11. Clusters should come to terms with the situation that arises when a country does not have enough information to address a particular OO. A prioritized or ranked/weighted system of targets should focus on priorities relating to impact, as well as data availability.

4. Piloting integrated implementation of EcAp

4.1. At the initiative of the countries concerned, the development of EcAp pilot projects at various scales (subnational, national and trans-boundary) and distributed throughout the Mediterranean will be encouraged, in order to allow: 1) testing the conceptual basis of EcAp (including the viability of target development and thematic integration); 2) assessment of data availability and compatibility; and 3) implementing geographic integration. For the purposes of integration, it would be useful if at least one of the pilots is carried out at a small scale as well as at least one trans-boundary pilot that spans different countries. In this context, a pilot on the Western Mediterranean linked to existing processes (5+5) and structures may be explored.

5. Other issues

5.1. Due to the importance of this process, countries are encouraged to ensure the widest possible participation in all stages of the EcAp implementation.