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Meeting of the Ecosystem Approach Correspondence Group on Marine Litter Monitoring

Madrid, Spain, 28 February – 2 March 2017

Report of the Meeting of the Ecosystem Approach Correspondence Group on Marine Litter Monitoring

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UNEP/MAP
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Introduction

1. The meeting of the Meeting of the Ecosystem Approach Correspondence Group on Marine Litter Monitoring (CORMON) was held from 28 February to 1 March 2017, in the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, Food and Environment, Madrid, Spain, in accordance with the UNEP/MAP Programme of Work 2016-2017 adopted by the 19th Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention in February 2016.
2. The overall aim of the Marine Litter CORMON was to discuss the practical implementation of the three indicators adopted with the Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme of the Mediterranean Sea and Coast and Related Assessment Criteria (IMAP - Decision IG.22/7):
 - Common Indicator 22: Trends in the amount of litter washed ashore and/or deposited on coastlines (EO10);
 - Common Indicator 23: Trends in the amount of litter in the water column including micro plastics and on the seafloor (EO10)
 - Candidate Indicator 24: Trends in the amount of litter ingested by or entangling marine organisms focusing on selected mammals, marine birds, and marine turtles (EO10)
3. The main objectives of the meeting were to: i) provide Contracting Parties with a training programme on specific elements of marine litter monitoring and related best practices; ii) share and exchange information on the revision of their national monitoring programmes in relation to Marine Litter to be updated in light of the Integrated Monitoring and assessment programme (IMAP); iii) review and discuss the draft Indicator Guidance Factsheets on Marine Litter for the two common and one candidate indicator; iv) review and discuss the first completed Quality Status Report (QSR) Assessment Factsheets Common Indicator's 22 and 23; and v) review and discuss Marine Litter Metadata Templates and Monitoring Protocols and the steps to be taken to develop a Marine Litter Reporting system.

Participation

4. The meeting was attended by participants from the following Contracting Parties: Albania, Algeria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Egypt, France, Greece, Israel, Italy, Lebanon, Libya, Malta, Monaco, Montenegro, Morocco, Slovenia, Spain, Tunisia and Turkey. The UNEP/MAP Secretariat was represented by the Coordinating Unit including the MED POL Programme, the Regional Activity Centers Plan Bleu, REMPEC and SPA/RAC. The meeting was also attended by the European Environment Agency (EEA) and the EC Joint Research Centre (JRC). In addition, a number of key experts and several representatives from key national institutions, regional projects and NGOs were invited to present best practices in the monitoring of marine litter. The full list of participants is attached as Annex I to the present report.

Best Practices on Marine Litter Monitoring: Training Session

5. The best practices on marine litter monitoring session was opened by Ms. Itziar Martin Partida, Technical Director of the Division for the Protection of the Sea from Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, Food and Environment, and Ms. Virginie Hart, MED POL Program Officer.
6. The training was divided into two sessions, each followed by a discussion. In the first session presentations were given on monitoring beach litter, riverine litter, and citizen engagement. With regards to the monitoring of Common Indicator 22 on beach litter, Ms. Thomais Vlachogianni, MIO-ECSDE Programme Officer presented the methodology and best practices on monitoring beach litter within the framework of the DeFishGear Project including the areas of assessment, applied protocols, comparability of results, management of the collected marine litter items and main results at sub-regional level and per country. This was followed by Ms. Ana Tejedor from the European

Environment Agency (EEA) who presented the methodology for monitoring beach marine litter via the use of Marine LitterWatch (MLW) application.

7. Regarding the importance of marine litter inputs from rivers, a presentation was given by Mr. Georg Hanke from the European Commission Joint Research Centre (JRC) on the experiences of monitoring riverine marine litter within the EC/JRC RIMMEL Project, including an overview on riverine litter, the importance of rivers in connecting land-based sources and the sea, the significant marine litter loads coming from rivers, the current situation in terms of related initiatives and projects, the RIMMEL application for monitoring marine litter and preliminary results. Finally, Stefania Di Vito, from the scientific office of Legambiente presented best practices of engaging citizens on marine litter related events, including the organization and managing groups of volunteers to carry out specific marine litter tasks, sharing best-practices and lessons learnt, and data collection and management.

8. Following this first session of presentations questions were raised on the best approaches for the selection of monitoring sites for beach litter, to include pristine beaches as well as beaches impacted by different sectors, such as tourism, ports, fishing etc., as well as the timing of monitoring. Several participants noted the importance to have common meta-data and data templates to ensure national and regional databases are harmonized and comparable, and the important role of citizen engagement in marine litter monitoring is extremely important especially where funding is limited for many countries.

9. The focus of the second session was on monitoring seafloor and floating litter, the effect of marine litter on biota and the presentation of the current baseline values for marine litter developed in the framework of the UN Environment/Mediterranean Action Plan. Ms. Maria Teresa Spedicato, research director at COISPA Tecnologia & Ricerca, Italy, involved in the design and implementation of the scientific trawl survey MEDITS in the European Mediterranean waters, presented the best practices in monitoring sea-floor litter in the framework of the MEDITS cruises using bottom trawling. This was followed by a presentation by Mr. Georg Hanke (JRC) on best practices in Monitoring of floating marine macro litter, and Mr. François Galgani, project manager at IFREMER, France, on the methodological approach for monitoring floating micro plastics. Two presentations were then given on the impacts of marine litter on biota. Ms. Françoise Claro (MNHN), Coordinator of the EU MSFD Marine Turtles Group, France presented the methodology for monitoring and assessing the effect of marine litter on sea turtles, and Ms. Maria Cristina Fossi, University of Siena (Italy), presented the effects of marine litter on marine mammals.

10. Finally, Mr. François Galgani presented the methodology for developing baselines values and corresponding targets on marine litter in the framework of the UN Environment/Mediterranean Action Plan including data and information requirements in order to further guide the Contracting Parties in their marine litter related assessment work.

11. In the discussion that followed clarifications were requested on the approach to prioritize monitoring between macro and micro-plastics, and the use of bio-markers. It was also noted that the work of the Mediterranean must consider and be aligned with global processes, such as the work of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's), and the decisions of the G7 Summit in May and G20 Summit in July 2017.

Agenda item 1. Opening of the Meeting

12. The meeting was opened by Ms. Marta Martínez-Gil Pardo de Vera, Chief of the Division for the Protection of the Sea, Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, Food and Environment and Ms. Tatjana Hema, MAP Deputy Coordinator.

Agenda item 2. Adoption of the Agenda and Election of Officers

Adoption of the Agenda

13. The proposed Provisional Agenda appearing in document UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG.429/1 was adopted and appears as Annex II to the present report.

Election of officers

14. In accordance with the Rules of procedures for meetings and conferences of the Contracting Parties the meeting elected one (1) President, three (3) Vice-Presidents and one (1) Rapporteur from among the participants, as follows:

Chair: Ms. Marta Martínez-Gil Pardo de Vera, Spain
Vice-Chair 1: Mr. Samir Grimes, Algeria
Vice-Chair 2: Ms. Lorenza Babbini, Italy
Vice-Chair 2: Mr. Mohamed Salem Hamouda, Libya
Rapporteur: Ms. Klodiana Marika, Albania

Agenda item 3. Current status of National Marine Litter Monitoring Programmes

15. Under this Agenda item, eleven of the Contracting Parties (Croatia, Greece, France, Israel, Italy, Lebanon, Montenegro Morocco, Slovenia, Spain, and Turkey) presented their national monitoring programmes in relation to Marine Litter (EO11) and the challenges and experiences in aligning their monitoring programmes with the IMAP decision. From the presentations, it was noted that the majority of countries have some monitoring in place for marine litter. Certain countries are advanced in implementation of monitoring marine litter, in line with their obligations under the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD), with France, Spain and Italy giving examples of the challenges they faced to develop in-depth monitoring programmes for all aspects of marine litter. In the Adriatic, the DeFishGear project had enabled additional support to Croatia, Montenegro and Slovenia in monitoring on beaches, the water surface, the seafloor and biota to enhance knowledge on amounts, composition and potential impacts of marine litter. Several other countries are in the process of development and initial focussed implementation monitoring activities, such as the monitoring of beach and seafloor marine litter in Israel, micro plastic monitoring in sediments in Turkey and the monitoring of floating plastic in Morocco and Egypt. It was stressed that irrespective of the status of monitoring activities, the management of litter is of high priority in all countries, with initiatives underway in terms of wastes management, banning of bottles, plastic bags, and programmes for the recycling and re-use of marine litter.

16. In the discussion on key needs and gaps, the importance of training was stressed, common guidance and protocols, and data reporting. The Secretariat noted that marine litter is a relatively new issue for MED POL, and work is still ongoing. Whilst there is much to be done, it is important that feasible and realistic monitoring programmes are designed for the next meeting of the 20th Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention in December 2017. The sharing of best-practices will assist in this work and MED POL can support exchanges between Contracting Parties to work together to share experiences. It was also noted that whilst the EU MSFD is an important driving force and a legal obligation for European countries work on marine litter, clear reference should always be made to IMAP, the Barcelona Convention and the Regional Plan on Marine Litter by all Contracting Parties. Finally, support is being provided by MEDPOL to a number of countries in the further development of their marine litter monitoring plans, and it was appreciated that this will be complemented by certain activities of the Horizon 2020 project.

Agenda item 4. Guidance Factsheets on Marine Litter Monitoring (EO10)

17. The Secretariat presented the Draft Indicator Guidance Factsheets for the two common and one candidate indicator for Marine Litter (EO10), in document UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG.429/3. Indicator Guidance factsheets have been developed for all the IMAP 27 indicators, led by the respective Components. These guidelines are based on the information available in the Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Guidance (document UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG.429/Inf.6) and will be further elaborated for discussion at the Component Focal Point meetings in May 2017.

18. During the discussion that followed, participants commended the work of the Secretariat to prepare these Indicator Guidance Factsheets. Detailed comments and suggestions were provided that were recorded by the Secretariat directly to the document, which were then shared with participants along with the draft conclusions and recommendations before the end of the meeting. Some of the general comments discussed included the need to strengthen information on micro plastics in the revision of the document; clarification on the minimum sampling over time in order to be able to establish trends for beach litter; and discussion on applying a reduced width on monitoring beach litter, based on some preliminary findings of the DeFishGear project, that tested also this approach. It was also noted that the marine litter online expert group previously recommended a reduced master list should be considered (UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG.417/7). It was suggested to revise, in the future the lower limit of 0.5cm for beach litter items so as to be in line the commonly used 2.5 cm limit that can be visible with the eye.

19. Finally, it was agreed that primary source of data should be the national monitoring programmes and that monitoring marine litter can be done in a very cost-effective manner and is much cheaper than the monitoring of many of the other IMAP indicators, and therefore all countries would be able to implement a basic monitoring programme on marine litter. In addition to the discussion any additional written comments would be submitted as appropriate to the Secretariat by the 15th March 2017, for inclusion in a revised version of the Guidance Factsheets for the MED POL Focal Points meeting (29-31 May 2017).

Agenda item 5. QSR Factsheets on Marine Litter (EO10)

20. The 19th COP of the Barcelona Convention in 2016, Mediterranean countries adopted the Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme of the Mediterranean Sea and Coast and Related Assessment Criteria (IMAP - Decision IG.22/7), and this included agreement on the development of a Quality Status Report (QSR) for the Mediterranean by the end of 2017. The Secretariat provided an introduction to the work towards the Quality Status Report (QSR) and the QSR Assessment Factsheets on Marine Litter were presented in document UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG.429/4. It was stressed that the assessment factsheets for marine litter were predominantly based on the 2015 UNEP/MAP Marine Litter Assessment in the Mediterranean, with some updated information from new publications. The assessment factsheets were reviewed by participants in detail and as in the previous session were all recorded on the document and shared with participants with the conclusions and recommendations.

21. During the discussion, some of the general comments included the need to ensure stronger harmonization between the brief and extended sections. There was an extended discussion on the marine litter top items (see agenda item 6), and it was agreed that the assessment factsheets should be revised to include additional top item lists that have been developed in several countries. Also noted was the need to harmonize the brief and extended sections of the report, to revise the sections on sources of marine litter in Common Indicator 22 to be more consistent and include as appropriate the latest Technical Group on Marine Litter (MSFD TGML) report on sources, and also litter coming from rivers. In addition to the discussion any additional written comments would be submitted to the Secretariat by the 15th March 2017, for inclusion in a revised version of the QSR Assessment Factsheets to be submitted to the EcAp Coordination Group meeting on the 27-28 April 2017.

Agenda item 6. Marine Litter Metadata Templates and Monitoring Protocols

22. In line with the Regional Plan on Marine Litter Management in the Mediterranean (Decision IG21/7 – COP 18, Istanbul, Turkey, 2013), the IMAP decision, and in order to ensure a harmonized and coordinated approach to data and meta data collection in the Mediterranean, the Secretariat presented a first proposal on the main elements for building Marine Litter Metadata Templates, in document UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG.429/5. Further work is needed to develop a proposal of data and meta-data for consideration by the MED POL focal points and it was agreed that those members of the Marine Litter online working group present (France, Spain and Italy) would lead in the development of a proposal for consideration by the MED POL Focal points meeting

23. Following this, the Secretariat presented the brief report on current Top Marine Litter Items in the Mediterranean (UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG.429/6). The issue of Top Marine Litter Items had been discussed throughout the meeting, as an important tool to guide policy makers in the development of targeted actions in line with the Regional Plan on Marine Litter Management in the Mediterranean. Currently there are a few studies that have been conducted, which however have not used the same methodology and categories, and it was noted that sources, typology and types of marine litter were often mixed. In addition, several participants mentioned work has been undertaken at the national level to develop top item lists that would be shared with the Secretariat. It was agreed that the same working group on meta-data and data (France, Spain and Italy) would work further on the analysis of top marine litter items in the Mediterranean for consideration by the MED POL Focal Points in May 2017.

Agenda item 7. Conclusions and Recommendations

24. The Secretariat presented the draft Conclusions and Recommendations of the meeting which after minor changes were adopted and are included in Annex III to this report.

Agenda item 8. Any Other Business

25. Under the eight Agenda item, participants didn't raise and discuss any other matters.

Agenda item 9. Closure of the meeting

26. After the expression of usual courtesies, the President declared the meeting closed at 2.00 p.m. on Friday 21 October 2016.

Annex I
List of Participants

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Annex II
Agenda of the Meeting

Agenda of the Meeting

Tuesday 28 February (9.30-15.30)

Best Practices on Marine Litter Monitoring: Training Session

- a) Monitoring Beach Marine Litter (EO10, Common Indicator 22);
- b) Monitoring Benthic & Floating Litter (EO10, Common Indicator 22);
- c) Effect of Marine Litter on Biota: Ingested Litter by Marine Organisms (EO10, Candidate Indicator 24);
- d) Monitoring Riverine Marine Litter; and
- e) Baseline Values on Marine Litter Indicators: Definition of Methodology.

Meeting of the Ecosystem Approach Correspondence Group on Marine Litter Monitoring

Tuesday 28 February (15.30-17.30)

- Agenda item 1.** Opening of the Meeting
- Agenda item 2.** Adoption of the Agenda and Election of Officers
- Agenda item 3.** Current status of national Marine Litter Monitoring Programmes

Wednesday 1 March (9.30-17.30)

- Agenda item 4.** Guidance Factsheets on Marine Litter Monitoring (EO10)
- Common Indicators: 22, 23
 - Candidate Indicator: 24
- Agenda item 5.** QSR Factsheets on Marine Litter (EO10)
- Agenda item 6.** Marine Litter Metadata Templates and Monitoring Protocols
- Agenda item 7.** Conclusions and Recommendations
- Agenda item 8.** Any Other Business
- Agenda item 9.** Closure of the meeting

Annex III
Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions and next steps

The Meeting of the Ecosystem Approach Correspondence Group on Marine Litter Monitoring was held on 28 February to the 1 March 2017 at the kind invitation of the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, Food and Environment in Madrid, Spain.

During its elaborations, the meeting delivered the following conclusions and next steps:

Current Status of National Monitoring Programmes

1. The meeting acknowledged with appreciation the session on sharing of best practices on different aspects of marine litter monitoring, and recommended additional similar activities in the future are organized by the Secretariat
2. The meeting acknowledged and appreciated the efforts of several Contracting Parties for preparing and implementing their national monitoring programmes on marine litter, and encouraged further collaboration among Contracting Parties for this purpose including bilateral support as appropriate par the intermediate of the Secretariat with the view to achieve that all Contracting Parties have Marine Litter National Monitoring programmes drafted by COP 20
3. The meeting welcomed the experience gathered from projects such as the DeFishGear and others and suggested the need as appropriate to build upon their results.

Indicator Guidance Factsheets

4. The meeting reviewed and took note of the Indicator Guidance Factsheets on Marine Litter, and asked the Secretariat to revise the document as per the instructions provided in the attached document, and taking into account in particular the following:
 - The revision of the document will be checked in order to ensure, that changes made remain in full alignment with the relevant COP decisions and the reports of the Marine Litter Online Working Group
 - The revision of the document would look to further develop the issue of micro-litter
 - That the primary source of data in the data sources section of the Guidance Factsheets should be from the Contracting Parties and then the other sources
5. The meeting was invited to send further comments in writing by the 15 March 2017 at the latest, in order for a revised version of the document to be prepared by 24 March 2017, to be sent to CORMON for no objection and then to be shared in line with the decision-making process of the MAP system.

QSR Factsheets on Marine Litter

6. The meeting reviewed and took note of the QSR Assessment Factsheets on Marine Litter, and asked the Secretariat to revise the document as per the instructions provided in the attached document, and taking into account the following:
 - The revision of the document will be checked in order to ensure, that changes made are in line with the 2015 Marine Litter Assessment in the Mediterranean
 - Additional information regarding top marine litter items for beach litter at the national and regional level, where available (existing monitoring programmes of Contracting Parties and from Marine Litter watch and the DeFishGear project) would be submitted to the Secretariat for inclusion in the factsheets
 - Additional information on lists of sources of marine litter at the national and regional level would be submitted to the Secretariat for inclusion in the factsheets
 - Contracting Parties and meeting participants would provide additional, comments, data and information where available to be included in the revision of the QSR factsheets by the 15

March 2017 at the latest, in order for a revised version of the document to be prepared by 24 March 2017

- The Secretariat will provide to participants the Terms of Reference for the QSR Case Studies and the CORMON participants will provide initial proposals for case studies by the 15 March 2017, for further development and finalization by the 30 June 2017, in close collaboration and support from the Secretariat

Marine Metadata templates and Monitoring Protocols

7. The meeting reviewed and took note of the proposed main elements to build data and metadata reporting on marine litter and agreed to ask members of the online working groups on marine litter present at the meeting (France, Spain and Italy) to take a leading role for the further development of data and metadata templates, in collaboration with the Secretariat for submission to the MED POL Focal Points meeting in May 2017.

8. The meeting agreed to provide information and guidance on existing national and regional marine litter databases to allow the Secretariat, in collaboration with Info/RAC to develop a state of play paper on marine litter databases in the framework of the IMAP Information System for submission to the MED POL Focal Points meeting in May 2017.

9. The meeting noted that further work is required to complete the analysis related to top marine litter items in the Mediterranean and asked the same group that will work on the metadata templates to also further develop the analysis of top marine litter items for consideration by the MED POL Focal Points in May 2017.

10. In undertaking this analysis the meeting recommended that all comments provided on this subject during the review of the QSR assessment factsheets should be taken into account and asked countries to provide recent information on top (or most frequent) marine litter items to the Secretariat by the 15th March 2017

The meeting thanked Spanish Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, Food and Environment, especially the MED POL Focal Point, Ms. Martínez-Gil Pardo de Vera for the support provided to ensure the successful completion of the meeting.